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Theology - Homiletics

A

HOMILETIC ENCYCLOPÆDIA

OF

Illustrations in Theology and Morals.

A HANDBOOK OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY, AND A COMMENTARY ON HOLY SCRIPTURE.

SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY

R. A. BERTRAM,

Compiler of "A Dictionary of Poetical Illustrations," &c.

"Great works are not in everybody's reach, and though it is better to know them thoroughly than to know them here and there, yet it is a good work to give a little to those who have neither time nor means to get more. Let every bookworm, when in any fragrant scarce old tome he discovers a sentence, a story, an illustration, that does his heart good, hasten to give it."—*S. T. Coleridge.*

"The aim of the teacher who would find his way to the hearts and understandings of his hearers, will never be to keep down the parabolical element in his teaching, but rather to make as much and frequent use of it as he can."—*Archbishop Trench.*

"An illustration is not a mere prettiness—an ornamental phrase, that might be left out without detriment to the train of thought,—it is something which really lights up that train of thought itself, and enables the reader or hearer to see the aim, as well as to feel the force, of the logic. An argument may be demonstrative,—it may thoroughly establish the position maintained,—but it may not at first, and simply as an argument, be fully appreciated; when, the understanding having done its work, passion and genius shall crown the whole with some vivid illustration, which shall make it stand out with a distinctness that shall never be forgotten! It is one great faculty of the mind holding up a lighted torch to the workmanship of another."—*Thomas Binney.*

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following facts and suggestions are given for the benefit of all whom they may concern.

1. This work is not merely another volume of Illustrations. It differs essentially from all other collections of Illustrations, except *Parable; or, Divine Poesy.* Its distinctive feature is, that its arrangement is homiletical. The headings under which the extracts of which the various articles are made up, might serve as divisions and subdivisions of sermons, or of courses of sermons. This, however, is not their design, but that thereby the student may be helped to attain to a clear and logical mastery of the subject concerning which he intends to speak.

2. This work is intended rather for study than for hasty reference. It is not for the man who, when he finds his ideas running dry, and does not see how he is to finish a division of a sermon effectively, runs to some Dictionary to find something that can be tacked on to what he has written; but for the faithful preacher, such as is depicted in Ecclesiastes xii. 9, 10, who gives diligence beforehand to find out "acceptable words" and useful ideas. It is not intended for the idler, who preaches under compulsion, but for the earnest student, to whom preaching is a delight.

3. Those who use this book are counselled to make constant use of the Indexes, especially of the *Textual Index.* The illustrations in this volume cast invaluable side-lights upon more than four thousand texts of Scripture. On this account, they constitute one of the most valuable Commentaries ever published. Many a brief clause referred to in the *Textual Index* contains material for effective and useful paragraphs. He is the useful preacher who knows how to amplify without diluting.

4. One idea that has sustained the Compiler in the immense labour involved in the preparation of this volume is, that he may thus be useful to his brethren in country districts, many of whom have no access to large libraries, and by a constant inadequacy of income are prevented from largely increasing their own. His hope has been thus to put within their reach a volume which, because of its wealth of suggestiveness, should be a little library in itself.

5. As far as was possible, care has been taken not to include in this volume anything that has already appeared in "*Parable; or, Divine Poesy,*" or in Bate's or Foster's *Dictionaries of Illustrations.*

6. Those who use this volume will find much valuable help of another kind in the Compiler's *Dictionary of Poetical Illustrations*, also published by Mr. Dickinson.

7. Every young minister is strongly advised to make a similar compilation for him-

self. Whenever he finds anything (fact, figure, verse, &c.) that seems to him fitted for effective use in a sermon, let him copy or cut it out. Let him not trust to memory : let him store up the treasure in his Note-book, and then he may reasonably hope to find it when it is wanted.

Long experience in this kind of work leads the Compiler to recommend the method he has himself followed. and which Mr. Moody was also led to adopt, that of arranging all the excerpts in large envelopes, such as lawyers use. This method has many advantages ; but it has its disadvantages also, such as that, to carry it out effectively, a large cupboard with pigeon-holes is necessary. A simple and an excellent method is, to have a large manuscript book for each letter of the alphabet, copying, *e.g.*, into the book lettered A all that refers to topics commencing with that letter, "Affliction," "Amusements," &c.

Whichever method is adopted, let the copyist write only on one side of the page. Paper is cheap, and a neglect of this counsel will lead to many inconveniences and regrets.

Next, let the student insert in his Bible a reference against the passage of which each extract is illustrative. Thus, *e.g.*, when he comes to preach upon John iii. 16, he may find written against that text A 97, which will remind him that in the envelope thus numbered, or on page 97 of the MS. volume lettered A, he will find something that will be helpful to him in dealing with it.

All this involves considerable labour, but the compensations for it are abundant. This is one of the methods by which the student may attain to a ministry of which the interest, the power, and the usefulness will grow to the very end.

HOMILETIC ENCYCLOPÆDIA

OF

Illustrations in Theology and Morals.

—o—

INTRODUCTORY READINGS.

I.—ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATION IN TEACHING.

(1.) THE importance of illustration for the purpose of enforcing truth is so obvious, that it seems a work of supererogation to say one word concerning it. . . . A man may often find materials to enliven a discourse which might otherwise have proved very dull, or to fasten on the conscience a truth or a warning, which otherwise would have fallen on the ear unnoticed, and glided past the mind unfelt. It is not enough that truth be pointed, like a straight smooth piece of steel; it needs side points, as a dart, that it may not draw out, when it effects an entrance. Anecdotes and illustrations may not only illustrate a point, and make an audience see and feel the argument, but they may themselves add to the argument; they may at once be a part of the reasoning, and an elucidation of it. Indeed, a just figure always adds power to a chain of logic, and increases the amount of truth conveyed. It is also of great use in relieving the attention, as a stopping-place where the mind is rested, and prepared to resume the reasoning without fatigue, without loss. Almost any expedient, which decorum permits, may be justified, in order to awake and fix the attention of an audience. Such attention, however, cannot be *kept* but by truth worth illustrating.

Dr. Abercrombie speaks of the importance of illustrations and analogies for assisting and training the memory of children. The same discipline is equally necessary for the hearers of sermons. Although they may have forgotten the text, the subject, and almost the whole design of the preacher, they will not unfrequently carry away the illustrations, and everything in the train of thoughts lying immediately in their neighbourhood. And, indeed, a single illustration will sometimes flash the meaning of a whole sermon upon the minds that otherwise would have departed scarcely knowing the application of a sentence.

Every one must have observed the effect of the introduction of such lights and illustrations upon an audience. The whole assembly may have appeared up to the point uninterested, listless, even oppressed with stupor; but the moment the preacher says, "I will illustrate this point by a relation of what took place in the life of such or such a person," an entire change comes on the whole congregation. Every countenance is lighted up with expectation, every mind is on the alert. Even if the minister says, "We will suppose a case for the purpose of illustration," even then the attention of the hearers is at once aroused. The presentation of actual facts, or cases of interest in point, is so attractive, that if real incidents are not at hand, it were better to suppose them than leave the subject without such illustration, in instances where it admits of it.

Accordingly, in the Scriptures, and in discourses of our blessed Lord, it is evident that suppositions are made, and fables are related, to illustrate and enforce truth, to give it life and action. This constituted a powerful charm in our Saviour's preaching, even for those who cared nothing for the spiritual lessons He was enforcing. The beauty and exceeding aptness of His cases and illustrations may have caught many a careless soul when the bare dry truth would have failed to touch the heart. The truth that a man is miserable who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God, might have been stated in ever so forcible language without reaching the conscience of the hearers. But when our Lord proceeded to say, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully," with the solemn close of the epilogue, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" what conscience could remain unmoved? The hearers of our blessed Lord were so deeply interested and absorbed in such narratives, that sometimes they seem to have forgotten that they were merely illustrations; and interrupted Him, carried away by their feelings, or desiring the thread of the narrative to unwind differently, as in the case when they broke in upon one of His parables with the declaration, "Lord, he hath ten pounds already!" One can see the company, their interest, their eagerness, and the truth taking hold upon them; we can hear their exclamations, as if a drama of real life were enacting before them. And it was life, taken out of the form of abstract, and dramatised for their life, their instruction. —*Cheever.*

(2.) The revealing the Word by similitudes is very useful and profitable; for it conduces much to make truth go to a man's heart before he is aware, and to impress it upon his memory. Many remember the simile, and so the truth which it conveyed. It is reported of the Marquis Galeacias, a nobleman of great estates, and near of kin to the Pope, that once coming but to hear Peter Martyr preach, by a mere simile that he used, God smote his heart, and made it the means of his conversion. The simile was thus: Peter Martyr in his discourse had occasion to say, Men may think very hardly of God and His people, but this is because they do not know Him; as suppose a man a great way off sees a company of excellent dancers, the musicians are playing, and there is exact art in all they do. At the distance he regards them as a company of madmen, but (added he) as he draws nearer and nearer to them, and hears the melodious sound, and observes the art that they use, then he is much taken and affected. So it is with you. You are a great way off, and look from a great distance upon the ways of God, and so you think His people mad; but could you come to observe what excellency is in them, it would take captive your hearts. God blessed such a similitude as this to that great man's heart, so that though his wife and children lay imploring at his feet, yet he came to Geneva, and there continued all his days. But we should take some heed here.

1 Similes should be brought from things known.

2. We must not urge similes too far, we must take heed of a luxuriant, wanton wit.

3. And they must be very natural, plain, and proper, or else man will appear in them rather than God. —*Burroughs*, 1599-1648.

(3.) Nothing strikes the mind of man so powerfully as instances and examples. They make a truth not only intelligible but even palpable, sliding it into the understanding through the windows of sense, and by the most familiar as well as most unquestionable perceptions of the eye.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

(4.) A proverb or parable being once unfolded, by reason of its affinity with the fancy, the more sweetly insinuates itself into that, and is from thence with the greater advantage transmitted to the understanding. In this state we are not able to behold truth in its own native beauty and lustre; but while we are veiled with mortality, truth must veil itself too, that it may the more freely converse with us.

—*John Smith*, 1618-1652.

II.—OUR LORD'S METHOD OF TEACHING.

(5.) With matter divine and manner human, our Lord descended to the level of the humblest of the crowd, lowering Himself to their understandings, and winning His way into their hearts by borrowing His topics from familiar circumstances and the scenes around Him. Be it a boat, a plank, a rope, a beggar's rags, an imperial robe, we would seize on anything to save a drowning man; and in His anxiety to save poor sinners, to rouse their fears, their love, their interest, to make them understand and feel the truth, our Lord pressed everything—art and nature, earth and heaven—into His service. Creatures of habit, the servants if not the slaves of form, we invariably select our text from some book of the Sacred Scriptures. He took a wider, freer range; and, instead of keeping to the unvarying routine of text and sermon with formal divisions, it were well, perhaps, that we sometimes ventured to follow His example; for may it not be to the naturalness of their addresses and their striking out from the beaten path of texts and sermons, to their plain speaking and home-thrusts, to their direct appeals and home-spun arguments, that our street and lay preachers owe perhaps not a little of their power?

Illustrating the words of the great English dramatist—

"Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything,"

our Lord found many a topic of discourse in the scenes around Him; even the humblest objects shone in His hands, as I have seen a fragment of broken glass or earthenware, as it caught the sunbeam, light up, flashing like a diamond. With the stone of Jacob's Well for a pulpit, and its water for a text, He preached salvation to the Samaritan woman. A little child, which He takes from its mother's side, and holds up blushing in His arms before the astonished audience, is His text for a sermon on humility. A husbandman on a neighbouring height between him and the sky, who strides with long and measured steps over the field he sows, supplies a text from which He discourses on the gospel and its effects on different classes of hearers. In a woman baking; in two women who sit by some cottage door grinding at the mill; in an old, strong fortalice perched on a rock, whence it looks across the brawling torrent to the ruined and roofless gable of a house swept away by mountain floods—Jesus found texts. From the birds that sung above His head, and the lilies that blossomed at His feet, He discoursed on the care of God—these His text and Providence His theme. —*Guthrie*.

III.—THE FIGURES OF THE BIBLE.

(6.) The figures of the Bible are not mere graceful ornaments—arabesques to grace a border, or fairy frescoes, that give mere beauty to a chamber or saloon. They are language.

Human speech articulate is marvellous beyond all our thought; but human words are not sufficient even for human thoughts and feelings. All high and grand emotions scorn the tongue, that lies as helpless in the mouth as would be artillery to express the sound and grandeur of mountain thunders in tropical storms. All deep griefs, and for the most part, tender and exquisite affections, are voiceless.

Then it is, if any speech is attempted, that nature yields another language, and figures, word-pictures, and illustrations, if they do not express, at least vividly suggest truths far beyond the reach of words or the compass of sentences such as men frame for the common use of life.

The Bible stands far beyond all other books in

this use of the language of nature. The great globe is but an alphabet, and every object upon it is a letter; and, from beginning to end of the Bible, these sublime letters are used to set forth in hieroglyphic the truths of immortality. And there is this nobility in the use of natural objects for moral teaching, that to the end of time, and to all people, of how different soever language, the symbol used is the same. Artificial hieroglyphics differ with age and nation. The Oriental cities had their special characters—the Egyptian his—the Aztec his; and they differ one from another, so that one could not have read the written signs of the other. But the sun, the mountain, the ocean, the storm, the rain, the snow, the winds, lions and eagles, the sparrow and the dove, the lily and the rose, grass, earth, stones, and dirt, are the same in all ages, in all latitudes, to all people. And those truths that are expressed in the figures drawn from the natural world have relationships, and they are the most universal of any in the Bible, and the most frequent.

—*Beecher.*

IV.—THE DELIGHT OF THE HUMAN MIND IN METAPHOR.

(7.) Deep in our nature there exists a tendency to seek amongst all interesting objects points of resemblance, and when some intuition keener than our own reveals that resemblance, we bow to its truths or acclaim to its beauty. For instance, when human life is compared to the course of a river—cradled in the moss-fringed fountain, tripping gaily through its free and babbling infancy, swelling into proud and impetuous youth, burdened with the great ships in its sober and utilitarian manhood, and then merging in the ocean of eternity—who is there that does not see the resemblance, and in seeing it find his mind richer by at least one bright thought? There may be little resemblance betwixt a clouded sky and the human countenance; and yet when that sky opens and lets through the sunshine, we say that it is smiling, and when that dull countenance opens and lets out the soul, we say that it is shining; and in the metaphor we feel that we have given a new animation to the sun, a new glory to "the human face divine."

This tendency to metaphor, and the universal delight in parables, comparisons, and figures of speech, are no mere freaks of man's fancy. They have their foundation in the mind and method of Deity, whose thoughts are all in harmony, and whose works and ways are all connected with one another; so that what we call the imagination of the poet, if his reading be correct, is really the logic of Omniscience. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

V.—HOMELY ILLUSTRATIONS ARE NOT TO BE SHRUNK FROM OR DESPISED.

(8.) God's ministers must use plain and familiar expressions for the better convincing of their people both of their sin and misery The prophet here (Hosea xiii.) uses similitudes from a travailing woman, from the east wind; and the Lord, by way of aggravation of their sins, tells them that He had spoken to them by His prophets, and had "multiplied visions," and given them much preaching, yea, and the better to convince them, He had "used similitudes by the ministry of His prophets" (Hosea xii. 10). This is an excellent way of preaching and prevailing; it both notably illustrates the truth, and insinuates itself into men's affections. Galeacius Caraciolus, an Italian marquis, and nephew to a pope, was converted by an apt similitude which he heard from Peter Martyr. Nathan caught David with a parable, and out of his own mouth condemned him. Christ, who spake as never man spake, whose words were full of power and authority, yet, the better to work upon His hearers, frequently used parables, from the sower, from leaven, from mustard seed, flowers, feasts, from a treasure, &c.; and the Apostle Paul fetches similitudes from runners and wrestlers.

Plain preaching is the best teaching; it is the best way to convince and convert men; and if plain, familiar preaching will not work, certainly by dark, mysterious preaching it will never be effected. This made Paul, that he had rather speak five words in a known tongue to edify others, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue. That is the best preaching which sets forth things to the life, and makes them as plain as if they were written with a sunbeam.

—*Thomas Hall*, 1659.

(9.) Let ministers wisely and soberly use this their liberty in teaching, for the edification of their hearers, whom, if they be of the weaker sort, let them not trouble with profound matters which they are not able to understand, but let us be content to use plain similitudes and home-bred comparisons, fetched from leaven, from the meal-tub, or other domestical business; knowing therein we do no other than Jesus Christ, our great Doctor and Master, Himself did.

—*Nehemiah Rogers*, 1594–1660.

(10.) About three years before the death of Rowland Hill, two gentlemen entered Surrey Chapel. They had long been friends, and one of them was shortly to leave this country for India. He was living "without hope and without God in the world." His companion was a decided and consistent Christian, and earnestly desired his friend's salvation. This pious friend, as the time drew near for the young man's departure, begged of him to grant him one especial favour, namely, to spend with him his four last Sabbath evenings, and to accompany him to the sanctuary. The request was complied with, and many prayers ascended to God that the sermons might lead the wanderer to the Saviour. The first, second, and third sermons were heard, but no impressions were produced. When the last Sabbath arrived, the Christian felt increased anxiety for his friend's soul. He took him to Surrey Chapel to hear good Rowland Hill, and secretly prayed that the preacher might be in a solemn state of mind, and not be permitted to indulge in eccentric remarks.

The venerable preacher gave out his text: "We are not ignorant of his devices;" and immediately told the following tale:—"Many years since I met

a drove of pigs in one of the streets of a large town, and, to my surprise, they were not driven, but quietly followed their leader. This singular fact excited my curiosity, and I pursued the swine, until they all quietly entered the butchery. I then asked the man how he succeeded in getting the poor, stupid, stubborn pigs so willingly to follow him, when he told me the secret; he had a basket of beans under his arm, and kept dropping them as he proceeded, and so secured his object. Ah! my dear hearers, the devil has got his basket of beans, and he knows how to suit his temptations to every sinner. He drops them by the way; the poor sinner is thus led captive by the devil at his own will, and if the grace of God prevent not, he will get him at last into his butchery, and there he will keep him for ever. Oh, it is because 'we are not ignorant of his devices' that we are anxious this evening to guard you against them!"

The Christian friend deeply mourned over this tale about the pigs, and feared it would excite a smile but not produce conviction in the mind of his unbelieving companion. After the service was over they left the chapel, and all was silence for a season. "What a singular statement we had to-night about the pigs, and yet how striking and convincing it was!" remarked the young man. His mind was impressed, and he could not forget the basket of beans, the butchery, and the final loss of the sinner's soul. He left this country, but has since corresponded with his friend, and continues to refer to this sermon as having produced a beneficial, and it is hoped an abiding, impression on his mind.

—*Memoir of Rowland Hill.*

VI.—WHENCE THEY ARE TO BE OBTAINED.

(11.) "Where shall I gather illustrations for my class?" On the source from which they are drawn depends, in a great measure, their value. Good bank-notes come from the banker, not from the counterfeiter. No one has any right to have counterfeits, so no teacher has a right to use spurious illustrations. Convey the truth by the simplest illustrations possible, and with the least circumlocution. Instead of relying on encyclopædias, &c., go into the streets with open eyes; pick up the dead, broken branch which lies at your feet, and convert it into an illustration of a blameless Christian life. Be wide awake, be discriminating; or, if the expression may be allowed, possess sanctified gumption. No teacher has a right to go to his class without an illustration to enforce the truth. The Saviour preached the gospel in the trees, in the fields, in the roads. Why not we? An illustration is to be used to gain attention, and to carry home the truth. Employ such as are within the comprehension of the child Let Greek mythology alone. Take God's illustrations, scattered on every hand, in the fields, the gardens, the lanes. Look at the flowers, the grass, all nature, and pray God to open your eyes. An excellent help is to have a Bible with a wide margin, in which to note down, as you find them, such illustrations as bear upon any particular passage. After a while you will have a book which money cannot buy. Use always the best material you can find, and, if possible, that drawn from your own experience. Do not labour to find great things. Take the little things. Be plain, consistent, concise. If your lesson is about Zaccheus, climbing into the scyamore tree, do not picture the scyamore of the Mississippi Valley, with its smooth trunk, but remember the Palestine sycamore. Never use an illustration simply for its own sake; ever keep in mind the great object, and let the truth follow the way into the mind and heart which the illustration has opened.

VII.—MISTAKES AGAINST WHICH WE NEED TO BE ON OUR GUARD.

(12.) Illustrations have been compared to the barbs that fix the arrow in the target. But it is to be remembered that barbs alone are useless. An archer would be poorly off if he had nothing in his quiver but arrow-heads or feathers. For an illustration to be useful or successful, there must be something to be illustrated. A sermon made up of anecdotes and flowers is quite as deficient as a sermon of the driest abstractions. —*Cheever.*

(13.) Illustrations, however beautiful, are dangerous if not employed with care. They may gratify without conveying instruction. When in excess, they become a mere diorama of illustration, leaving gratified curiosity and weariness behind. Superior elocution can do much, but a heavy weight of adornment will enfeeble the strongest. A multiplication of beauties neither helps the beautiful nor the useful. The choicest tulip-bed in richest bloom loses its attractions if strewed over with buttercups and daisies, and occasionally the tree covered with blossom fails to produce the richest fruit.—*Anon.*

(14.) As I was once endeavouring to explain to a class of children the nature of faith, I told the familiar story of a child on shipboard, from whom a pet monkey snatches his cap and darts with it up into the rigging. The little fellow makes after him, climbing higher and higher, till at last the sailors, to their horror, see him far up at a point where he is growing dizzy. He is just about to pitch headlong to the deck. His father, called up from the cabin, shouts to him to leap out into the water as his only hope. The child hesitates, but finally, trusting his father's wisdom, makes the tremendous leap, and is brought up by the sailors safely. One little hearer in the class, as I was rendering the story as vividly as possible, seemed much impressed, and sat deeply thinking while I tried to make the application. The truth seemed to have taken hold of him. "A hopeful case," I thought. At last, when he could hold down the ferment in him no longer, and I turned to hear his question, he asked, breathlessly, "Well—but—what became of the monkey?" It was, in his teacher, the old blunder repeated, *of making the illustration more impressive than the illustrated truth.*

—*G. B. Willcox.*

(15.) I think the question in every instance should be, Does it help? Does that mode of putting it

help? Would it help me? And a canon of our speech for all times should be the canon of the old poet: not too much of anything—to over-colour is to destroy all effect; not too much detail—to know when to stop; not too many words—to overlay the ornament is to destroy all the beauty, the harmony, the impressiveness, by destroying proportion. Perhaps, in the preacher's order of teaching, we must often use more than strict good taste does allow, because we have to stimulate spiritual, and even intellectual, appetites. The severe style tells on educated and refined minds in a state of preparation; but just as pictures are for children, so also pictorial words and emotions, which embody, and even startle, must be used in dealing with the multitudes. Still the mind, as it prepares itself, should come back to the question, Will that help? Is that too much? This will compel the speaker to feel his own images—his own language; that which is real to him will usually be felt to be real to the audience he addresses; not in mere copiousness, but in selectness, is power; not in the crowd of illustrations, but in the distinctness of one, is power—even as we are lost in a gallery of paintings, until we take refuge in one, and permit it to exercise its impression.

But you have to manage your text by illustration, and on this I must dwell a little longer. You need good skill here: good taste is only the unison of sound knowledge and correct feeling; but you will greatly need good taste here, as a rule. If an illustration adds at all to the light in your own mind, it will probably add to the light upon the text in the minds of your audience. And first, let me caution you against the improper use of allegory. Do you ever feel any tendencies to the use of it? It needs superlative genius to be tolerable. A bold, strong, Bunyan-like, Christmas Evans-like mind, may recite an allegory like some lofty poem; but be you very cautious how you yield to the seduction.

—*E. P. Hood.*

See also on the whole subject of the use of Illustration in Preaching, Beecher's "Lectures on Preaching," *First Series, chapter vii.;* Parker's "Ad Clerum," *chapter xviii.; and the* "Prolegomena" *to* Bertram's "Parable or Divine Poesy."

THE GREATER TOPICS IN THEOLOGY AND MORALS.

ADVERSITY.

1. Should be expected by all men.

(16.) As a wise pilot and governor of a ship will, in calm and fair weather, look for a storm: even so every wise man, in time of peace and prosperity, will prepare his mind for adversity.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(17.) God "hath set the day of prosperity and the day of adversity, the one over against the other," as the clouds are gathered for rain by the shining of the sun. —*Cecil*, 1743–1810.

2. Is not necessarily an evil.

(18.) To be thrown upon one's own resources is to be cast in the very lap of fortune; for our faculties then undergo a development, and display an energy, of which they were previously unsusceptible.

—*B. Franklin.*

3. It is a means of self-knowledge.

(19.) If God should refuse to interrupt the course of men, they would scarcely know the strength of their resistance to Him. It is not when the cable lies coiled up on the deck that you know how strong or how weak it is; it is when it is put to the test, when it is made to sing like the chord of a harp, in times when the ship is imperilled, and the waves are beating fiercely against it. And it is only when men are brought to the test that they can tell what their real nature is, or how strong their instincts and passions are.

A house built on sand is, in fair weather, just as good as if builded on a rock. A cobweb is as good as the mightiest chain cable when there is no strain on it. It is trial that proves one thing weak and another strong. —*Beecher.*

4. It shows other men what we are.

(20.) Sorrow often reveals and develops the noblest qualities. What prosperity had concealed, adversity brings to light. Nobleness that we never suspected, with powers that would have remained uncultured and unfruitful, have been manifested. They are like some grand mansion surrounded and hidden, in summer-time, by large, full-foliaged trees; the passer-by cannot discern the fine proportions and ornamental sculpture that make it "a thing of beauty;" but when winter tears away, with ruthless hand, every leaf, until the trees stand clear and bare, then, behold! the magnificent handiwork appears in all its glory and perfection. The best natures show best when most tried, and they are lovelier in poverty than in wealth. —*Braden.*

5. It is essential to the development and perfecting of nobility of character.

(21.) If you were to hear some men's experience, you would think that they grow as the white pine grows, with straight grain, and easily split; for I notice that all that grow easy split easy. But there are some that grow as the mahogany grows, with veneering knots, and all quirls and contortions of grain: that is the best timber of the forest which has the most knots. Everybody seeks it, because being hard to grow, it is hard to wear out; and when knots have been sawn and polished, how beautiful they are!

There are many who are content to grow straight, like weeds on a dunghill; but there are many others who want to be stalwart and strong like the monarchs of the forest, and yet, when God sends winds of adversity to sing a lullaby in their branches, they do not like to grow in that way. They dread the culture that is really giving toughness to their soul and strength to its fibre. —*Beecher.*

(22.) The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without adversity.

—*Eliza Cook.*

6. It enables us to discover our real friends.

(23.) *On hearing a swallow in the chimney.*

Here is music, such as it is; but how long will it hold? When but a cold morning comes in, my guest is gone, without either warning or thanks. This pleasant season has the least need of cheerful notes; the dead of winter shall want and wish them in vain.

Thus doth an ungrateful parasite; no man is more ready to applaud and enjoy our prosperity; but when with the times our condition begins to alter, he is a stranger at least. Give me that bird which will sing in winter, and seek to my window in the hardest frost. There is no trial of friendship but adversity.

He that is not ashamed of my bonds, not daunted with my checks, not aliened with my disgrace, is a friend for me; one drachm of that man's love is worth a world of false and inconsistent formality.

—*Hall*, 1656–1754.

(24.) Faith and friendship are seldom truly tried but in extremes. To find friends when we have no need of them, and to want them when we have, are both alike easy and common. In prosperity, who will not profess to love a man? In adversity, how few will show that they do it indeed! When we are happy, in the spring-tide of abundance, and the rising flood of plenty, then the world will be our servant; then all men flock about us with bared heads, with bended bodies, and protesting tongues. But when these pleasing waters fall to ebbing, when wealth but shifts to another stand,—then men look upon us at a distance, and stiffen themselves as if they were in armour, lest (if they should comply with us) they should get a wound in the close. Adversity is like Penelope's night,—which undoes all that ever the day did weave. —*Feltham*, 1668.

7. Moreover, it is a test of our religious experience.

(25.) A religion which cheers you in prosperity is certainly better than no religion; and faith in God while the sky is blue is better than no faith; but, after all, taking men as they are, the religion which they need is a religion which is brought into play more in the day of trial than in the day of prosperity. What matters it what is the texture of your raiment in August? It is *January* that needs thick raiment. What matters it what your experiences are in prosperity? It is *adversity* that is to test the nature of your experiences. An anchor is not bad when it lies upon the deck; it is convenient when we use it in a tranquil harbour; but when the stars are hidden, and the storm is on the deep, and you are driving in upon the coast—then it is *salvation*. We need a hope, a faith, which, while it will be a convenience in fair weather, will be our mainstay on foul and stormy days.

—*Beecher.*

8. On all these accounts, and on others, it is spiritually less perilous than prosperity.

(26.) For my own part, I bless God that hath kept me from greatness in the world; and I take it as the principal act of friendship that ever you did for me, that you provoked me to this sweet though flesh-denying life of the ministry, in which I have chosen to abide. I had rather lie in health on the hardest bed than be sick upon the softest; and I see that a feather bed maketh not a sick man well. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet. The ploughman's brown bread and cheese is more savoury to him, and breedeth fewer sicknesses, than the fulness and variety of the rich. This country diet doth not cherish voluptuousness, arrogance, vainglory, earthly-mindedness, uncharitableness, and other selfish diseases, as much worldly greatness doth.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(27.) Some ships behave best in a gale; in light winds they rock themselves to pieces. To a Christian man adversity is not the most dangerous condition; fine weather tries him more. When we are least visibly strained, we are often most sharply tested. —*Birrell.*

9. Things to be avoided in adversity.

(α.) *Selfishness.*

(28.) One of the worst features of adversity is that it has a tendency to concentrate one's thoughts on one's self. One of the best features of prosperity is that it permits a person to forget himself and help others. If it takes all your strength to stem the tide of trouble, what have you to spare to help a brother afloat? But if you are gliding smoothly down the tide, with sails full spread and favouring breezes, you can have eye, and ear, and helping hand for all endangered and overladen craft.

(β.) *Despair.*

(29.) In the hour of adversity be not without hope; for crystal rain falls from black clouds.

—*Nezzoumee.*

10. Our supreme duty in adversity: trust in God.

(30.) A dark cloud hung over the interests of the African race in our land. There seemed no way of deliverance. Frederick Douglass, at a crowded meeting, depicted the terrible condition. Everything was against his people. One political party had gone down on its knees to slavery. The other proposed not to abolish it anywhere, but only to restrict it. The supreme court had given judgment against black men as such. He drew a picture of his race writhing under the lash of the overseer, and trampled upon by brutal and lascivious men. As he went on with his despairing words, a great horror of darkness seemed to settle down upon the audience. The orator even uttered the cry for blood. There was no other relief. And then he showed that there was no relief even in that. Everything, every influence, every event was gathering, not for good, but for evil about the doomed race. It seemed as if they were fated to destruction. Just at the instant when the cloud was most heavy over the audience, there slowly rose, in the front seat, an old black woman, her name "Sojourner Truth." She had given it to herself. Far and wide she was known as an African prophetess. Every eye was on her. The orator paused. Reaching out towards him her long bony finger, as every eye followed her pointing, she cried out, "*Frederick, is God dead?*" It was a lightning-flash upon that darkness. The cloud began to break, and faith and hope and patience returned with the idea of a personal and ever-living God.

AFFECTIONS, THE

1. They are irrepressible in their activity.

(31.) Love is the great instrument and engine of nature, the bond and cement of society, the spring and spirit of the universe. It is of that active, restless nature, that it must of necessity exert itself; and like the fire, to which it is so often compared, it is not a free agent to choose whether it will heat or no, but it streams forth by natural results and unavoidable emanations. So that it will fasten upon an inferior, unsuitable object rather than none at all. The soul may sooner leave off to subsist than to love; and, like the vine, it withers and dies if it has nothing to embrace. Now this affection, in the state of innocence, was happily pitched upon its right object; it flamed up in direct fervours of devotion to God, and in collateral emissions of charity to its neighbour. —*South*, 1633–1716.

2. Religion calls us, not to destroy, but to control them.

(32.) It is not the business of virtue to extirpate the affections, but to regulate them.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

3. There is constant need for watchfulness in regard to them.

(33.) Affections are, as it were, the wind of the soul, and then the soul is as it should be, when it is neither so becalmed that it moves not when it should, nor yet tossed with tempests to move disorderly — when it is so well-balanced that it is neither lift up nor cast down too much.

Our affections must not rise to become unruly passions, for then, as a river that overflows the banks, they carry much slime and soil with them.

Though affections be the wind of the soul, yet unruly passions are the storms of the soul, and will overturn all, if they be not suppressed. The best, as we see in the case of David, if they do not steer their hearts aright, are in danger of sudden gusts. A Christian must neither be a dead sea nor a raging sea. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

4. A comprehensive rule for their exercise.

(34.) Do not be over-fond of anything, or consider that for your interest which makes you break your word, quit your modesty, or inclines you to any practice which will not bear the light, or look the world in the face. —*Antoninus.*

5. The folly and the baseness of setting them on earthly things.

(35.) Mercies are love's messengers, sent from heaven to win our hearts to love again, and entice us thither. Our mercies therefore should be used to this end. That mercy that doth not increase, or excite and help our love, is abused and lost, as seed that is buried when it is sowed, and never more appeareth. Earthly mercies point to heaven, and tell us whence they come, and for what. Like the flowers of the spring, they tell us of the reviving approaches of the sun: but, like foolish children, because they are near us, we love the flowers better than the sun; forgetting that the winter is drawing on. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(36.) Build your nest upon no tree here; for you see God has sold the forest to Death; and every tree whereupon we would rest is ready to be cut down, to the end we may flee and mount up, and build upon the rock, and dwell in the holes of the rock. —*Rutherford*, 1661.

(37.) How many thousands exercise their affections and feelings without recognising God in them all. They much resemble a person who, being put into possession of a fine garden, should experience no other gratification than that of devouring greedily the fruits, regardless of the magnitude of the gift or the bounty of the giver. —*Salter.*

(38.) Suppose a man builds a temple, with one seat in it very high and much ornamented, and another very far below it. You ask him for whom are those seats designed, and he replies, "Why, the most elevated one is for me, and the one below is for God." Now, in this case you can see the horrible absurdity and impiety of such conduct, and yet each one of you who continues impenitent is doing this. You have given yourselves the first place in your affections; you have thought more of yourselves than of God, and have done more to please yourselves than to please God. In short, you have in everything preferred yourselves before Him.
—*Payson.*

6. They find rest only in God.

(39.) Every man must go out of himself for enjoyment. Something in this universe besides himself there must be to bind the affections of every man. There is that within us which compels us to attach ourselves to something outward. The choice is not this: love, or be without love. You cannot give the pent-up steam its choice of moving or not moving. It must move, one way or the other—the right way or the wrong way. Direct it right, and its energies roll the engine wheels smoothly on your track. Block up its passage, and it bounds away, a thing of madness and ruin. Stop it you cannot, it will rather burst. So it is with our hearts. There is a pent-up energy of love, gigantic for good or evil. Its right way is in the direction of our eternal Father, and then, let it boil and pant as it will, the course of the man is smooth. Expel the love of God from the bosom, what then? Will the passion that is within cease to burn? Nay, tie the man down, let there be no outlet for his affections, let him attach himself to nothing, and become a loveless spirit in the universe, and then there is what we call a broken heart —the steam bursts the machinery that contains it. Or else, let him take his course, unfettered and free, and then we have the riot of worldliness—a man of strong affections thrown off the line, tearing himself to pieces, and carrying desolation along with him.
—*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

7. It should be the chief endeavour of preachers to win the affections for God.

(40.) Come to the sensual and voluptuous person, and convince him that there is a necessity for his bidding farewell to all inordinate pleasure in order to his future happiness. Perhaps you gain his reason, and in some measure insinuate into his will; but then his sensual desire interposes, and out-votes and ravels all his convictions. As when, by much ado, a vessel is forced and rowed some pretty way contrary to the tide, presently a gust of wind comes and beats it farther back than it was before.

If Christ ever wins the fort of the soul, the conquest must begin here; for the understanding and will seem to be like a castle or fortified place; there is strength indeed in them, but the affections are the soldiers who manage those holds. The opposition is from these; and if the soldiers surrender, the place itself, though never so strong, cannot resist.
—*South*, 1633–1716.

8. How they are to be won.

(41.) You cannot attempt to dislodge one object of earthly affection or pursuit without having some other and better to substitute in its room. It was a *dictum* of the old philosophy that nature abhors a *vacuum*, and this is as true regarding the moral as the material world. The dove of old, with weary wing, would have retained its unstable perch on the restless billow had it not known of an ark of safety. You cannot tempt the shivering child of want to desert his garret or rude shielding until you can promise him some kindlier and more substantial shelter. You cannot induce the prodigal to leave off the husks of his miserable desert exile before you can tell him of a father's house and welcome; you cannot ask him to part with his squalid rags and tinsel ornaments until you can assure him of robe, and ring, and sandals. The husks and the tatters, wretched as they are, are better than nothing. In one of the islands on our northern coast a daring adventurer clambered down one of the steep cliffs, which rose perpendicular from the ocean, in search of eggs of some seafowl. The precarious parapet or ledge of rock on which he stood suddenly gave way, and with one giant bound plunged into the boiling surge beneath. In a moment the instinctive love of life made him spring from the yielding footing and lay hold on a branch of ivy which clung with uncertain tenacity to the precipice that rose sheer above him. Who would have had the madness or cruelty to shout to that wrestler for dear life to let go the treacherous ivy branch? Worthless as it was, it was his only chance of safety; and those on the summit of the cliff, the spectators of his imminent peril, were wise not by word or sign to disturb his grasp of what they anxiously felt might prove a brittle thread in these moments of suspense. But when a fleet foot had returned with the rope, and let it down

by the side of the exhausted man, then, with no hesitating accents did they call upon him to let go the fragile support and lay hold of what brought him up safe to their feet. In the same way do we find the inspired writers dealing with the human soul. They never exhort to abhor that which is evil without telling of some objective "good" to which the heart can cleave instead. "Charge them that are rich in the world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, BUT *in the living God.*" "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . . The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; BUT *he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*" —*Guthrie.*

(42.) In the spangled sky, the rainbow, the woodland hung with diamonds, the sward sown with pearly dew, the rosy dawn, the golden clouds of even, the purple mountains, the hoary rock, the blue boundless main, Nature's simplest flower, or some fair form of laughing child or lovely maiden, we cannot see the beautiful without admiring it. That is one law of our nature. Another is, that so far as earthly objects are concerned, and apart from the beauty of holiness, we cannot help loving what is lovely, and regarding it with affection. Our affections are drawn to an attractive object as naturally as iron is charmed by a loadstone. God made us to love; and when brought near to such an object our feelings entwine themselves around it, as the soft and pliant tendrils of the vine do around the support it clothes with leaves, and hangs with purple clusters. Such analogy is there between the laws of mind and matter. —*Guthrie.*

9. How they are to be controlled.

(43.) Draw off thy observation from deluding vanities, as if there were no such things before thee. When thou rememberest that there is a God, kings and nobles, riches and honours, and all the world should be forgotten in comparison of Him; and thou shouldst live as if there were no such things, if God appear not to thee in them. See them as if thou didst not see them, as thou seest a candle before the sun; or a pile of grass, or single dust in comparison with the earth. Hear them as if thou didst not hear them; as thou hearest not the leaves of the shaken tree at the same time with a clap of thunder. As greatest things obscure the least, so let the Being of the Infinite God so take up all the powers of thy soul, as if there were nothing else but He, when anything would draw thee from Him.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(44.) On board iron vessels it is a common thing to see a compass placed aloft, to be as much away from the cause of aberration as possible: a wise hint to us to elevate our affections and desires; the nearer to God, the less swayed by worldly influences.
—*Spurgeon.*

(45.) Seek for God in everything, and for everything in God. Only thus will you be able to bridle those cravings which else tear the heart. The presence of the king awes the crowd into silence. When the full moon is in the nightly sky, it makes the heavens bare of flying cloud-rack, and all the twinkling stars are lost in the peaceful, solitary splendour. So let delight in God rise in our souls, and lesser lights pale before it—do not cease to be, but add their feebleness, unnoticed, to its radiance. The more we have our affections set on God, the more we shall enjoy, because we subordinate His gifts. The less, too, shall we dread their loss, the less be at the mercy of their fluctuations. The capitalist does not think so much of the year's gains as the needy adventurer, to whom they make the difference between bankruptcy and competence. If you have God for your "enduring substance," you can face all varieties of condition, and be calm, saying:

"Give what Thou canst, without Thee I am poor,
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."
—*Maclaren.*

10. Their free exercise is necessary to give beauty to the religious life.

(46.) Christians, however exact and regular in the detail of duties, where the religious affections do not hold dominion, give an impression similar to that of leafless trees observed in winter, admirable for the distinct exhibition of their boughs so clearly defined, left destitute of all the soft, green, luxuriant foliage which is requisite to make a perfect tree. The affections which exist in such minds seem to have a bleak abode, somewhat like those deserted nests which you often see in such trees.
—*Salter.*

AFFLICTION.

I. *OUR PRESENT PORTION.*

(47.) When man prospereth, so that all things go well with him, yet it fareth with him as with a flower in the field, which flourisheth for a while, and is pleasant to look upon: within a little while after it drieth up and fadeth away.

As long as we are upon earth we are, as it were, in a camp or siege, where we must ever be skirmishing and fighting, and know neither who shall break out and give the onset against us, nor how, nor when. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(48.) The present state of life is subject to afflictions, as a seaman's life is subject to storms. "Man is born to trouble;" he is heir-apparent to it; he comes into the world with a cry, and goes out with a groan. —*Watson*, 1696.

(49.) The present life is an incurable disease, and sometimes attended with that sharp sense, that death is desired as a remedy, and accepted as a benefit. And though the saints have reviving cordials, yet their joys are mixed with many sorrows, nay, caused by sorrows. The tears of repentance are their sweetest refreshment. Here the living stones are cut and wounded, and made fit by sufferings for a temple unto God in the New Jerusalem. But as in the building of Solomon's temple, the noise of a hammer was not heard, for all the parts were framed before with that exact design and correspondence, that they firmly combined together; they were hewn in another place, and nothing remained but the putting them one upon another in the temple, and then, as sacred, they were inviolable: so God, the wise Architect, having prepared the saints here by many cutting afflictions, places them in the Eternal Building, where no voice of sorrow is heard.
—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(50.) The Christian lives in the midst of crosses, as the fish lives in the sea.—*Vianney.*

(51.) When God built this world, He did not build a palace complete with appointments. This is a drill world. Men were not dropped down upon it like manna, fit to be gathered and used as it fell; but like seeds, to whom the plough is father, the furrow mother, and on which iron and stone, sickle, flail and mill, must act before they come to the loaf.
—*Beecher.*

II. *ITS GRIEVOUSNESS.*

(52.) Our imagination makes every day of our sorrow appear like Joshua's day, when the sun stood still in Gibeon. The summer of our delight is too short; but, oh, the winter of our affliction goes slowly off. —*Adams*, 1654.

(53.) Sorrow commonly comes on horseback, but goes away on foot. —*Adams*, 1654.

(54.) Every man feels, and not strangely, that there never were such experiences of life as his own. No joy was ever like our joy, no sorrow ever like our sorrow. Indeed, there is a kind of indignation excited in us when one likens our grief to his own. The soul is jealous of its experiences, and does not like pride to be humbled by the thought that they are *common*. For, though we know that the world groans and travails in pain, and has done so for ages, yet a groan heard by our ear is a very different thing from a groan uttered by our mouth. The sorrows of other men seem to us like clouds of rain that empty themselves in the distance, and whose long-travelling thunder comes to us mellowed and subdued; but our own troubles are like a storm bursting right overhead, and sending down its bolts upon us with direct plunge.
—*Beecher.*

(55.) We can recommend so persuasively the cheerful drinking of the cup of sorrow when in the hand of others, but what wry faces we make when put into our own! —*A. J. Morris.*

III. *ITS DESIGN.*

1. To produce repentance and lead to amendment of life.

(56.) When Almighty God, for the merits of His son, not of any ireful mind, but of a loving heart towards us, doth correct us, He may be likened unto a father; as the natural father first teacheth his beloved child, and afterwards giveth him warning, and then correcteth him at last, even so the eternal God assayeth all manner of ways with us. First, He teacheth us His will through the preaching of His Word, and giveth us warning. Now, if so be that we will not follow Him, then He beateth us a little with a rod, with poverty, sickness, or with other afflictions, which should be esteemed as nothing else but children's rods or the wands of correction. If such a rod will not do any good, and his son waxeth stubborn, then taketh the father a whip or a stick, and beateth him till his bones crack; even so, when we wax obstinate and care neither for words nor stripes, then sendeth God unto us more heavy and universal plagues. All this He doth to drive us unto repentance and amendment of our lives. Now truth it is, that it is against the father's will to strike his child; he would much rather do him all the good that ever he could. Even so certainly, when God sendeth affliction upon our necks, there lieth hidden under that rod a fatherly affection. For the peculiar and natural property of God is to be loving and friendly, to heal, to help, and to do good to His children, mankind. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(57.) When the oil of spiritual grace will not mollify our iron hearts, then God makes them soft in the fiery furnace of tribulation. When they are such stiff grounds, that they are not fit for the seed of the Word, then He breaks up, ploughs, and harrows them with afflictions, that so they may become fruitful. And whereas, naturally, we are so blinded with self-love that we do not see our sins, and so puffed up with pride, that we will not confess them, when our eyes are anointed with this sharp eye salve of afflictions, we easily discern all our former wicked courses; and when our lofty hearts are pressed down with the weight of tribulations, then we humble ourselves before God, and acknowledge our sins. —*Downame*, 1644.

(58.) What does God send forth His arrows for, and shoot this man with sickness, another with poverty, and a third with shame, but to reclaim and to recover them? to embitter the sweet morsels of sensuality to them, and to knock off their affections from sinful pleasure? For God makes not the miseries of men His recreation. It can be no diversion to the surgeon to hear the shrieks of him whom he is cutting for the stone; yet he goes on with his work, for he designs nothing but cure to the person whom he afflicts. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(59.) By repentance is meant, in Scripture, change of life, alteration of habits, renewal of heart. This is the aim of all sorrow. The consequences of sin are meant to wean from sin. The penalty annexed to it is, in the first instance, corrective, not penal. Fire burns the child, to teach it one of the truths of this universe—the property of fire to burn. The fever in the veins and the headache which succeed intoxication, are meant to warn against excess. On the first occasion they are simply corrective; in every succeeding one they assume more and more a penal character, in proportion as the conscience carries with them the sense of ill desert. Sorrow, then, has done its work when it deters from evil; in other words, when it works repentance.
—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

2. To prevent us from going astray.

(60.) As men clip the feathers of fowls, when they begin to fly too high or too far; even so doth God diminish our riches, &c., that we should not pass our bounds, and glory too much of such gifts.
—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(61.) We are furthered by our afflictions in attaining to heavenly happiness, as they are used by God to keep us in the way of righteousness which leads to it. For, whereas by our natural corruption we are ready to wander into the bye-paths of sin, being allured by the enticing baits of worldly vanities, the Lord makes afflictions to serve us as a thorny hedge and strong fence to keep us in our right course.

And when, sailing in the sea of this miserable world towards the haven of everlasting rest, we are ready to listen to the sweet syren tunes of carnal pleasures, and leaping out of our ship of safety, the true and invisible Church, to perish, by adhering to them in the gulf of destruction, God in love to us uses our afflictions, as wax to stop our ears, that we may not hearken to these bewitching songs, but

may without distraction hold on our course, which will bring us at the last to the port of blessedness.
—*Downame*, 1644.

(62.) The Lord takes away from His children worldly honours, when He sees that they would by them be puffed up with pride. Thus He deprives them of riches, when they would be unto them thorns to choke and hinder the growth of His heavenly grace, or provocations and incitements to sin, or the means and instruments to further them in wicked actions, or, like camels' hunches, hinder them from entering into the strait gate which leads to happiness. Thus, He takes from us parents, children, and dear friends, when, if we should still enjoy them, we would make them our idols, setting our hearts upon, loving, or trusting in them more than in God Himself. So He deprives us of our earthly pleasures when He sees that we would prefer them before heavenly joys; and causes us to find many crosses in the world, because He knows that if it should smile and fawn upon us, we would make a paradise of the place of our pilgrimage, set our affections upon these transitory trifles, and never care to travel in the way of holiness which leads to our heavenly country.

As, therefore, the skilful physician does not only apply medicines for the curing of diseases when men are fallen into them, but also in time of infection, and when they see some distemper in them through the abounding of humours, give wholesome preservatives to maintain health; so our Heavenly Physician uses these portions of affliction, not only to cure us of the diseases of sin, when we are fallen into them, but also to purge away our inward corruptions, and so to prevent these deadly sicknesses of the soul, before they have seized upon us, and to free us from all causes and other sins which would otherwise bring us into this dangerous condition.
—*Downame*, 1644.

(63.) We who were wild branches barren of all good fruit of holiness, are through God's infinite mercy ingrafted into the true Vine, Jesus Christ, from whom receiving all our grace and sap, we are enabled to bring forth the pleasant grapes of new obedience. Yet, if we were left alone, and suffered to run out with uncontrolled liberty, we would, like the vine which is never pruned, return to our old natural wildness, and bring forth no other fruit than those sour grapes of iniquity and sin; therefore our heavenly Vintager, for His own glory and our good, cuts away the superfluities of our licentious liberty, and prunes us with this knife of affliction, that being kept short in our carnal desires, we may become more fruitful in all holy duties (John xv. 1, 2).
—*Downame*, 1644.

(64.) It may be that thy outward comforts are taken from thee that God may be all in all to thee. It may be while thou hadst these things they did share with God in thy affections; a great part of the stream of thy affection ran that way. Now the Lord would not have the affections of His children to run waste; He does not care for other men's affections, but thine, they are precious, and God would not have them run waste. Therefore He cuts off thy other pipes, that thy heart may run wholly upon Him. If you perceive that one of your servants, because she feeds and tends them, steals away the hearts of your children, you will hardly be able to bear it; you would be ready to turn away such a servant. And when the servant is gone, the child is at a great loss, it has not the nurse. But the mother intends by her putting away that the affections of the child might run the more strongly towards herself; and what loss has the child, that the affections that ran in a rough channel before towards the servant run towards the mother? So those affections that run towards the creature God would have them run toward Himself, that so He may be all in all to thee here in this world. And a gracious heart can indeed tell how to enjoy God so as that God shall be all in all to it: that is the happiness of heaven to have God to be all in all. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(65.) The best ground untilled soonest runs out rank weeds. Such are God's children, overgrown with security ere they are aware, unless they be well exercised, both with God's plough of affliction and their own industry of meditation.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

3. To recall us to duty and true happiness.

(66.) There is never a schoolmaster taketh any scholar, but he will make these conditions with him expressly: that the lad shall not be self-willed, but with all possible diligence shall take heed unto that which the master teacheth him; and if he will be negligent, or play the truant, if he, being his master, should punish him therefore, that he be content to take it patiently. The master doth not punish his scholar for any malice towards him, but only that he should learn better afterward. Even so Christ receiveth no disciple but He maketh conditions with him most necessary for every Christian man, which are expressed in Matthew xvi. 24. The Word of God ought to be the only rule whereby we should be ordered; but we had rather to follow our own head, by the means whereof ofttimes we go away; and therefore the Heavenly Schoolmaster knappeth us on the fingers till we apprehend and learn His will more perfectly. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(67.) When a horse-breaker giveth unto a lusty young horse too much of the bridle, he is wild and wanton, and goeth not well, and in a slippery place might fall headlong: even so, if our Creator should give us too large liberty, we should soon wax wild; and it might happen that we should destroy ourselves; therefore He giveth us a sharp bit in our mouths, and helpeth us to bridle our flesh, that the noble and precious soul perish not.

Again, as the carter jerketh his horses with the whip, and striketh them sharply when they will not go forward, and yet spareth them also, that he may enjoy them the longer; even so God striketh us when we do not right, and yet spareth us, and will not make utterly an end of us.
—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(68.) If a sheep stray from his fellows, the shepherd sets his dog after it, not to devour it, but to bring it in again; even so our Heavenly Shepherd, if any of us, His sheep, disobey Him, sets His dog of affliction after us, not to hurt us, but to bring us home to consideration of our duty towards Him. Now, His dogs be poverty, &c.
—*Cawdray*, 1598–1644.

(69.) Afflictions make us most frequent and fervent in pouring forth our supplications unto God. In our prosperity we either utterly neglect this duty, or perform it carelessly and slothfully; but when we are brought into calamities we flee to Him by earnest prayer, craving His aid and help. And as the child fearing nothing is so fond of his play, that

the strays and wanders from his mother; not so much as thinking of her; but if he be scared or frighted with the sight or apprehension of some apparent or approaching danger, presently runs to her, casts himself into her arms and cries out to be saved and shielded by her: so we, securely enjoying the childish sports of worldly prosperity, do so fondly dote on them that we scarce think of our Heavenly Father; but when perils approach, and are ready to seize upon us, then we flee to Him and cast ourselves into the arms of His protection, crying to Him by earnest prayer for help in our extremity.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(70.) Like the passengers through the tunnelled Alp, from the dark, and the cold, and the stifling air, emerging on the broad light-flooded plains of Lombardy, it is often by a way which they know not, gloomy and underground, that the convoy is carried which God's Spirit is bringing to the wealthy place; and your present grief you will have no reason to regret, if it introduce you to God's friendship, and to joys which do not perish in the using. It may not have struck you, but you have been trying to create your own Eden, and it was an Eden with the living God left out. For a time the experiment seemed to prosper, but if it is blighted you have no right to complain; and though it should never blossom again, even the howling wilderness does you a service, if it makes you a pilgrim and turns your face to the better land. Affliction is God's message. This mighty famine is no accident: it is God's voice sounding through the bare country, and saying to you, Come Home.

—*Hamilton*, 1814-1861.

4. To restore us to spiritual health.

(71.) The surgeon must cut away the rotten and dead flesh, that the whole body be not poisoned, and so perish: even so doth God sometimes plague our bodies grievously, that our souls may be preserved and healed. How deep soever God thrusteth His iron into our flesh, He doth it only to heal us; and if it be so that He kill us, then will He bring us to the right life. The physician employeth poison to drive out another: even so God, in correcting us, useth the devil and wicked people, but yet all to do us good.

As long as the physician hath any hope of the recovery of his patient, he assayeth all manner of means and medicines with him, as well sour and sharp as sweet and pleasant; but as soon as ever he beginneth to doubt of his recovery, he suffereth him to have whatsoever himself desireth. Even so the Heavenly Physician, as long as He hath any hope to recover us, will not always suffer us to have what we most desire; but as soon as He hath no more hope of us, then He suffereth us for a time to enjoy all our own pleasure (Isa. i. 5).

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(72.) Such is our natural corruption, that we are easily made wanton with the fruition of God's blessings. Therefore the Lord is after a sort enforced to correct us, that by sorrow and smart He may bring us to know ourselves, and to remember Him. As the wise and faithful physician is constrained, upon the necessity of recovering his patient's health, to prescribe to him abstinence after surfeiting, and bitter potions, when he finds his body distempered with corrupt humours: so upon the like necessity of recovering our spiritual health, the Lord is fain, when we surfeit upon His blessings, to withdraw them from us, and to appoint us a shorter diet: and when He sees our souls full of corruptions, to give us these bitter potions of afflictions that the poison of sin may be expelled, and we freed from the danger of everlasting death.

And as in these regards there is necessity of sending these afflictions in respect of every particular faithful man, so also in regard of the whole Church in general. For as it is never more spiritually poor and lean, than when it is pampered in worldly pomp and prosperity; so it is never richer, or in better liking, than when it is outwardly pinched with misery and affliction. And as by too much fulness, it falls into consumption, and by being too rank is easier laid with every storm of temptation, so it grows fatter by fasting, prospers better when it is bitten and snipped.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(73.) Sickness is God's lance to let out the imposthume of sin (Isa. xxvii. 9). —*Watson*, 1696.

(74.) It is a sword which pierces the heart, and makes the corrupted matter flow from it.

—*Massillon.*

5. To test our character and Christian profession.

(75.) By trouble will God prove and assay how deep thy heart hath entered with God, how much thy faith is able to bear, whether thou canst forsake both thyself and all other creatures in the world for His sake. He will try how thou wilt behave thyself, when He taketh utterly from thee that wherein thou most delightest. God knoweth well enough before, how thou wilt take it and behave thyself; but He will show and declare to thyself and to others also, what is in thee. A man cannot learn to know a stout man of war in the time of peace, but best of all in the time of war. When a great tempest ariseth in the sea, then doth it appear whether the shipmaster be cunning in ruling the stern or no. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(76.) The Lord tries us with afflictions, to make it known whether we be sound Christians, or whether we deceive both ourselves and others with shadows only. Our Saviour has taught us in the parable, that there are some hearers like unto the stony ground, who receive the seed of the Word with joy, and bring forth a fair green blade of an outward profession, but yet, having no root in themselves, when the hot sun of affliction shines upon them, wither and fall away. That these time-serving hypocrites may be discerned from true professors, He causes this sun of tribulation to arise.

We profess to be gold fit for God's treasury, and corn meet for the garners of eternal blessedness; and yet there is among us more dross than gold, and more chaff than wheat. Therefore the Lord casts us into the furnace of affliction, that the pure metal may be tried, and in trial purified; and that the drossy substance may be severed, and in the separation consumed: and fans and winnows us with the strong wind of tribulation, that the chaff may be blown away, and the pure corn remain for His own use.

We profess ourselves trees planted by God's own hand in His garden of grace, and houses fit for His own dwelling, which have a good ground and sure foundation, even the rock Jesus Christ: whereas in truth there are many plants of the devil's setting, which have no other hold but the weak and short

roots of carnal ends and worldly respects, which are there planted by Satan to hinder the growth, to suck away the nourishment, and to shade and annoy, disorder and disgrace those fruitful and choice trees of God's own grafting; and many houses which are not built upon the rock Christ, but upon the sands of human inventions and traditions, upon the examples of their superiors or their own good meaning and ungrounded superstition. Therefore the Lord causes the winds to blow, and the tempestuous storms of troubles to arise, that His own trees may take the more deep rooting; that those plants of Satan's setting may be overturned and rooted up; that the temples of His own erecting for the habitation of His Holy Spirit may by their standing in all these storms, approve the skill of the workmaster; and that these chapels of the devil, which, being gilt by hypocrisy, make no less a show, may be overturned and utterly ruined.

Finally, we profess to be soldiers of the Church militant, fighting under the standard of the Lord of Hosts. Therefore the Lord suffers Satan and the world to assault us with afflictions and persecutions to try whether we be traitors, who upon the first encounter will join with the enemy, or true-hearted soldiers, who will live and die in our Lord's quarrel; whether we be such cowards and dastards as will presently yield at the first onset, though before we have made many brags of our strength and valour, or such courageous and magnanimous spirits as will not fly back one foot to save our lives. And thus our Saviour tried the young man in the Gospel, who though he seemed at the first sight a great worthy of undaunted courage, yet when our Saviour did but speak of those two enemies, poverty and the cross, at the very naming of them he was discomfited, and ran away (Matt. xix. 16–22). —*Downame*, 1644.

(77.) Gold is both the fairest and most solid of all metals, yet is the soonest melted with the fire; others, as they are coarser, so more churlish and hard to be wrought on by a dissolution. Thus a sound and a good heart is easily melted into fear and sorrow for sin by the sense of God's judgments, whereas the carnal mind is stubborn and remorseless.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(78.) A sanctified person, like a silver bell, the harder he is smitten, the better he sounds.
—*Sumnock*, 1673.

(79.) The design of God in all the afflictions that befall His people is only to try them; it is not to wrong them nor to ruin them, as ignorant souls are apt to think. "He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold," says patient Job. So in Deut. viii. 2, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." God afflicted them thus, that He might make known to themselves and others what was in their hearts. When fire is put to green wood, there comes out abundance of watery stuff that before appeared not; when the pond is empty, the mud, filth, and toads come to light. The snow covers many a dunghill, so does prosperity many a rotten heart. It is easy to wade in a warm bath, and every bird can sing on a sunshiny day. Hard weather tries what health we have; afflictions try what sap we have, what grace we have. Withered leaves soon fall off in windy weather; rotten boughs quickly break with heavy weights. Afflictions are like pinching frosts that will search us: where we are most unsound we shall the soonest complain; and where most corruptions lie we shall the soonest shrink. —*Brooks*, 1680.

(80.) Sharp afflictions are to the soul as a soaking rain to the house; we know not that there are such holes in the house, till the shower comes, and then we see it drop down here and there; so we before did not know that there were such unmortified lusts in the soul, till the storm of affliction comes, then we spy unbelief, impatience, carnal fear, we see it drop down in many places. —*Watson*, 1696.

(81.) Every man will have his own criterion in forming his judgment of others. I depend very much on the effect of affliction. I consider how a man comes out of the furnace: gold will lie for a month in the furnace without losing a grain. And, while under trial, a child has a habit of turning to his father: he is not like a penitent who has been whipped into this state; it is natural to him. It is dark, and the child has no whither to run but to his father. —*Cecil*, 1743–1810.

(82.) A man who swims upon bladders is apt to conceive that he could easily dispense with the support and still keep his head above the waters; nor is it easy to ascertain what resources he had in himself for swimming until the artificial support is withdrawn. Let me say that, by way of making trial of His children, or ascertaining, or rather of certifying to *themselves* (for He must know without being certified) how far they have their treasure in heaven, and set their affections on things above, God sometimes removes our earthly treasures, and withdraws one or more of the swimming bladders. He strikes perhaps with His dart some friend or relation who was dear to us as our own soul, and to whom our affections were beginning to cleave idolatrously.
—*Goulburn.*

6. To measure the progress we have made in the Divine Life.

(83.) As we are tried with afflictions, whether we be true Christians or no; so also thereby God shows unto what measure of grace we have attained. For, as when we are winnowed with the wind of affliction every small blast is sufficient to drive away the chaff, so when a stronger gale blows, there is a second division made; for howsoever the weaker and stronger Christians remain together, as it were in the same heap, yet when any strong blast of temptation blows, those that are weaker in grace, like the light corn, fly back, whereas the stronger keep their place, like the purer wheat and weightier grain, with undaunted courage. —*Downame.*

(84.) By afflictions the Lord discovers how much we are weaned in our affections from the world. For as the grain of corn, which is full and ripe, is no sooner touched with the flail, but presently flies from the straw; while if it be small and light it is beaten out with much more difficulty; but if it be altogether empty and unripe it remains in the straw, and is cast out with it: so those who adhere to worldly delights, like the corn to the ear, if they be full of grace and ripe in godliness, are with the least touch of this flail of afflictions severed from the world; whereas if they have made as yet small pro-

gress in holiness, they are not weaned from these worldly vanities, except they be much beaten with many crosses; but if they be quite empty of grace, then they in their affections stick so fast to the things of this life, that though they be never so much beaten with tribulations, they cannot be disjoined, and so are rejected of God, perishing together with these transitory evils, because they will not be divided from them. —*Downame*, 1644.

7. To purify the people of God.

(85.) Whilst we lie at ease, we become, like standing waters, corrupt and noisome, and are fit to bring forth nothing but those toads and venomous serpents of sin; but when we are stirred and troubled, or have a passage and current over the sands and stones of affliction, then are we purified from the slime of corruption, and attain to crystalline purity. —*Downame*, 1644.

(86.) God says by His prophet to His sinful people, "I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin," Isa. i. 25. With which consideration Augustine comforts himself, because his tribulation was but his purgation, whereby he was freed from the dross of sin. For which purpose the Lord, like a skilful goldsmith, uses the world for His furnace, the devil and wicked men as straw and fuel to maintain this fire of affliction, who do but consume themselves whilst they purify God's elect, like gold, from the dross of their corruptions. —*Downame*, 1644.

(87.) Sharp afflictions are a fire to purge out our dross, and to make our graces shine; they are a potion to carry away ill-humours; they are cold frosts, to destroy the vermin; they are like the north wind, that dries up the vapours, that purges the blood, and quickens the spirits; they are a sharp corrosive, to eat out the dead flesh. Afflictions are compared to baptizing and washing, that take away the filth of the soul, as water does the filth of the body (Matt. x. 38, 39.) God would not rub so hard, were it not to fetch out the dirt and spots that be in His people's hearts.

—*Brooks*, 1680.

(88.) Affliction is God's flail to thresh off our husks; it is a means God useth to purge out sloth, luxury, pride, and love of the world. "God's furnace is in Zion," Isa. xxxi. 9. This is not to consume, but to refine: what if we have more affliction, if by this means we have less sin.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(89.) Human nature is very much like some elements of vegetation. In tapioca, one of the most harmless of all articles of food, there is one of the most deadly of all poisons; but the poison is of such a volatile nature, that when it is subjected to heat it escapes, and leaves only the nutriment of the starch. I think that the heart of man originally is full of poison, but that when it is tried by affliction, little by little the poison, the rancour, the virus exhales, and leaves all the rest wholesome indeed.

—*Beecher.*

(90.) Upon a glowing fire rested a crucible, at the bottom of which lay a piece of gold. More and more intense became the flame; hotter, and still more heated, grew the vessel—and then the precious metal melted, till it trickled like water.

"Unfortunate creature that I am, to have been cast into this place!" it cried.

"No; not unfortunate," replied the Furnace.

"Is it not my misfortune to be such a sufferer?" said the Gold.

"Not your misfortune," answered the Furnace.

"I shall certainly be consumed!" exclaimed the Gold.

"No; not consumed," said the Furnace.

"Alas! you have no consideration for me, surely!" observed the tried Gold.

"I am truly concerned for your best welfare," replied the Furnace.

"Then why must I suffer this agony?" asked the glittering Gold.

"It is to purge away your dross, that you may be purer, and therefore more valuable," answered the Furnace.

"Oh! when will it be ended?" said the Gold, stirred at the bottom of the crucible.

"As soon as possible; but not a moment before the good purpose is accomplished," kindly remarked the Furnace.

"How may it be known?" inquired the Gold, which increased in brightness.

"Immediately that the watchful Refiner, who is sitting by, shall see His face reflected in you," replied the Furnace, "at which instant the process will end, and you come forth the better and richer for the fire." —*Bowden.*

8. To develop and display the graces of God's people.

(91.) If, as Chrysostom affirms, Satan had not pierced, and, as it were, bored holes through the body of Job, with all those plagues and punishments which he inflicted upon him, the bright beams of his graces would have been hidden within him, and would not have shined unto us. If he had not sat down in ashes, we had never come to the knowledge of his spiritual riches. —*Downame*, 1644.

(92.) If, like spices, we be pounded in the mortar of affliction, the odoriferous smell of our spiritual graces, which before were scarcely discerned, now spreads abroad, to the comfort and refreshing of all that stand about us. And whereas if, like roses, we grow untouched, we do but for the present send forth some sweet smell to those who are next to us; contrariwise, if we be distilled with the fire of affliction, we shall yield sweet waters of durable comfort even to those who are far distant, and to such as live in after ages, when by report this sweet odour of our fame shall come to them (Phil. i. 13, 14).

—*Downame*, 1641.

(93.) (*On the blowing of the fire.*)

We beat back the flame, not with a purpose to suppress it, but to raise it higher, and to diffuse it more.

Those afflictions and repulses which seem to be discouragements are indeed the merciful incitements of grace. If God did mean judgment to my soul, He would either withdraw the fuel or pour water upon the fire, or suffer it to languish for want of new motion; but now that He continues to me the means and opportunities and desires of good, I shall misconstrue the intentions of my God, if I shall think His crosses sent rather to damp than to quicken His Spirit in me.

O God, if Thy bellows did not sometimes thus breathe upon me in spiritual repercussions, I should have just cause to suspect my estate. Those few weak gleeds of grace that are in me might soon go

out if they were not thus refreshed. Still blow upon them till they kindle, still kindle them till they flame up to Thee. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(94.) A youth who had a lighted link in his hand being offended thereat because it burnt so dark and dim, the better to improve the light thereof he beat, bruised, and battered it against the wall, that the wick therein might be spread out, and the pitch, with other combustible matter, which before stifled the light with its over-stiffness, might be loosened, which presently caused the link to blaze forth in a brighter flame. Thus God deals with our souls: that they may shine the brighter before men, He buffets and afflicts us with several temptations, to give us occasion to exercise those graces which otherwise would lie dormant within us; and such corrections will, in fine, greatly add to our spiritual life and lustre. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(95.) Grace in the saints is often as fire hid in the embers, affliction is the bellows to blow it up into a flame. The Lord makes the house of bondage a friend to our grace: now faith and patience act their part; the darkness of the night cannot hinder the brightness of a star: so, the more the diamond is cut, the more it sparkles; and the more God afflicts us, the more our graces cast a sparkling lustre.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(96.) God delights to see grace in us at all times; but He loves not to see it latent. He desires it to be in exercise. And in order to bring it into exercise He uses the instrumentality of suffering. The leaves of the aromatic plant shed but a faint odour, as they wave in the air. The gold shines scarcely at all as it lies hid in the ore. The rugged crust of the pebble conceals from the eye its interior beauty. But let the aromatic leaf be crushed; let the ore be submitted to the furnace; let the pebble be cut and polished; and the fragrance, the splendour, the fair colours are then brought out:—

"This leaf? This stone? It is thy heart:
It must be crushed by pain and smart,
It must be cleansed by sorrow's art—
Ere it will yield a fragrance sweet,
Ere it will shine, a jewel meet
To lay before thy dear Lord's feet."
—*Goulburn.*

(97.) Who is there that does not know that there is a joy higher and more stately than is known to our ordinary experience? There are some natures that only tempest can bring out. I recollect being strongly impressed on reading the account of an old castle in Germany with two towers that stood upright and far apart, between which an old baron stretched large wires, thus making a huge Æolian harp. There were the wires suspended, and the summer breezes played through them, but there was no vibration. Common winds, not having power enough to move them, split, and went through them without a whistle. But when there came along great tempest-winds, and the heaven was black, and the air resounded, then these winds, with giant touch, swept through the wires, which began to ring and roar, and pour out sublime melodies.

So God stretches the chords in the human soul which ordinary influence do not vibrate; but now and then great tempests sweep them through, and men are conscious that tones are produced in them which could not have been produced except by some such storm-handling. —*Beecher.*

(98.) The harp holds in its wires the possibilities of noblest chords; yet, if they be not struck, they must hang dull and useless. So the mind is vested with a hundred powers, that must be smitten by a heavy hand to prove themselves the offspring of Divinity.

9. To prepare our hearts for the reception of Divine truth.

(99.) As it is not only the property of the plough to root up all briers and weeds out of the arable land, but also to prepare the same to receive the seed when it shall be sown upon it: so likewise it is the quality of affliction, not only to root out of the earthly heart of man all the weeds of concupiscence and worldly delights, but also to make ready his heart and soul to receive the wholesome seed of Christ's doctrine, when it is by His faithful ministers preached. —*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(100.) "Unaccountable this!" said the Wax, as from the flame, it dropped melting upon the paper beneath.

"Do not grieve," said the Taper, "I am sure it is all right."

"I was never in such agony!" exclaimed the Wax, still dropping.

"It is not without a good design, and will end well," replied the Taper.

The Wax was unable to reply at the moment owing to a strong pressure; and when it again looked up, it wore a beautiful impression, the counterpart of the seal which had been applied unto it.

"Ah! I comprehend now," said the Wax, no longer in suffering; "I was softened in order to receive this lovely durable impress. Yes, I see now it was all right, because it has given to me the beautiful likeness which I could not otherwise have obtained."

Afflictions are in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to effect the softening of the heart in order to receive heavenly impression. Job said: "God maketh my heart soft" (23, 16).

As the wax in its naturally hard state cannot take the impress of the signet, and needs to be melted to render it susceptible, so the believer is by sanctified trials prepared to receive, and made to bear, the Divine likeness. "In whom also after that ye believed (says the apostle), ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. i. 22). —*Bowden.*

10. To prepare us for greater usefulness and fruitfulness.

(101.) If the gardener cut off the knobs and the crooked boughs from the trees in his garden, and loppeth them a little, yet as long as the roots remain, the trees are never the worse, but wax nevertheless, and bring forth fruit: even so doth God lop and hew the crabby old Adam with the cross, not to the intent to harm us, but to keep us in awe, and to teach us godly manners. And surely, as long as the root of faith remaineth with us, though we be spoiled of all riches, and of all manner of worldly comfort, yet shall we bring forth good fruits to the high honour of God's holy name.
—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(102.) God's ploughing of us by affliction is to kill the weeds of sin; His harrowing of us is to

break the hard clods of impenitency, that the heart may be the fitter to receive the seeds of grace; and if this be all, why should we be discontented?
—*Watson*, 1696.

(103.) God's stretching the strings of His viol, is to make the music better. —*Watson*, 1696.

(104.) It is possible that the most generous of plants, fixed in the richest soil, and visited with the most benign influence of sun and weather, may yet not fructify till they are pruned, and rid of those superfluous branches and suckers which steal and intercept that sap, which, according to the prime intention of nature, should pass into fruit. And therefore the great Husbandman of souls takes this course with His spiritual vines, to add the pruning-hook of His judgments to the more gentle manuring of His mercy. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(105.) Creature comforts are often to the soul what suckers are to a tree, and God takes off those that this may thrive. —*Ryland.*

(106.) Earthly suffering seems to weaken men, to discourage them, and to destroy them; but the fact is that it does not really destroy or weaken them. That part in us which suffering weakens is usually that very part which ought to be weakened.

The great trouble in turning flax into thread or cloth is caused by that which gives the green plant its very power; for when the flax is growing it needs two things: one is its ligneous or woody structure, and the other is its gluten. But when it has grown enough, and man wants it to make garments, to furnish the queen in the palace and the peasant in the cottage, he must get rid of these two things. And how is the flax separated from them? It is plucked and thrown into the field, that under the influence of repeated rains and dews, the wood may rot; then the flax is taken and put through the brakes until every particle of the stiffness and strength that it had is destroyed, and all but the stringy fibres can be shaken to the winds; then it is subjected to certain chemical processes by which the gluten is taken away; and not till then is it in a proper condition to be carried to the spinning-wheel and the loom, and manufactured into materials for use.

So it is with men. There are a great many qualities which they need up to a certain point, but which beyond that are a disadvantage to them. We need a given amount of self-will and independence; but after these qualities have been carried to a certain point, the necessity for them measurably ceases, and there must be superinduced on them opposite qualities. For man is made up of contraries. He is to be as firm as iron, and as yielding as silk; he is to be persevering, and yet the most ready to give up; he is to be as steadfast as a mountain, and yet easy to be entreated; he is to abhor evil, and yet to love with an ineffable love; he is to be courageous, and yet to have that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Certain qualities, when they have served their purpose, must give place to opposite qualities. Afflictions, under the supervision of Divine Providence, are working out in those that are exercised thereby beneficial results; so that suffering, while it seems frequently to be wasting and destroying men, is only wasting and destroying that part of them which they are better without than with.
—*Beecher.*

(107.) An inexperienced young miser, we will suppose, inherits the Almaden mine. Great heaps of ore are thrown out, and he goes and looks at it, and says, "I am a mountain rich." He gives directions to have this ore prepared for market. The labourers take it and throw it into the furnace; and he watches the process with greedy eye, saying, "What! putting my precious silver in the fire?" And it begins to melt, and flow out, and grow less and less; he is appalled to see how it is wasting away. But the men that smelt it laugh, and say, "You have lost nothing; you have gained by as much as it has shrunk; for it was nothing but ore, and nine-tenths of it was good for nothing, and that which was good was so tied up that it could not serve you at all. It was necessary that you should lose nine-tenths of it in order that you might have the benefit of the other tenth."

In this life, that which seems to men to be wasted and destroyed, is frequently that which they can better afford to lose than to keep. —*Beecher.*

(108.) What can differ more than the aspect of the on-coming and the whole phenomenon of a summer's rain, and its actual after results? The sun goes out. Birds cease their singing. Low and terrific sounds and voices, vengeful thunders, are in the air. Great winds come as *avant-courcurs*, sweeping onward, and causing the trees to groan and writhe as if in pain. Weakly leaves are shreded off and hurled hither and thither. All beasts hide themselves. Everything looks dark as the judgment day. Then comes, with mighty roar, the outpouring and beating rain, that still further shreds off the leaves, and tears the trees, and beats down the grass, and overwhelms the grain, and dishelves the flowers. In the midst of this storm let a man look out, and he will sceptically say, "Is this the refreshment of Nature? Is this the cup that is put to the lips of flowers that they may drink and be revived?" And yet let the hour go by; let all its gloomy works and seemings be swept away with it; let the sun re-appear; let the birds begin to sing again; let the trees shake themselves of drops of rain; let the grass lift itself up once more, and then man will instinctively praise God for that which before seemed to be only a process of destruction. The storm seems to have gone; but it has not gone. Those things which at first appeared—all the external signs of fury—these have passed away; and now the storm is at work on the root, and every blade of grass is drawing, and every tree is pumping, and every flower is drinking. Who could have cleansed the air as that breathing wind has? Who could have swept the vapours out of the heavens as that tornado has? Who, by any appliance of human skill, could have watered the acres as that rain has? Who could have given new life to the wasting herbage as that thunder-storm has, which went tramping through the valley and the wilderness apparently a messenger of evil? One hour after it is gone all things silently thank God that one hour before shuddered and trembled, and said, "Hast Thou forgotten to be gracious?"

So it is with the ministrations of suffering and sorrow. While the storm pelts, men shrink. While the thunder sounds, they slink down. While the tempest rages, it is as if they were ruined. But when the violence abates a little, they begin to lift up their head, and to perceive that it was not all dark, that it was not all thunder, that it was not all beat-

ing, that there was an element of good in it; and gradually they learn the sweet bounty and benefit that God meant to bestow upon them by afflictions. —*Beecher.*

(109.) When trees grow so that their branches are mostly on one side, we never restore branches to the deficient side by cutting the opposite side. We cut the most barren side, and there Nature, in seeking to restore what we cut, drives out new buds and branches. The gardener knows that where he puts the knife, there will follow the fruit of the tree. And blessed are they whom the Heavenly Husbandman prunes, that they may bring forth more fruit, if, when He cuts, there is a bud behind the knife; but, woe to them who, being cut, have no bud to grow, and are more disbranched and barren for being pruned. —*Beecher.*

11. To wean us from the world.

(110.) Two lessons principally God would teach you by affliction:—

First, *That your affections be taken off from earthly possessions.* When Israel doted on Egypt as a palace, God made it an iron furnace to make them weary of it. The creature is our idol by nature, but infinite wisdom makes it our grief, that it may not be our God. When children fare well abroad, they are mindless of home; but when abused by strangers, they hasten to their parents. The world is therefore a purgatory, that it might not be our paradise. As soon as Laban frowned on Jacob, he talks of returning to his father's house. Every rout the world puts us to sounds a retreat to our affections, and calls off our heart from the eager pursuit of these withering vanities.

Secondly, *That you choose the good part that shall never be taken from you.* Man's heart will be fixed on somewhat as its hope and happiness. God therefore puts out our candles, that we may look up to the sun. When we are delving in the earth to find content, He sends damp, purposely to make us call to be drawn upward. Till the prodigal met with a famine, he regarded not his father. If the waters be abated, the dove is apt to wander and defile herself; but when they cover the face of the earth and allow her no rest, then she returns to the ark. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(111.) We are the children of the Great King, but we were sold unto slavery before we were born, and we know not the estate of the first-born. As if the children of her Majesty should sell themselves into slavery, without knowing what slavery is, in the hope of improving their condition: so it was with God's first-born of mankind. By their birthright they had dominion over all powers and elements; but by the powers, which they should have held captive, they were taken captive.

Bitterly as her Majesty's children would feel the change, the next generation would have a very different sense of it. On hearing what their original condition was, it might kindle a wish in them that their parents had been wise enough to keep their first estate. To the later generations of the royal children the state of slavery would be quite natural. They would hardly be able to conceive that their normal, or original natural condition was so widely different from that into which they were born. This is the case with mankind. They are a late generation, and they have not an idea of what their original condition was. It is so long since the glory departed from them, that they know not in what their royalty consisted. The unnatural is become so natural to them, that they have a far stronger inclination to remain as they are, than to undergo a re-birth in order to be restored to their first estate.

It is fortunate that this strange country behaves so ill to them, or they would never inquire for the royal home-lands. It is a good thing that in their new and fallen condition they sicken and suffer. It is a good thing that the elements of nature, which have got the mastery over them, often oppress and scourge them, and in the end deprive them of all the goods which they have lusted after. It is a good thing that, in this cruel house of bondage, the final recompense which the powers that be confer on their devoted slaves, is to turn them into dead clay. Were it not for hard usage the foolish slaves would never be weaned in heart from the land of Egypt. —*Pulsford.*

12. To prepare us for eternal glory.

(112.) The vessels of mercy are seasoned with affliction, and then the wine of glory is poured in. —*Watson*, 1696.

(113.) "Oh dear! don't;" said the Stone to the Chisel, which was cutting and modelling it into certain forms and proportions. "These heavy blows are very terrible to bear; besides, I am at a loss to imagine where the necessity is for my being subjected to such coarse and severe treatment. Oh dear! pray, do desist!"

"You are intended to fill a place in yonder building, which, when finished, will be a splendid mansion," answered the Chisel with another sharp stroke.

"Oh dear! worse and worse!" cried the Stone shuddering under the blow which struck off a further rough part. "But, if so designed, why not put me into my place at once, without this suffering?"

"You are not fit for it," replied the Chisel, still going on with its work. "Don't you see that all the stones in the building have undergone a shaping process?"

"How long must I suffer it?" asked the Stone sorrowfully.

"Only till all that is unsuitable and improper shall be removed," replied the Chisel, "and when made meet for the high situation you are to occupy, you will be added unto the others, and be as beautiful as they."

"To insert the stones in their roughness, as taken from the quarry, would be an incongruity and moral impossibility. None are built up in their natural condition and without preparation. The plan of the house has been drawn by the 'Wise Master Builder;' unto which design every part must be brought, by working the materials into their several forms and dimensions, which are then added to the structure. And when all is finished, the topstone will be brought forth, with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!" (Zech. iv. 7).

How many "lively stones" now fitting for the heavenly temple, unable to discover the design and necessity of their afflictions, are crying out under the hand of the great Artificer, "Oh, pray spare me these trials!—Remove Thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of Thine hand." And to how many need the Divine assurance be given, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." —*Bowden.*

(114.) There seems to each individual consciousness a strange adjustment of the events that are happening in our lives; and every day we see things that we cannot account for; and men will never be done asking about mysteries and "mysterious providences." There is no reconciliation apparently from the human stand-point for conflicting events. There never yet was found, and I think will never be, a key that shall solve these mysteries. But if you teach men the truth that is in Christ Jesus, that the Spirit of God is fashioning, not our outward life (except as it stands related to the more glorious result), but the inward and spiritual life; that Christ is not working for the results which appear in this life alone, but for results which shall appear in the life hereafter—that reconciles them; or, if it does not reconcile, it settles. I do not care what befalls you; you do not yourself care what befalls you, so long as you have the certainty that the end of it shall be right. Your ship goes to sea, a storm follows it, you get no tidings of it, yet if you have confidence in her crew and in her commander, if you are sure that she will make the port, it matters very little to you whether she has more or less of stormy voyage. Storms may even be an impetus and a help. So in human life. Once give me to believe that I am a child of God, that my Father's Spirit has reinhabited my soul, that all that is happening to me, whether seemingly good or evil, is the working out of a higher nature from my lower one—once let me believe that this life is one from which there is to come a spiritual being, and that the oppression, the raspings, the piercings, the sorrows, the anguish, the disappointment, the ten thousand inequalities, the rude buffetings, the downthrows, and all the events which are happening to me here, are but the preparation for that higher life, and its development in me, and I am content.

Once on a summer's day, I went with my brother to extract a crystal from the rock. With a mighty sledge-hammer he vigorously dealt blow after blow upon the rock, and chipped piece after piece. At last the top of the crystal appeared. Then one might see what he was after, for it had not shown upon the outer surface of the rock. When the crystal appeared, then the whole strife became how so to break the rock away from it, and how so to strike the rock as to extract the crystal. The rock was good for nothing, the crystal was everything. The soul is man's crystal, and the body is but the incasing rock that holds it. God's providences are smiting upon the rock, and breaking and cutting it away, and extracting the precious crystal, which is worth incomparably more than its setting in the rock. —*Beecher.*

(115.) When I see God especially busy in troubling and trying a Christian, I know that out of that Christian's character there is to come some especial good. A quarryman goes down into the excavation, and with strong-handed machinery bores into the rock. The rock says, "What do you do that for?" He puts powder in. He lights a fuze. There is a thundering crash. The rock says, "Why, the whole mountain is going to pieces." The crowbar is plunged. The rock is dragged out. After awhile it is taken into the artist's studio. It says, "Well, now I have got to a good, warm, comfortable place at last." But the sculptor takes the chisel and mallet, and he digs for the eyes, and he cuts for the mouth, and he bores for the ears, and he rubs it with sandpaper, until the rock says, "When will this torture be ended?" A sheet is thrown over it. It stands in darkness. After awhile it is taken out. The covering is removed. It stands in the sunlight, in the presence of ten thousand applauding people, as they greet the statue of the poet, or the prince, or the conqueror. "Ah!" says the stone, "now I understand it. I am a great deal better off now, standing as the statue of a conqueror, than I would have been down in the quarry." So God finds a man down in the quarry of ignorance and sin. How to get him up? He must be bored, and blasted, and chiselled, and scoured, and stand sometime in the darkness. But after awhile the mantle of affliction will fall off, and his soul will be greeted by the one hundred and fourty-four thousand, and the thousands of thousands, as more than conqueror. —*Talmage.*

IV. *WHY IT IS "GOOD" FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE TO BE AFFLICTED.*

1. Because it cleanses them from sin.

(116.) There are some troubles that beat us right down; and there are some troubles that afford a stimulus to the whole mind, and lift it up to a higher plane.

Have you not, in the great hours of sorrow—not in the despairing hours of sorrow; not in the degrading hours of sorrow; not in the sordid hours in which sorrow drags you in its own slime; but in those hours in which you feel that you are a son of God under affliction, that this world is not your abiding place, and that your home is the eternity of God—have you never, in those hours, felt that the world to come was opened as it had never been before, and that God's glory shone as it had never shone before? Have you never, in those hours, felt that those doubts and scepticisms which had pestered your mind had been swept away?

In the sultry insect-breeding days of summer, how insects abound! Every tree is a harbour for stinging pests. Wherever you sit they swarm around, and annoy you, and destroy your peace and comfort. By and by there come those vast floods of clouds that bring tornadoes, and that are thunder-voiced and up through the valleys and over the hills and mountains sweep drenching and cleansing rains. And when the storm has ceased, and the clouds are gone, and you sit under the dripping tree, not a fly, not a gnat, not a pestilent insect is to be seen. The winds and rains have driven them all away.

Has it never been so with those ten thousand little pests of pride, and vanity, and envying, and jealousy, and unlawful desire, that for days have teased and fretted you, and kept you busy with conscience, and taste, and affection, and all the higher faculties, until God sent upon you some great searching sorrow, some overwhelming trouble? There was that babe that lived in your heart; and He laid heart and babe together in the grave. He subverted your household. He brought on you such torrents of suffering, that it seemed as though the foundations of the great deep were broken up. And in those hours He graciously sustained you, and lifted you up toward Himself, so that, although you suffered unutterable affliction, you felt that it had cleansed you from jealousies, envies, vanity, pride, the whole swarm of venomous and stinging insects that had beset you. —*Beecher.*

2. Because in it God reveals Himself most fully to them.

(117.) Afflictions are so far from being ground of discomforts, that they are rather cordials in the issue, because they advance us more degrees in that knowledge of God, which is the means of eternal life. We often learn more of God under the rod that strikes us, than under the staff that comforts us (Ps. cxix. 71, 72). If the sun should perpetually shine in our hemisphere, how could we understand God's workmanship in those little spangles of the heavens? Though the night hide from us the beauty of the sun, yet it discovers the brightness and motions of the stars. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(118.) God chooseth this season, to make the omnipotency of His love the more conspicuous. As Elijah, to add to the miracle, first causeth water in abundance to be poured on the wood and sacrifice, and then brings fire from heaven by his prayer to lick it up; thus God pours out the flood of affliction upon His children, and then kindles that inward joy in their bosoms which licks up all their sorrow. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(119.) God afflicts us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. The flowers smell sweetest after a shower; vines bear the better for bleeding; the walnut-tree is most fruitful when most beaten; saints spring and thrive most internally, when they are most externally afflicted. Afflictions are the mother of virtue. Manasseh's chain was more profitable to him than his crown. Luther could not understand some scriptures till he was in affliction. The Christ-cross is no letter, and yet that taught him more than all the letters in a row. God's house of correction is His school of instruction. All the stones that came about Stephen's ears did but knock him closer to Christ, the corner-stone. The waves did but lift Noah's ark nearer to heaven; and the higher the waters grew, the more the ark was lifted up to heaven. Afflictions lift up the soul to more rich, clear, and full enjoyments of God. "Behold, I will lead her into the *wilderness*, and speak comfortably unto her" (Hos. ii. 14), or rather, as the Hebrew has it, "I will earnestly or vehemently speak to her heart." God makes afflictions to be but inlets to the soul's more sweet and full enjoyment of His blessed self. When was it that Stephen saw the heavens open, and Christ standing at the right hand of God, but when the stones were about his ears, and there was but a short step betwixt him and eternity? And when did God appear in glory to Jacob, but in the day of his troubles, when the stones were his pillows, and the ground his bed, and the hedges his curtains, and the heavens his canopy? Then he saw the angels of God ascending and descending in their glittering robes. —*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(120.) The presence of Christ can turn a dark night into a night much to be remembered. Perhaps it is time to be sleeping; but the November wind is out; and as it riots over the misty hills, and dashes the rain-drift on the rattling casement, and howls like a spirit distracted in the fireless chimney, it has awakened the young sleeper in the upper room; and when his mother enters, she finds him sobbing out his infant fears, or with beating heart hiding from the noisy danger in the depths of his downy pillow. But she puts the candle on the table, and sits down beside the bed; and as he hears her assuring voice, and espies the gay comfort in her smiling face, and as she puts her hand over his, the tear stands still upon his cheek, till it gets time to dry; and the smoothing down of the panic furrows on his brow, and the brightening of his eye, announce that he is ready for whatever a mother has got to tell. And as she goes on to explain the mysterious sources of his terror—"That hoarse, loud roaring is the brook tumbling over the stones; for the long pouring rains have filled it to the very brim. It is up on the green to-night, and had the cowslips been in blossom they would all have been drowned. Yes; and that thump on the window. It is the old cedar at the corner of the house, and as the wind tosses his stiff branches, they bounce and scratch on the panes of glass; and if they were not very small, they would be broken in pieces." And then she goes on to tell how this very night there are people out in the pelting blast, while her little boy lies warm in his crib, inside of his curtains; and how ships may be upset on the deep sea, or dashed to pieces on rocks so steep that the drowning sailors cannot climb them. And then, perhaps, she ends it all with breathing a mother's prayer, or he drops asleep beneath the cradle-hymn.

And why describe all this? Because there is so much practical divinity in it. In the history of a child, a night like this is an important night, for it has done three things. It has explained some things which, unexplained, would have been a source of constant alarm—perhaps the germ of superstition or insanity. It has taught some precious lessons—sympathy for sufferers, gratitude for mercies, and perhaps some pleasant thought of Him who is the hiding-place from the storm, and the covert from the tempest. And then it has deepened in that tender bosom the foundations of filial piety, and helped to give that parent such hold and purchase on a filial heart as few wise mothers have ever failed to win, and no manly son has ever blushed to own.

Then for the parallel. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so the Lord comforteth His people." It is in the dark and boisterous night of sorrow or apprehension that the Saviour reveals Himself nigh. And one of the first things He does is to explain the subject-matter of the grief—to show its real nature and amount. "It is but a light affliction. It lasts but for a moment. It is a false alarm. It is only the rain-drift on the window—wait till the day dawns and shadows flee away. Wait till morning, and you will see the whole extent of it." And then the next thing that He does is to teach some useful lesson. And during those quiet hours, when the heart is soft, the Saviour's lessons sink deep. And last of all, besides consolation under the trial and peaceful fruits that follow it, by this comforting visit, the Saviour unspeakably endears Himself to that soul. Paul and Silas never knew Christ so well, nor loved Him so much, as after that night which He and they passed together in the Macedonian prison. And the souls on which the Lord Jesus has taken the deepest hold, are those whose great tribulations have thrown them most frequently and most entirely into His own society.

—*Hamilton.*

(121.) Affliction brings its own precious compensations with it. Rich issues unfold from its seeming poverty; the tearful cloud is painted with a rainbow; the waste lonesome night is made cheerful with songs and radiant with stars; amid the darkness and emptiness of earthly scenes the

glories of the New Jerusalem shine forth with a new and surpassing lustre. The outside of a stained glass window looks dingy and unsightly; it has no beauty or attraction. And so the coloured windows of pain, sickness, bereavement, to those who look at them from without, from the busy street of the world's pursuits and pleasures, may appear gloomy and uninviting. But within, to God's true children, worshipping in that most solemn of temples —the temple of sorrow—where all earthly clamours are hushed, and all hearts are awed into earnestness and devotion, what a grand and radiant sight is disclosed by these windows! The blue sky is concealed, but a golden glory floats around: the sunshine is dim, but dimmed into the radiance of ruby and sapphire, of emerald and topaz; the common familiar sights of earth are obscured, but painted in hues of living light on these windows,—hues that bathe the soul with their splendour,—are the sublime scenes of the life and death of the Redeemer—scenes well fitted to hide the world by their overpowering glory. —*Macmillan.*

3. It strengthens their faith in God.

(122.) The Christian through trouble is made more bold and hearty, and concludeth with himself, more than ever he did before, that God hath a special consideration of those that are in trouble, and will graciously help and deliver them.

Like as one that hath sailed oft upon the sea, and hath been sore tossed with the fearful waves, is afterwards the more bold to go unto the sea, forasmuch as he hath ever escaped well; even so a Christian man, whom the cross hath oft assaulted and exercised, forasmuch as he hath always found comfort, aid, and help of God, afterward he trusteth God, the longer the more, though the same affliction come again unto him that he had before.

David, when he prepared himself to fight against the valiant giant Goliath, said these words: "The Lord, which *hath* delivered me from a lion and from a bear, *shall* deliver me also from this Philistine" (1 Sam. xvii). And again, Paul saith: "God *hath* delivered us from so great a death, and delivereth us daily, and we hope that He *will* deliver us from henceforth also" (2 Cor. i).

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(123.) Our faith receives much strength in our afflictions, because in them we have experience of God's truth, both in His threatenings, in that for our sins He has inflicted those judgments which in His Word He has denounced, and also in His promises, seeing He performs all that He has undertaken, not only in assisting us in our afflictions, but also in delivering us in due time; in both showing His infinite wisdom, omnipotent power, and all-governing providence, whereby He has disposed of all things to the best. When by experience we find that the Lord has showed us great mercy in crossing our most earnest desires, has brought to us much comfort out of our greatest calamities, turned our fears and dangers into security and joyful triumph, and has made the whole, which in swallowing seemed to devour us, to be a means of our deliverance, then is our faith marvellously increased, and we thereby are enabled to endure the next afflictions with much more patience and contentment. As the pilot having escaped out of many storms, and the soldier out of many dangerous conflicts, are so heartened thereby that they are marvellously courageous when tossed with tempests and assaulted by enemies, whilst inexperienced passengers and fresh water soldiers tremble at the least danger; so those who have been exercised in afflictions, and have had manifold experience of God's mercy, power, and love, both in assisting them in their troubles and in delivering them out of their greatest dangers, have their faith in God hereby so strengthened that they are much more patient in afflictions and more courageous in perils than those who were never exercised with these trials.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(124.) The purpose of suffering is never to be found out by a comparison of merits among neighbours, but by considering how it draws the soul in more childlike dependence towards the Father. By this principle, the right-minded and well-meaning must be tried quite as much as the faithless. Trials are signs of celestial favour, seals on their forehead, badges of favourites, crowns of honour. We forget that it is just as important that the good should be made better, as that the bad should be reformed. Vessels that are to be made meet for the Master's highest uses are to be refined in the furnace seven times heated. We must learn that it is a far richer blessing to be taught what the feeling of the Comforter is, and what peace comes from self-renunciation, than to go through life in any holiday dance. Just as the wise and affectionate mother shows her true maternal love more manifestly when she causes her child to cry with disappointment by snatching him back from the candle he grasps at as a flaming toy, than when she gives him the costliest plaything; so God often shows a tenderer concern when He denies us health and riches than when He grants them—when He enfeebles us with disease or poverty than when He covers us with flesh or fortune.

—*Huntington.*

4. Because it makes them fruitful.

(125.) Sharp frosts nourish the corn, so do sharp afflictions grace. —*Watson*, 1696.

(126.) "What beautiful fruit you bear!" said a little Flower to the Vine with purple grapes in the same conservatory.

"I am very truly thankful for it," answered the Vine modestly.

"It is so ornamental; and besides makes you so much more profitable," observed the little Flower.

"And yet, notwithstanding, I rebelled against the only means which could render me really fruitful," replied the Vine.

"Then, is it not natural to vines to yield fruits?" asked the little Flower with some wonder.

"I confess for myself," said the Vine humbly, "that though I produced abundance of green leaves, there was found very little fruit of any good quality. —Vines are apt to degenerate."

"What is necessary, then?" inquired the Flower.

"With proper training, careful pruning," said the Vine.

"What is pruning?" asked the little Flower.

"Shortening the branches, cutting off, and taking away all that would only run to waste," replied the Vine. "Ah! it was against that use of the sharp knife that my nature shrank and rebelled! It greatly humbled me too; I looked so shorn and so short afterwards."

"And what then?" asked the little Flower deeply interested.

"Then, after awhile, new shoots appeared, which are those branches now bearing; but still the knife

is often required, in order to keep down a running disposition, and to strengthen the formed fruit."

"Very wonderful!" said the little Flower in admiration. "But who would have thought that such severe wounding could have such results, and become such a blessing!" —*Bowden.*

5. Because it brings out their graces and excellencies into view, to the glory of God.

(127.) What place should we then have for patience, submission, meekness, forbearance, and a readiness to forgive, if we had nothing to try us either from the hand of the Lord or from the hand of men. A Christian without trials would be like a mill without wind or water. The contrivance and design of the wheel-work within would be unnoticed and unknown without something to put it in motion from without. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

6. Because it establishes them in grace.

(128.) We cannot be established except by suffering. It is no use our hoping that we shall be well-rooted if no March winds have passed over us. The young oak cannot be expected to strike its roots as deep as the old one. Those old gnarlings on the roots, and those strange twistings of the branches, all tell of many storms that have swept over the aged tree. But they are also indicators of the depths into which the roots have dived; and they tell the woodman that he might as soon expect to rend up a mountain as to tear up that oak by the roots. We must suffer awhile, then shall we be established.

—*Spurgeon.*

7. Because it makes them grow in grace.

(129.) Nor would our graces grow, unless they were called out to exercise: the difficulties we meet with not only prove but strengthen the graces of the Spirit. If a person were always to sit still, he would probably wholly lose the power of moving his limbs; but by walking and working he becomes strong and active. So, in a long course of ease, the powers of the new man would certainly languish: the soul would grow soft, indolent, cowardly, and faint; and therefore the Lord appoints His children such dispensations as make them strive, and struggle, and pant. They must press through a crowd, swim against a stream, endure hardships, run, wrestle, and fight; and thus their strength grows in the using. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(130.) Many of our graces cannot thrive without trials, such as resignation, patience, meekness, long-suffering. Some of the London porters do not appear to be very strong men, yet they will trudge along under a burden which some stouter people could not carry so well; the reason is, they are accustomed to carry burdens, and by continual exercise their shoulders acquire a strength suited to their work. It is so in the Christian life; activity and strength of grace is not ordinarily acquired by those who sit still and live at ease, but by those who frequently meet with something which requires a full exertion of what power the Lord has given them. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

8. Because it keeps them humble.

(131.) Poverty and affliction take away the fuel that feeds pride. Now, when the fuel is taken away, the fire goes out. When the fodder is taken away, wanton steeds that grew fierce with pampering grow more tractable. So it is with man. Take away that that feeds his carnal disposition, and he grows tractable and gentle. Thus, then, affliction and poverty, outward in our condition, help to inward poverty of spirit.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(132.) Afflictions do us good likewise, as they make us more acquainted with what is in our own hearts, and thereby promote self-abasement. There are abominations which, like nests of vipers, lie so quietly within, that we hardly suspect they are there, till the rod of affliction rouses them: then they kiss and show their venom. This discovery is, indeed, very distressing; yet, till it is made, we are prone to think ourselves much less vile than we really are, and cannot so heartily abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

9. Because it teaches them true wisdom.

(133.) As prosperity blindeth the eyes of men, even so doth adversity open them.

Like as the salve that remedieth the disease of the eyes doth first bite and grieve the eyes, and maketh them to water, but yet afterward the eyesight is clearer than it was; even so trouble doth vex men wonderfully at the first, but afterward it lighteneth the eyes of the mind, that it is afterward more reasonable, wise, and circumspect. For trouble bringeth experience, and experience bringeth wisdom. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(134.) The tears of sorrow are like spiritual lenses, showing us the world in its true character as a poor, empty, unsatisfying inheritance.

—*Macmillan.*

10. Because it teaches them to sympathise with the suffering.

(135.) By these afflictions we are made more compassionate unto others who endure the like crosses. Those that have been sick are apt to pity those most whom they see pained with the like diseases. Those who have been imprisoned more readily compassionate, and accordingly help and relieve those who are restrained. They who have been pinched with penury and pined with hunger do above others pity them who, being poor, want food to feed them and clothes to cover them. And this was one end why God laid upon our Saviour Himself so many afflictions, that He might be able sufficiently to have compassion on them that are ignorant, because He was compassed with infirmity. —*Downame*, 1644.

(136.) The story goes that Harry the Eighth, wandering one night in the streets of London in disguise, was met at the bridge-foot by some of the watch, and not giving a good account of himself was carried off to the Poultry Compter, and shut up for the night without fire or candle. On his liberation he made a grant of thirty chaldrons of coals and a quantity of bread for the solace of night prisoners in the Compter. Experience brings sympathy. Those who have felt sharp afflictions, terrible convictions, racking doubts, and violent temptations, will be zealous in consoling those in a similar condition. It were well if the great Head of the Church would put unsympathising pastors into the Compter of trouble for a season, until they weep with those that weep. —*W. M. Taylor.*

11. Because it endears the promises to them.

(137.) (*On hearing of music by night.*)

How sweetly doth this music sound in this dead season! In the daytime it would not, it could not, so much affect the ear. All harmonious sounds are advanced by a silent darkness.

Thus it is with the glad tidings of salvation. The gospel never sounds so sweet as in the night of persecution, or of our own private affliction. It is ever the same; the difference is in our disposition to receive it.

O God, whose praise it is to give songs in the night, make my prosperity conscionable, and my crosses cheerful. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(138.) We never prize the precious words of promise till we are placed in conditions in which their suitability and sweetness are manifested. We all of us value those golden words, "*When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*," but few if any of us have read them with the delight of the martyr Bilney, to whom this passage was a stay, while he was in prison awaiting his execution at the stake. His Bible, still preserved in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, has the passage marked with a pen in the margin. Perhaps, if all were known, every promise in the Bible has borne a special message to some one saint, and so the whole volume might be scored in the margin with mementoes of Christian experience, every one appropriate to the very letter. —*Spurgeon.*

12. Because it teaches them to prize their mercies.

(139.) Afflictions when sanctified make us grateful for mercies which aforetime we treated with indifference. We sat for half an hour in a calf's shed the other day, quite grateful for the shelter from the driving rain, yet at no other time would we have entered such a hovel. Discontented persons need a course of the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, to cure them of the wretched habit of murmuring. Even things which we loathed before we shall learn to prize when in troublous circumstances. We are no lovers of lizards, and yet at Pont St. Martin, in the Val D'Aosta, where the mosquitoes, flies, and insects of all sorts drove us nearly to distraction, we prized the little green fellows, and felt quite an attachment to them as they darted out their tongues and devoured our worrying enemies. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and this among them—that it brings into proper estimation mercies aforetime lightly esteemed. —*Spurgeon.*

13. Because it makes them long for heaven.

(140.) By these things, likewise, they are made more willing to leave the present world, to which we are prone to cleave too closely, when our path is smooth. Had Israel enjoyed their former peace and prosperity in Egypt, when Moses came to invite them to Canaan, I think they would hardly have listened to him. But the Lord suffered them to be brought into great trouble and bondage, and then the news of deliverance was more welcome; yet still they were but half willing, and they carried a love to the flesh pots of Egypt with them into the wilderness. We are like them; though we say this world is vain and sinful, we are too fond of it; and though we hope for true happiness only in heaven, we are often well content to stay longer here. But the Lord sends afflictions one after another to quicken our desires, and to convince us that this cannot be our rest. Sometimes, if you drive a bird from one branch of a tree, he will hop to another a little higher, and from thence to a third; but if you continue to disturb him, he will at last take wing and fly quite away. Thus we, when forced from one creature-comfort, perch upon another, and so on; but the Lord mercifully follows us with trials, and will not let us rest upon any. By degrees our desires take a nobler flight, and can be satisfied with nothing short of Himself; and we say, To depart and be with Jesus is best of all. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(141.) We had traversed the Great Aletsch Glacier, and were very hungry when we reached the mountain tarn half-way between the Bel Alp and the hotel at the foot of the Æggischorn; there a peasant undertook to descend the mountain, and bring us bread and milk. It was a very Marah to us when he brought us back milk too sour for us to drink, and bread black as a coal, too hard to bite, and sour as the curds. What, then? Why, we longed the more eagerly to reach the hotel towards which we were travelling. We mounted our horses, and made no more halts till we reached the hospitable table where our hunger was abundantly satisfied. Thus our disappointments on the road to heaven whet our appetites for the better country, and quicken the pace of our pilgrimage to the celestial city. —*Spurgeon.*

14. Because it will sweeten heaven to them.

(142.) There is no exceeding joy or triumph, but some sorrow or heaviness goeth before it. The spring-time, following immediately upon the rough and hard winter, is the more welcome unto us.

In battle, the sorer our enemies do assault against us, the greater is the joy and triumph at the overthrow of them.

He that hath kept his bed a long time, and lain sick a great season, afterward when he is recovered, health is a more precious treasure unto him than ever it was before that he felt what sickness was; and also such as mourned for his sickness, do receive an exceeding rejoicing at his restoring unto health again.

Even so doth God deprive us for a time of riches, wealth, prosperity, our natural country, bodily health, and such other transitory benefits, for this purpose, that when He giveth them again unto us, we may the more rejoice and be the gladder of them. —*Wermullerus.*

V. *DUTIES OF THE AFFLICTED.*

1. Recognition of the hand of God.

(143.) Xerxes, having received a loss by the rage of Hellespontus, himself more mad than the sea, caused fetters and manacles to be cast into the waters thereof, as if he would make it his prisoner, and bind it with links of iron at his pleasure. Darius did the like upon the river Gyndes, who, because it had drowned him a white horse, threatened the river to divide it into so many streams, and so to weaken the strength of it, that a woman great with child should go over it dry shod. And there were people in Africa that went out to fight with the north wind, because it drove heaps of

and upon their fields and habitations. Such is the madness of our days. If we be crossed with fair or foul weather, we fall a-cursing and banning, repining and murmuring at the creatures, like a dog that biteth the stone, and never looketh after the hand that threw it. We cast our eye, not upon the agent, God, but upon the instruments, His creatures, which cannot do us the least harm till they have a commission from Him so to do.

—*King*, 1591–1669.

2. Self-Examination.

(144.) Lay a book open before a child, or one who cannot read: he may gaze upon it, but he can make no use of it, because he understandeth nothing in it; yet bring it to one who can read, and understandeth the language that is written in it, he will read you many stories and instructions out of it. It is dumb to the one, but speaketh to the other In like manner it is with God's judgments. As St. Augustine well applies it: all sorts of men see them, but few are able to understand them. Every judgment of God is a real sermon of reformation and repentance: every judgment hath a voice, but every one understands not this voice—as St. Paul's companions, when Christ spake to him, they heard a voice, and no more. But it is the duty of every good Christian to listen to the rod and Him who sent it, and to spell out the meaning of God's anger; to inquire and find out the cause of the cross and the ground of God's hiding His face—why it is that He dealeth so harshly with them, and carrieth Himself so austerely towards them.

—*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

3. Penitence and Humility.

(145.) It is God's main end in correcting us, to bring us by His chastisements to unfeigned repentance; and therefore if impenitently we continue in our sins, we cannot wait upon God for help and deliverance, seeing so He should be frustrate of His principal end, but may justly expect that He will double and redouble our afflictions until, according to His purpose, He has brought us to repentance, unless we be in the number of those whom He gives over as a desperate cure, reserving them for everlasting condemnation. So Chrysostom says, that God can this present day deliver us out of all our afflictions; but He will not do it till He sees us purged from our sins, and our repentance not only begun, but thoroughly confirmed in us. And as the goldsmith will not take his gold out of the furnace until he sees that it is well purified from the dross, because this was the end why he cast it in; so the Lord will not deliver us out of this furnace of affliction until the dross of sin be by our repentance purged away, because this was the end that moved Him to cast us into it. —*Downame*, 1644.

(146.) If in our affliction we would pour forth to God such acceptable prayers as may obtain comfort in our crosses and deliverance from our calamities, we must confess our sins, and humbly acknowledge that we have not deserved God's smallest benefits, but are worthy to be overwhelmed with much more heavy plagues and punishments. And so the Lord will excuse us, when we accuse ourselves; and absolve us from punishment, when in all humility we acknowledge that we have justly deserved the fearfullest of His plagues. For if we, who have but a little milk of mercy, are moved with compassion, when either our sons or our servants humble themselves, acknowledge their faults, and of their own accord offer themselves to suffer that punishment which they have deserved, then how can we doubt that God will be pitiful and ready to forgive us when He sees us thus humbled, whose love and mercy towards us is infinite and incomprehensible?

As, therefore, a man skilful in the art of swimming, being, through casualty, cast into the sea, and labouring to recover the shore, does not, when he sees a billow approaching, oppose against it, because it would cast him further into the main; his weaker force being far too feeble to withstand the violence of the mighty wave; but stoops and dives under it, and so suffers it to pass over him without receiving any hurt. So when we see the huge billows of troubles and afflictions raised by the stormy blasts of God's anger, near approaching and coming against us, it is both vain and dangerous to oppose against them by pride and impatience, or to imagine that we can withstand them by our struggling, murmuring, and repining; seeing this will rather hinder us from arriving in the haven of safety, and cast us back into the depth of misery; but like these cunning swimmers, we must dive under these waves, which it is impossible to withstand, bearing our burden with patience, meekness, and humility, and acknowledging that far greater punishments are due unto us. And of both this confession and humiliation we have notable precedents in those excellent prayers of Ezra (ix.), Nehemiah (ix.), and Daniel (ix.); as also in the speech of the prodigal son after his conversion and returning to his father.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(147.) Labour to grow better under all your afflictions, lest your afflictions grow worse, lest God mingle them with more darkness, bitterness, and terror. As Joab said to David, if he ceased not his scandalous lamentation on the death of Absalom, all the people would leave him, and then he should find himself in a far worse condition than that which he bemoaned, or anything that befell him from his youth. The same may be said to persons under their afflictions. If they are not improved in a due manner, that which is worse may—nay, in all probability will—befall them. Whenever God takes this way, and engages in afflicting, He commonly pursues His work until He has prevailed, and His design on the afflicted party be accomplished. He will not cease to thresh and break the bread-corn until it be meet for His use. Lay down, then, the weapons of warfare against Him; give up yourselves to His will; let go everything about which He contends with you; follow after that which he calls you unto; and you will find light arising unto you in the midst of darkness. Has He a cup of affliction in one hand?—lift up your eyes, and you will see a cup of consolation in the other. And if all stars withdraw their light whilst you are in the way of God, assure yourselves that the sun is ready to rise.

—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

4. Patience.

(148.) Whensoever a man doth give a light punishment unto him that hath deserved much greater, it is reason that he take it patiently. Wherefore, if thou suffer adversity, consider with thyself after this manner: Well, thy manifold sins have deserved a thousand, thousand times more grievous punishment. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(149.) The way to be eased is not struggling with it, but meekly to bear it, as for a prisoner to be free from his fetters is not, in the jailor's sight, to seek to break them; that is the way to procure more, or the longer lying in them. So to be eased of a burden is not to wrestle with it when one is under it, but to go softly; there is more ease while it is on his back, and sooner comes he to be released of it. A man may with impatiency wrestle and use unlawful means to ease himself, and God haply will let him prosper for awhile; but after He will bring a more heavy and inevitable burden on him.

There is a fable, but it has its moral for this purpose. A certain ass, laded with salt, fell into a river, and after he had risen, found his burden lighter, for the moisture had made it melt away; whereupon he would ever after lie down in the water as he travelled with his burden, and so ease himself. His owner perceiving his craft, after laded him as heavy with wool. The ass purposing to ease himself, as before, laid himself down in the next water, and thinking to have ease, rising again to feel his weight, found it heavier as it continued with him all the day. The moral is, that they who impatiently seek means contrary to the will of God, to ease themselves of their burden, shall have it more and more increase upon them.

—*Stock*, 1568–1626.

(150.) Afflictions occasion experience of God and trial of grace, and are a part of God's discipline for the mortifying of sin, happy opportunities to discover more of God to us; yea, there is more reason of submission to Him in these, because God takes us into His own hands. A man that storms when a bucket of water is cast upon him, is patient when wet to the skin with the rain that comes from heaven. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(151.) This patient submission to God's will in affliction shows a great deal of wisdom and piety. The skill of a pilot is most discerned in a storm, and a Christian's grace in the storm of affliction; and indeed this submission to God's will is most requisite for us while we live here in this lower region. In heaven there will be no need of patience more than there is need of the starlight when the sun shines. In heaven there will be all joy, and what need of patience then? It requires no patience to wear a crown of gold; but while we live here in a valley of tears, there needs patient submission to God's will, "Ye have need of patience."

—*Watson*, 1696.

(152.) If the ground of your heart be harrowed by the good husbandman, expect in patience the abundant harvest. —*St. Marthe.*

(153.) A consideration of the benefit of afflictions should teach us to bear them patiently when they fall to our lot, and to be thankful to heaven for having planted such barriers around us, to restrain the exuberance of our follies and our crimes.

Let these sacred fences be removed; exempt the ambitious from disappointment and the guilty from remorse; let luxury go unattended with disease, and indiscretion lead into no embarrassments or distresses; our vices would range without control, and the impetuosity of our passions have no bounds; every family would be filled with strife, every nation with carnage, and a deluge of calamities would break in upon us which would produce more misery in a year than is inflicted by the hand of Providence in a lapse of ages. —*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(154.) Did you ever watch to see a stone-cutter carve the figures that were to decorate a temple? I stood once, in Paris, where the stone is soft, and where the building blocks are cut, not on the ground, but in their places on the tops of the doors, and about the windows; and I saw the chiselling done. I saw the work going forward on some of the public buildings, where lions, and eagles, and wreaths of flowers were being carved. Men stood with little chisels and mallets, cutting, and cutting, and cutting the stone, here and there. Suppose one of these blocks of stone, when it first mounts into its place, is told that it is to be a royal lion, and it is to decorate a magnificent structure. The workman commences, and after working one day the head is rudely shaped, but you can barely tell what it is. The next day he brings out one ear. The third day he opens one eye. And so, day after day, some new part is added. The stone complains, and asks if the operation is to be an everlasting one; but the work goes on. And you cannot get anything out of stone except by myriads of blows continued until the work is done. I hear people say, "Why am I afflicted?" For your good. "How long shall I be afflicted?" Until you cease to ask how long. Until God's work is done in you. God will go on chiselling as long as it is necessary, in order to elaborate first one feature and then another, and then another. The work ought to go on until it is completed. And every true heart ought to say, "Lord, do not stay Thy hand; cut away until I am brought out into the fair lines and lineaments of the image of God." Troubles and afflictions and blows that are sent are useless unless they make you patient to your fellows, and submissive to your lot. But rest assured that if you love God all things will work together for your good. And now join and work with them. Help God to work for you. —*Beecher.*

5. Faith in the Divine goodness.

(155.) The hour of affliction is an hour of temptation. Satan loves to fish when the waters are troubled. He would bring us to hard thoughts of God, by the hard things we suffer from God. "Touch him, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." In such stormy weather some vessels are cast away. Faith is a special antidote against the poison of the wicked one. It can read love in the blackest character of Divine dispensation, as by a rainbow we see the beautiful image of the sun's light in the midst of a dark and waterish cloud. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(156.) We see God's judgments pursuing and overtaking a man in his righteousness. Let us not now murmur and say, how can God justly afflict the upright? But let us acquiesce in the rational acknowledgment of this, that God's wisdom may outreach ours. We see the dispensation, but we do not see the design of it; and therefore let us suspend our censure.

If we should see a goldsmith cutting, breaking, or filing a piece of gold, and come and say to him, "Friend, what! do you mean to spoil your gold? Do you not know the value of what you thus cut and file away?" What a ridiculous question would this be to him, who knows that in what we call spoil he pursues the rational purposes of his own art, that to

the excellence of the metal he may also add the curiousness of the figure. But now is it not, think you, much more ridiculous for such blind, silly worms as we to call God's works to an account, and to censure whatsoever thwarts our humour or transcends our apprehensions? —*South*, 1633–1716.

6. Resignation and self-committal to God.

(157.) As learned and faithful physicians do not promise their patients, who are full of corrupt humours, or endangered with old and festered sores, that they will not distaste their appetite or any way molest and trouble them, but only that they will effect the cure, and to this purpose use both the best and easiest means and medicines which they can; and as the wise patient is well satisfied with this promise, being contented rather to suffer for the present a little smart and pain than to hazard his life by neglect of the means, or to have his sore turn to a fistula or incurable cancer. So the Lord does not promise that we shall feel no smart or pain, but that He will cure and save us by the best means which will stand with His own glory and our good.

If we would have our prayers heard in our afflictions we must pray for that which God has promised; not absolutely that crosses may not befall us, or being inflicted we may be delivered out of them; but conditionally, if this our suit will stand with God's glory; not that they may not happen, but that they may not hurt us; not that we may be quite exempted from sense of pain, for this perhaps would hinder the cure, and cause us to rot in our corruptions, but that like a wise, faithful, and pitiful physician, He will handle us as gently as possibly He may, so as in the meantime the medicines used may be effectual for the purging of our corruptions and recovery of our health.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(158.) While we fret and repine at God's will, do we not say in effect that it is better for us to have our own? that is, in other words, that we are wiser than God, and could contrive things much more to our own advantage, if we had the disposal of them. Do we not as good as complain that we are not taken in as sharers with God in the government of the world? that our advice is not taken, and our consent had, in all the great changes which He is pleased to bring over us? These indeed are things that no man utters in words; but whosoever refuses to submit himself to the hand of God speaks them aloud by his behaviour: which by all the intelligent part of the world is looked upon as a surer indication of man's mind than any verbal declaration of it whatsoever. God, perhaps, is pleased to visit us with some heavy affliction, and shall we now, out of a due reverence of His all-governing wisdom, patiently endure it? or out of a blind presumption of our own, endeavour by some sinister way or other to rid ourselves from it? Passengers in a ship always submit to their pilot's discretion, but especially in a storm; and shall we, whose passage lies through a greater and more dangerous deep, pay a less deference to that great pilot, who not only understands, but also commands the seas? —*South*, 1633–1716.

7. Courage.

(159.) Howsoever this enemy adversity, and those innumerable troops of afflictions, are in show more terrible than prosperity and those glorious forces led under his conduct, yet they are much weaker, in truth, and less dangerous when we come to buckle with them. For these indeed are grim in their outward appearance, but not so fearful when, having experience of their strength, they become familiar to us; like those barbarians who, when they were to fight with their enemies, painted themselves that they might appear more terrible, whereas in truth they were weak and naked, unable to endure the first onset. For so these afflictions have in them a painted shadow of fierceness, and do but put on them an ugly vizard to make them full of terror at their first appearing; whereas if the vizard be done away, and we, ceasing to look upon them through the false glass of fear and astonishment, do behold them with a true judgment, we shall find them so easy to be endured, through the assistance of God's Spirit, that there will be no cause of terror and amazement. But on the other side, those enemies, prosperity and worldly allurements, hiding hostility under pretence of friendship, and being much stronger, bring us into a pernicious security, and without show of assault get the victory.

Afflictions, like bills and pikes, make a terrible show when they cannot reach us; but the temptations of prosperity, like unseen bullets, wound and kill us before they are discerned. They, like the fiery serpents, sting us, but with sense of pain make us seek for remedy, looking up to the true Brazen Serpent that we may be cured. These, like the viper, putting us to no pain, bring us into a sweet slumber of security, which ends in that deep sleep of death and condemnation. They wound with pain, and enforce us with torment to seek recovery; these, with delight, making us to love still the weapons that hurt us, and to abhor the means whereby we may be healed, because even our wounds and sores are pleasing to us. The one, like the wind boisterously blowing upon us, makes us more careful to hold fast the garments of God's graces, that they be not taken from us; the other, like the sun, warming us with delight, causes us of our own accord to cast it from us. —*Downame*, 1644.

(160.) How sick soever a man be with physic, he is not afraid of dying, because he considers the physician in wisdom gave him what now occasioneth his present sickness. No more should we be dismayed at the bitterness of our cup, if, with Christ, we did but take notice it is the cup that our Heavenly Father hath mingled, and hath given us only for our correction, not confusion.

—*Ludovicus de Granada.*

(161.) Let us make a right judgment of afflictions. Let us not think God intends to destroy when He begins to strike. We are often in the same error the apostles were in. When they saw Christ, walking upon the waves in the dead of the night and terror of a tempest, coming to succour them, they imagined He was a spirit coming to mischief them. The flesh makes us think God often to be our enemy when He is our friend. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

8. Gratitude.

(162.) If the child be bound to his father in all love and duty, not only because he feeds and clothes him, but also because he governs and corrects him; not for the blows and smarts which he sustains, for these his nature abhors, but for his care in reclaiming him from his faults, which, being nourished, would in time justly disable him from receiving his inheritance.

And if, being grievously sick, we are content to

requite the physician and surgeon for their distasteful potions, their sharp corrosives, cutting, lancing, searing, with thanks and deserved praise; not because of the things themselves, which for the present increase our pain; but because out of their skill they use them as means for the recovery of our bodily health.

Then, how much more are we to be thankful to our Heavenly Father chastising us? seeing in His love and care He hereby reforms us of our sins, and so makes us fit to be heirs of that everlasting patrimony of His glorious kingdom? How much should we magnify this Spiritual Physician of our souls? Not for the bitter potions which He makes us drink, but because He intends, and accordingly effects, our recovery to health, and that not the health of our corruptible bodies, which only reprieves them to the next assizes of sickness, but of our precious and immortal souls; not such as is momentary and temporary, but perpetual and everlasting. It is not therefore enough that we take these great benefits, which God's chastising hand reaches out to us, with patience; but we must also receive them with praise and thanksgiving (1. Pet. iv. 16; Col. i. 11, 12).

—*Downame*, 1644.

(163.) How profitable and beneficial a thing is affliction; especially to some dispositions! I see some trees that will not thrive unless their roots be laid bare; unless, besides pruning, their bodies be gashed and sliced. Others that are too luxuriant, except divers of their blossoms be seasonably puiled off, yield nothing. I see too rank corn, if it be not timely eaten down, may yield something to the barn, but little to the granary. I see some full bodies that can enjoy no health without bloodlettings. Such is the condition of our spiritual part: it is a rare soul that can be kept in any constant order, without these smarting remedies: I confess mine cannot. How wild had I run, if the rod had not been over me! . Every man can say he thanks God for ease: for me, I bless God for my troubles.

—*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(164.) Before the corn be ripened, it needs all kinds of weathers, and therefore the husbandman is as glad of showers as sunshine, because they both conduce to fruitfulness. We need all kinds of dispensations. —*Manton*, 1620-1667.

(165.) There are bitter mercies and sweet mercies; some mercies God gives in wine, some in wormwood. Now we must praise God for the bitter mercies as well as the sweet: thus Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Too many are prone to think, nothing is a mercy that is not sweet in the going down, and leaves not a pleasant farewell on their palate; but this is the childishness of our spirits, which, as grace grows more manly, and the Christian more judicious, will wear off. Who, that understands himself, will value a book by the gilt on the cover? Truly, none of our temporals (whether crosses or enjoyments) considered in themselves abstractly, are either a curse or mercy. They are only as the covering to the book; it is what is writ in them that must resolve us whether they be a mercy or not. Is it an affliction that lies on thee? If thou canst find it comes from love, and ends in grace and holiness, it is a mercy though it be bitter to thy taste. Is it an enjoyment? If love doth not send it, and grace end it (which appears when thou growest worse by it), it is a curse though sweet to thy sense. There are sweet poisons as well as bitter cordials. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

9. It is the duty of the afflicted to look at life as a whole.

(166.) Our hours of misery become such, because we feel them singly, and apart from the rest of life. But we know not what those shades will be, when the whole, with its reliefs and lights, is seen together. The minute insect which moves upon the face of a pictured landscape, as upon a wide and boundless plain, may feel itself at times buried in the deepest gloom of midnight; while the eye that takes it all at once, sees in those dark lines the contrast which gives effect and brilliancy to the general design. —*Woodward*.

(167.) Though it be not in our power to make affliction no affliction, yet it is in our power to take off the edge of it, by a steady view of those Divine joys prepared for us in another state.

—*Atterbury*, 1663-1732.

(168.) There are many scenes in life which are either sad or beautiful, cheerless or refreshing, according to the direction from which we approach them. If, on a morning in spring, we behold the ridges of a fresh-turned ploughed field from their northern side, our eyes, catching only the shadowed slopes of the successive furrows, see an expanse of white, the unmelted remains of the night's hailstorm, or the hoar-frost of the dawn. We make a circuit, or we cross over, and look behind us, and on the very same ground there is nothing to be seen but the rich brown soil, swelling in the sunshine, warm with promise, and chequered perhaps, here and there, with a green blade bursting through the surface. —*Froude*.

10. To seek deliverance by the use of all appointed means.

(169.) When a little child, that can scarcely go, chanceth to stumble upon a stone, he falleth down, and there lieth, crying till somebody take him up. But people of reason and understanding must not do like children, but must endeavour, what sickness or inconvenience soever happen, so far as is possible, to remedy it. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(170.) Ordinary means are not to be contemned. Like as a shipmaster being upon the water, and foreseeing a tempest, calleth upon God's help; and yet hath also a sure eye to the stern, to rule that as handsomely and cunningly as he can (Acts xxvii). Even so in all manner of necessities and perils, it is lawful to use all manner of honest and convenient means; as medicines in sickness; labour in poverty; the power and authority of the magistrate in wrong; battle array against the enemies of our country, and such like: so that no man build nor trust in any manner of thing, saving in the very living God only, who can help, deliver, and remedy all things, without any middle or mean, if there were none at hand. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

11. But they are not to seek comfort in worldly things.

(171.) Whosoever followeth but man's reason to teach comfort to the troubled mind can give but a counterfeit medicine; as the surgeon doth, which colourably healeth, or the physician which giveth medicines that do but astonish the sore place,

and so deceive the patient. But the true healing of sorrow they had not, for they lacked the ground; they lacked that that should heal the sore at the bone first, that is, true faith in Christ and His holy Word. All medicines of the soul, which be laid on the sores thereof, not having that cleanser with them, be but over-healers: they do not take away the rankling within; and many times, under colour of hasty healing, they bring forth proud flesh in the sore, as evil or worse than that which was first corrupt. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

12. Nor unduly to depend on human aid.

(172.) As a passenger in a storm that, for shelter against the weather, betaketh him to a fair spread oak, standeth under the boughs, and findeth good relief thereby for the space of some time, till at length cometh a sudden gust of wind, that teareth down a main arm of it, which, falling upon the poor passenger, maimeth him that resorted to it for succour; thus falleth it out not with a few, meeting in the world with many troubles, they step aside out of their own way, and too often out of God's, to get under the wing of some great one, and gain, it may be, some aid and shelter thereby for a season, but after awhile that great one himself, falling from his former height of favour or honour, they are also called in question, and so fall together with him, that might otherwise have stood long enough on their own legs, if they had not trusted to such an arm of flesh, such a broken staff, that deceived them. —*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

13. Nor to seek relief by sinful methods.

(173.) Turn a four-cornered stone how thou wilt, and it will always stand right up; even so, howsoever a right Christian be tempted and assaulted, he will ever notwithstanding remain upright. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(174.) A man that is unskilful in swimming, having ventured past his depth, hastily and inconsiderately catcheth at what comes next to hand to save himself; but often layeth hold on sedgy weeds, that do but entangle him and draw him deeper under water, and there keep him down from ever getting up again, till he be (by that whereby he thought to save himself) drowned indeed. Thus it is that, whilst many, through weakness of faith and want of patience, are loth to wait God's good pleasure, and, being desirous to be rid in all haste of the present affliction, they put their hand oft to such courses as procure fearful effects, and use such sorry shifts for the relieving of themselves as do but plunge them further and deeper into such a labyrinth of evils, out of which they seldom or never get again. —*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

(175.) I have often seen young and unskilful persons sitting in a little boat, when every little wave sporting about the sides of the vessel, and every motion and dancing of the barge, seemed a danger, and made them cling fast upon their fellows; and yet all the while they were as safe as if they sat under a tree, while a gentle wind shook the breeze into a refreshment and a cooling shade. And the unskilful, inexperienced Christian shrieks out whenever his vessel shakes, thinking it always a danger that the watery pavement is not stable and resident as a rock; and yet all his danger is in himself, none at all from without; for he is indeed moving upon the waters, but fastened to a rock; faith is his foundation, and hope is his anchor, and death is his harbour, and Christ his pilot, and heaven his country: and all the evils of poverty, or affronts of tribunals and evil judges, of fears and sudden apprehensions, are but like the loud wind blowing from the right point; they make a noise, and drive faster to the harbour; and if we do not leave the ship, and leap into the sea, quit the interest of religion, and run to the securities of the world, cut our cables, and dissolve our hopes; grow impatient and hug a wave, which dies in its embraces, we are as safe at sea, *safer in the storm that God sends us* than in a calm when befriended by the world. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

14. But to look up to God.

(176.) 2 Cor. iv. 18.—Mr. Astor, once fording the Susquehanna on horseback, became so dizzy as to be near losing his seat. Suddenly he received a blow on his chin from a hunter who was his companion, with the words "Look up." He did so, and recovered his balance. It was looking on the turbulent waters that endangered his life, and looking *up* saved it.

15. And to seek relief and strength in prayer.

(177.) We must also pray either that God will help and deliver us, not after the device of our own brains, but after such wise as shall seem unto His godly wisdom, or else that He will mitigate our pain, that our weakness may not utterly faint. Like as a sick person, although he doubt nothing of the faithfulness and tenderness of his physician, yet for all that desireth him to handle his wound as tenderly as possible; even so may we call upon God, that, if it be not against His honour and glory, He will vouchsafe to give some mitigation of the pain. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(178.) That grace which will carry us through prosperity will not carry us through sufferings: the ship needs stronger tackling to carry it through a storm than a calm. —*Watson*, 1696.

VI. *CONSOLATIONS FOR THE AFFLICTED.*

1. Affliction is apportioned and limited by God.

(179.) We are not equally afflicted with the same diseases, or all in need of an equally severe method of cure. Hence we see different persons exercised with different kinds of crosses. But whilst the Heavenly Physician, consulting the health of all His patients, practises a milder treatment towards some, and cures others with rougher remedies, yet He leaves no one completely exempted, because He knows we are all diseased, without the exception of a single individual. —*Calvin*, 1509–1564.

(180.) The Lord does not measure out our afflictions according to our faults, but according to our strength, and looks not what we have deserved, but what we are able to bear; for, as the prophet says, in wrath He remembers mercy (Hab. iii. 2), which makes Him in all our chastisements to intend our profit, and not our punishment. Neither does He give to all His servants a cup of like size, or a burden to bear of the same weight; but either fits their afflictions to the measure of their strength, or their strength to the measure of their afflictions. He does not observe in sharing of afflictions an arithmetical proportion, giving to all indifferently the same number and measure, but like a wise geometrician, He proportionates them to the strength

of the bearers, allotting a greater burden to the strongest, and a less to the weakest. In the Word of God we have an express promise, that the Lord will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it (1 Cor. x. 13). —*Downame*, 1644.

(181.) Afflictions proceed from God *our heavenly Father*, whose wisdom is infinite, and whose love is incomprehensible. And therefore, if earthly parents —out of their small model of love and little pittance of affection, guided by their shallow discretion—do not give to all their children the like measure of chastisement, though they be alike guilty of the same fault, but have respect to their age and bigness, giving less to the youngest and weakest, and more to those who are older and of greater strength; because if they should receive these greater stripes, they would (exceeding their strength) make them dull and desperate, and if these should have the lighter chastisements they would hereby grow careless and negligent; how much more then will the Lord, so far exceeding them in love and wisdom, thus proportionate His chastisements to the strength of His children, seeing He does not in His chastisements aim at the satisfying of His justice by punishing the fault, but does all out of mere love for the reformation of the offender. —*Downame*, 1644.

(182.) If we see all who are wise and just to have regard not to oppress their inferiors with labours, but fit their employments according to their abilities; if no good schoolmaster will appoint his scholars longer or harder lessons than they can learn, nor correct them with more or greater stripes than is fit for their age; if no good master will give his servants a greater burden than they can carry, but allot the heaviest to the strongest, and the lightest to the weakest; yea, if a good man will be merciful to his beast, fitting its load to its strength, and not oppressing it with more than it can bear; how much more may we be assured that the Lord will be more careful over His own children, in proportioning their burden to their strength, that they may not sink under the weight of their afflictions, especially considering that He perfectly knows their power and ability, and can as easily add to their strength as detract from their burden! —*Downame*, 1644.

(183.) As no man is so loaded with benefits, as that he is in all respects happy; so there is none so oppressed with afflictions, that he is in every way miserable. And this mixture the wise Judge of heaven and earth has made, to keep us in a mean, who are too prone to run into extremes. And because we would be too much exalted with continual prosperity, and too much dejected if we should feel nothing but affliction, the Lord never suffers us to abound with worldly happiness, but that we have something to humble us; nor so to be plunged in misery, but that we have some cause of present comfort or future hope. And like a wise father, He does not too much dandle us, which would make us wantons, nor always beat us, which would make us desperate; but He judiciously mingles the one with the other, not letting us have our wills in all things, lest we should neglect Him; nor yet always crossing us in them, lest we should hate and rebel against Him; not always cockering us, lest we should grow proud and insolent, nor always correcting us, lest we should become base and servile; but He gives gifts that we may love Him, and stripes that we may fear Him. Yea, oftentimes He mixes frowns with His favours, when they make us malapert, and kind speeches with His rebukes and chastisements, to show in the hatred of our faults His love to our persons, when He sees us humble and penitent; that so He may make us in all things to reverence Him, and no less to fear Him in His favours, than to love Him in His chastisements. —*Downame*, 1644.

(184.) As the wise commander does not always wear out his servants with long marches, wearisome watchings, and fierce skirmishes and assaults; but after their tedious labour brings them into garrisons, that, taking their rest, and refreshing themselves with some wholesome diet, good lodging and pleasant recreations, they may renew their strength and courage, and afterwards be more fit for service: so deals our great Commander with us, in this spiritual warfare, giving to us a breathing time after our fight, rest after our labours, recreation after sorrows, and after troubles and afflictions, comforts and refreshings; that so having recovered our strength, and taken new courage unto us, we may the better be enabled to do Him further service. Yea, He does not only interchangeably let one of these succeed the other, but like a prudent general, He intermixes them, giving to them in the time of their greatest labours some rest, and in their sharpest encounters with afflictions some breathing and refreshing; even as contrariwise He does not, when they are in the garrison of prosperity, suffer them to languish in idleness, and to spend their whole time in pleasure, which would make them unfit for service, but sometimes inures them to labour, watching, and warlike exercises, for the preserving of their strength and manlike courage. —*Downame*, 1644.

(185.) Not to be afflicted is a sign of weakness; for, therefore God imposeth no more on me, because He sees I can bear no more. God will not make choice of a weak champion. When I am stronger I will look for more; and when I sustain more it shall more comfort me that God finds me strong, than it shall grieve me to be pressed with a heavy affliction. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(186.) When an unskilful eye looks upon the threshing of corn, he says, "Why do they spoil the corn?" But those that know better say, "The flail does not hurt the corn; if the cart-wheel should pass upon it there would be spoil indeed, but the flail hurts not." Now, there is no affliction or suffering that a godly man meets with but is God's flail. And if you look into Isa. xxviii., ye shall find the Lord promises, under a similitude, that His cart-wheel shall not pass upon those that are weak. God will always proportion His rod to our strength. . . . "I am God's corn," says the martyr, "I must therefore pass under the flail, through the fan, under the millstone, into the oven, before I can be bread for Him." And if our chaff be severed from our graces by this flail, have we any reason to be discouraged because we are thus afflicted? —*Bridges*, 1600–1670.

(187.) God doth moderate His stroke (Jer. xxx. 11), "I will correct thee in measure." God will in the day of His east wind stay His rough wind (Isa. xxvii. 8). The physician that understands the crasis and temper of the patient will not give too strong

physic for the body, nor will he give one drachm or scruple too much. God knows our frame, He will not over-afflict. He will not stretch the strings of His viol too hard, lest they break. —*Watson*, 1696.

(188.) "I had," said Latimer, describing the way in which his father trained him as a yeoman's son, "my bows bought me according to my age and strength; as I increased in them so my bows were made bigger and bigger." Thus boys grew into cross-bowmen, and by a similar increase in the force of their trials, Christians become veterans in the Lord's host. The affliction which is suitable for a babe in grace would little serve the young man, and even the well-developed man needs severer trials as his strength increases. God, like a wise father, trains us wisely, and as we are able to bear it He makes our service and our suffering more arduous. As boys rejoice to be treated like men, so will we rejoice in our greater tribulations, for here is man's work for us, and by God's help we will not flinch from doing it. —*Spurgeon.*

2. Afflictions do not necessarily prove that God is angry with us.

(189.) Every severe dispensation is not an effect of God's anger. The same effect may proceed from very different causes. Love is sometimes put upon the rigour of those courses, which at the first aspect seem to carry in them the inscriptions of enmity.

God may sweep away a man's estate, snatch away a friend, stain his reputation; and yet the design of all this not be revenge, but remedy; not destruction, but discipline.

He sees, perhaps, something evil in us to be cured, and something worse to be prevented; some luxuriances to be abated, and some malignant humours to be evacuated; all which cannot be effected but by sharp and displeasing applications. And in all the hard passages of Providence when God strips a man of all his externals, God's intent may be, not to make him miserable, but to make him humble; not to ruin, but to reduce him.

If you look only upon the outside of an affliction, you cannot distinguish from what principle it may proceed. Gehazi's leprosy and Lazarus's sores may seem to be inflicted by the same displeasure, and yet one was a curse for hypocrisy, and the other a trial of humility.

David's and Saul's afflictions were dispensed with a very different hand. Saul could not pursue him so fast, but mercy followed him as close. Stephen was stoned as well as Achan; but certainly God did not with the same arm fling the stone at the one with which He did at the other.

Consider the saints (Heb. xi. 37), "Afflicted, tormented, naked, destitute, sawn asunder." And what could anger itself do more against them? And yet the God who did all this was not angry. That very love which makes God to be our friend, makes Him sometimes to appear our enemy: to chastise our confidence, to raise our vigilance, and to give us safety instead of security.

Persons who are truly holy, are yet very apt to look upon God's dealings on the wrong side, and to make hard conclusions concerning their own condition. David is an example of this; through the transports, sometimes of diffidence, sometimes of impatience, he is high in his expostulations with God (Ps. lxxiv. 1, lxxvii. 9); not considering (as he does elsewhere) that when God deals with His chosen ones, with "the sheep of His pasture," His rod is still attended with His staff; and as with one He strikes, so with the other He supports.

So, on the other side, men of a morose, uncharitable temper, from such instances of outward miseries, are as ready to denounce God's anger against others. If such dogs meet with a Lazarus, instead of licking his sores they will bite his person, bark at his name, and worry his reputation. Nothing can befall any man, besides themselves, but presently it is "a judgment."

Let us rest assured of this, that the roughest of God's proceedings do not always issue from an angry intention: it is very possible, because very usual, that they may proceed from the clean contrary. The same clouds which God made use of heretofore to drown the earth, He employs now to refresh it. He may use the same means to correct and to better some that He does to plague and to punish others. The same hand and hatchet that cuts some trees for the fire may cut others into growth, verdure, and fertility. —*South*, 1633–1716.

3. On the contrary, they may be an evidence of our acceptance with God.

(190.) Furthermore, be it in case, that the father hath two sons, whereof the one behaveth himself wickedly, and yet his father correcteth him nothing at all; the other for the least fault that he doth is corrected by and by. What thing else is the cause of this, but that the father hath no hope of amendment at all of the one, and therefore mindeth to put him clearly from his heritage, and to give him no part thereof? For the heritage pertaineth wholly unto that son that is chastened.

And yet the same poor son that is thus chastened thinketh in his mind that his brother is much more happy than he, forasmuch as he is never beaten; and therefore he mourneth by himself, "Well, my brother doth what he will against my father's will, and yet my father giveth him not one foul word; and towards me he showeth not so much as a good look, but is ever in my top, if I do but look away," &c.

Here now mayest thou mark the foolishness of the child, which hath respect only unto the present grief, and never considereth what is reserved for him. Even such imaginations have Christian men also, when they suffer much tribulation, and see on the other side how prosperously it goeth with the wicked; whereas they ought rather to comfort themselves with the remembrance of the heritage that is reserved for them in heaven, which appertaineth unto them, as good and virtuous children.

As for the other, that hop and spring, make merry, and take their pleasure now for a while, they shall be deprived of the heritage everlastingly, as strangers, and shall have no part thereof (Heb. xii. 6–8). —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(191.) The herdman will suffer such calves as are appointed shortly to the slaughter to run about in the pasture of pleasure; and again, such as are reserved to labour are kept under the yoke. Even so Almighty God doth permit unto those ungodly persons, whose destruction is at hand, to accomplish their pleasures and desires; but the godly whom He will use to His honour and glory, those keepeth He under the yoke, and restraineth them from the pleasant lusts of the world. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(192.) We are trees of righteousness which God's

right hand has planted. Let us not, therefore, fear to be pruned with afflictions, seeing God thus pares away our superfluous branches that we may bring forth more fruit, as our Saviour teaches us (John xv. 2).

Yea, rather, we had great cause of fear, if we were exempted from these calamities. For as that is a fruitless tree which is suffered to grow wild and untouched, and is therefore daily in danger to be cut down and cast into the fire, because it does no good by standing and growing: so it is a sign that we are fruitless trees still growing in the wild wood of the world, which must one day be cut down and cast into everlasting fire if our Heavenly Husbandman takes no care to prune us with crosses and afflictions.

We are vines of God's own setting, whose glory and excellency consists not in the broadness and beauty of our leaves, nor in the handsomeness and straightness of our body and branches, but only in our fruitfulness, whereby we bring forth great plenty of the ripe and sweet grapes of holiness and righteousness. And, therefore, when we have the beauty and bravery of our outward estate taken from us, and have these leaves of earthly vanities blown away with the winds of adversity, and our superfluous stems of worldly substance pruned and plucked from us in the winter of affliction, there is no cause for grief or mourning, seeing our chiefest excellency is not hereby impaired; yea, rather, because it is much advanced, in that we are made more fruitful, by how much the more we are by these afflictions pruned from our superfluities, this may justly increase our joy and comfort. —*Downame*, 1644.

(193.) Our afflictions are notable signs of our effectual calling, whereby we are severed from the world, and admitted into God's church and family. For they are God's livery and cognisance which He gives to all to wear who will be His disciples; for "as many as will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

As when the masons and carpenters polish their stones and square their timber with their tools and axes, it is a sign that they have chosen them for the use of building; whereas that which is untouched is left as refuse, fit for nothing, to be cast into the highway, and to be burned in the fire. So when the Lord doth polish, square, and plane us with troubles and afflictions from the knots and knobs of sin and corruption, it appears hereby that He has made choice of us to be stones in the building of His spiritual temple; whereas those who are let alone, and not hammered and squared by this Heavenly Workman, are rejected as refuse stuff, which is altogether unfit for this holy building.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(194.) "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii. 6, 11). Misunderstand not, then, the prognostics of your present sorrows. Think how they will work, as well as how they taste. They bode good, though they are unpleasant. If you were bastards and reprobates, you might feel less of the rod. When the ploughers make furrows on you, it prepareth you for the seed; and the showers that water it prognosticate a plenteous harvest. Think it not strange if He thresh and grind you, if you would be bread for your Master's use. He is not drowning His sheep when He washeth them, nor killing them when He is shearing them. But by this He showeth that they are His own; and the new-shorn sheep do most visibly bear His name or mark, when it is almost worn out, and scarce discernible, on them that have the longest fleece. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(195.) When sickness and disease attack the saint, or when death enters the saint's home and darkens it by his overshadowing presence, when poverty like an armed man attacks him, or when the wicked revile and persecute him, or when heart and flesh fail, it appears as though God did not care. But these very circumstances are signs of His care. The plough, with its broad and sharp blade or furrow-slice driven into the land, is a sign of culture and of ownership. The harrow, with its long prongs drawn over the field, is a proof of concern for its fertility. The sharp threshing instrument having teeth, is a sign of something being thought worthy of the garner. —*Samuel Martin.*

(196.) Lawns which we would keep in the best condition are very frequently mown; the grass has scarcely any respite from the scythe. Out in the meadows there is no such repeated cutting, they are mown but once or twice in the year. Even thus the nearer we are to God, and the more regard He has for us, the more frequent will be our adversities. To be very dear to God, involves no small degree of chastisement. —*Spurgeon.*

4. Afflictions assure us that we are in the heavenward way.

(197.) Passengers that have been told that their way to such a place lieth over a steep hill, or down a craggy rock, or through a moorish fen, or dirty vale, if they suddenly fall into some pleasant meadow, enamelled with beautiful flowers, or a goodly corn field, or a fair champaign country, look about them, and bethinking themselves where they are, say, "Surely we are come out of the way; we see no hills, nor rocks, nor moors, nor fens: this is too good to be the right way." So in the course of our life, which is but a pilgrimage on earth: when we pass through fields of corn or gardens of flowers, and enjoy all worldly pleasures and contentments; when the wind sets in such a corner as blows riches, honours, and preferments upon us;—let us then cast with ourselves, "Surely this is not the way the Scripture directeth us unto; here are not the temptations nor the tribulations that we must pass through: we see little or no footing of the saints of God in this road, but only the print of Dives' feet: somewhere we have missed our way; let us search and find where we went out of it." It is very true that God hath the blessings of this life and that which is to come in store for His children; when He seeth it good for them, they may go to heaven this way; but, certainly, afflictions and troubles are surer arguments of God's love, and a readier way to heaven than the other.

—*Alphonsus ab Avendano*, 1590.

5. God is present with His people in all their afflictions.

(198.) The Lord does not only behold our tribulation as it were afar off, He being included in heaven, as we are in the earth; but as He fills all places with His essence, so after a more especial manner He is present with the faithful in all their afflictions. As the careful physician watches over

his patient, that he may apply to him fit medicine, which may so purge away the corrupt humours as that in the meantime nature itself be not too much weakened; and as the goldsmith, when he has cast his gold into the furnace, does not carelessly leave it, but watches by it, that he may moderate the fire, and so order it, in respect both of the heat and the time of enduring it, that it may be purified from the dross, and not consumed in the purest substance; so the Lord stands by us, that when we are according to His own mind purged and purified, He may withdraw his bitter potions, and pull us like pure metal out of the fire, that we may not in our spiritual parts receive any hurt.

—*Downame*, 1644.

6. God sympathises with His people in all their sorrows.

(199.) Canst thou not read God's gracious indulgence in thine own disposition? Thou art a parent of children: perhaps thou findest cause to affect one more than another, though all be dear enough; but if any one of them be cast down with a feverous distemper, now thou art more carefully busy about him than all the rest. How thou pitiest him; how thou pliest him with offers and recipes; with what silent anxiety dost thou watch by his couch; listening for every one of his breathings; jealous of every whispering that might break off his slumber; answering every of his groans, with so many sighs; and, in short, so making of him for the time, that thy greatest darling seems the while neglected in comparison of this more needful charge. How much more shall the Father of Mercies be compassionately intent upon the sufferings of His dear children, according to the proportion of their afflictions!

—*Hall*, 1514-1656.

7. God succours and sustains His people according to their need.

(200.) Although in winter the trees appear not only unfruitful, but utterly dead, yet the sun, when the winter hath taken her leave, doth so warm both the earth and the trees that they bud out again, wax green, and bring forth fruit: even so when the faithful seem as though they were utterly forsaken, yet doth the heavenly Spirit in due time lighten, warm, and strengthen their hearts to all goodness.

As the young infant is not able to go of himself for very tenderness and lack of strength, but must be holden up, and led with the hand of the nurse; and like as a woman, weakened with sickness, is not able to go one step, but some strong woman must take her under the arm, and lead her, even so are we not able to go of ourselves, but God with His mighty hand and present power sustaineth us. The Spirit helpeth our infirmities (Rom. viii.)

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(201.) As the tender mother teaching her young child to go oftentimes seems to leave him to his own strength, when in truth he goes by her help supporting him; and to let him alone to his own care, when in the meantime she has a watchful eye to him, so that he is no sooner ready to fall but with nimble speed she catches hold of him, and prevents his danger. So the Lord deals with us His children, whilst in our nonage and greatest weakness He teaches us to go in this rough path of afflictions which leads to His kingdom. For when He seems to neglect us He watches over us; and when, in our sense and feeling, He leaves us to ourselves, even then He stays us by His strength; and when we are in greatest danger of sinking and falling, He stretches out with speed His powerful hand, and preserves us from receiving any harm.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(202.) We see in the body if any member be hurt, thither presently runs the blood to comfort the wounded part. The man himself, eye, tongue, and hand is altogether employed about that part and wounded member, as if he were forgetful of all the rest. So we see in the family, if one of the children be sick, all the care and kindness of the mother is about that sick child, so that all the rest do as it were envy his sickness. If nature does thus, will not God, who is the author of nature, do much more? For if an earthly mother do thus to a sickly and suffering child, will not our Heavenly Father, who has an infinite, incredible, and tender love to His people? This is the difference between God and the world, the world runs after those that rejoice in prosperity, as the rivers run to the sea when there is water enough already. But God comforts us all in our tribulations. His name and style is, "He comforts those that are cast down." The world forsakes those that are in poverty, disgrace, and want; but God vouchsafes most of His presence to them that holily, meekly, and patiently bear the afflictions which He lays upon them, and one drop of this honey is enough to sweeten the bitterest cup that ever they drank of. If God be with us, if the power of Christ will rest upon us, then we may even "glory in infirmities," as Paul did.

—*Manton*, 1620-1667.

(203.) It is a very true saying, the sharper the lye is the cleaner taketh it away all manner of filth. Even so our corrupt and poisoned nature had need of a biting medicine. The sharper the trouble the more filth it biteth away. For a weak stomach, which is of a naughty digestion, bitter wormwood is very good and wholesome; even so for the weak and feeble soul is bitter affliction.

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

8. Afflictions minister to our true wellbeing.

(204.) A water that is continually standing, how clear soever it seem, is corrupt; but that water which hath his continual course, the more it rusheth and struggleth over the stones and sands the better it is; even so a godly man, in the absence of the cross, is sluggish and dull; but through the cross and affliction he is quickened, and increased in all goodness. Rusty iron through the file is made bright and smooth; even so the old rusty Adam hath need of trouble to purge him from the cankered rust of sin.

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(205.) The soldier when he first enters into the field fears when he hears but a false alarm, and is ready to duck at every shot, whereas after he has passed desperate dangers, and has been long exercised in many conflicts and skirmishes, he becomes so courageous that he dares to enter upon the push of the pike, and to fight at the cannon's mouth; now less fearing the cruel enemy and killing bullet, than when he was first trained, the paper shot and the seeming encounter of his friends and fellows.

There is no combatant that contends against his adversary with that spirit and courage when he first comes into the theatre, as he does who has been accustomed to these exercises; and is not only heartened with easy victories, but also after many

foils and falls, dangerous wounds and much bloodshed, has in the end prevailed, and by many perils has made his way to a glorious triumph.

There is no mariner so bold and cheerfully confident in the least show of a seafaring danger, when he first enters the ship, and in his moving house becomes an inhabitant of this new appearing world of dreadful waters, as he who, after innumerable storms and dangerous tempests, has oftentimes arrived safely at the wished-for haven.

And thus it also fares with us in these spiritual combats with troubles and calamities. For howsoever in the first conflict we are marvellously cowardly and impatient in suffering the least pain, yet when we have been long exercised in these skirmishes, and after many foils and falls, have in the end, through God's gracious assistance, obtained a joyful victory, we exceedingly increase in Christian valour.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(206.) Experience teaches us that as other creatures, so also men, are made much more tender by gentle usage, and much disabled to bear the brunt of any outward violence, and contrariwise that they are much strengthened to endure any hardness, when they are inured into it by continual custom. Severe training makes the best soldiers, and, by continual custom, causes want and watching, pains and toilsome labour, scant diet and hard lodging to become familiar and easy to be endured. Mariners who have been accustomed to storms and tempests find small alterations in their bodies in the roughest seas and foulest weather, whereas freshwater soldiers and tender passengers cannot brook the smell of the ship, nor sight of the water, and are extremely sea-sick when they are but a little tossed with some ordinary winds. The daily traveller goes longer journeys with little weariness, whereas they that keep at home are soon tired and surbaited with going a few miles. The tender gentleman takes cold being in a warm house and well clothed, whereas the poor husbandman dares the cold winds and nipping frosts with his bare head and naked breast; and is strong to endure the whole day any toilsome labour, when the other pants and faints with weariness if he work but one hour.

And as it thus fares with the body inured to pains and labour, so with the mind exercised with troubles, and accustomed to bear the burden of the cross.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(207.) Afflictions are a notable means to crown us, even in this life, with a good name, which is better than all riches, and sweeter than the most odoriferous perfume. For, whereas, whilst we live in ease and prosperity, the spiritual gifts and graces which God has bestowed on us, lie hid and undiscerned. When they come to the trial of tribulation, they are plainly discovered to all men. And as the stars cannot be seen in the sunshiny day, but when the darkest night comes, they appear in all their beauty; so these shining virtues and graces of God have their light much obscured in the day of prosperity, but when the dark night of affliction comes, then they shine gloriously. The precious ointments send forth their most odoriferous smell, when our earthen vessels and these brittle glasses of our bodies, wherein they are contained, are cracked and broken, by being smitten with calamities. This sweet incense of grace and virtue yields the most fragrant scent when it is cast into this fire of afflictions. Then does this spiritual gold appear true and good when it is tried in this burning furnace. Then is the strength of our faith manifested to God's glory and our praise, not when we sit idly still, but when we wrestle and contend with strong temptations. Then our Christian valour and fortitude most plainly appears, not whilst we lie at ease in the safe garrison, but when we are assailed with these mighty enemies, and after many conflicts get the victory.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(208.) Look upon a painted post or sign whose colour is laid in oil, how the rain beats upon it in stormy weather, that one would think all the colour would be washed off; yet how the water glides away, and leaves it rather more beautiful than before. And thus it is with every child of God: being well varnished and garnished with the graces of the Spirit, let the wind of persecution blow, and the floods of persecution lift up their voice, they shall never disfigure, nor deface, but rather add unto their beauty. Such is the condition of grace, that it shines the brighter for scouring, and is most glorious when it is most clouded.

—*Jenkin*, 1612–1685.

(209.) Afflictions do increase grace, as the wind serves to increase and blow up the flame. Grace spends not in the furnace, but it is like the widow's oil in the cruse, which did increase by pouring out. The torch, when it is beaten, burns brightest: so doth grace when it is exercised by sufferings. Sharp frosts nourish the good corn; so do sharp afflictions grace. Some plants grow better in the shade than in the sun, as the bay and the cypress. The shade of adversity is better for some than the sunshine of prosperity. —*Watson*, 1696.

(210.) Christians all want to have graces, but they are not so willing to take what is necessary in order to obtain them. The pale think it a fine thing to be painted—all the lovely flowers and gay colours so skilfully laid on by the cunning hand of the artist; but when it comes to being daubed all over with some dark substance, when the very gold that is upon them becomes as black as ink, when they are thrust into the heated furnace, how then?—how *then?*

Christians are like vases, they must pass through the fire ere they can shine. And often the very furnace and the flame which they call destruction is only burning *in* the graces which are to be their everlasting beauty and glory. —*Beecher.*

(211.) Our afflictions are not for naught. They are the fruitful seed of future glories. They are blessings in disguise. They are meant for good, and are productive of good. They are like the early processes of the garden, when the soil is broken up and weeded, in order that fair flowers may at length adorn it. They are the quarrying and the chiselling of the marble before the living statue can stand out in symmetrical proportions. They are the tuning of the instruments, without which no harmony can be secured in the ultimate concert. They are the medicine of our convalescence, the drudgery of our education, the spring pruning of our vine trees, without which we can never be healthy or happy, fit for heaven, or qualified to bring forth fruit whereby our Father may be glorified. —*Horton.*

(212.) It is a remarkable circumstance that the most brilliant colours of plants are to be seen on the highest mountains, in spots that are most exposed to the wildest weather. The brightest lichens and

mosses, the loveliest gems of wild flowers abound far up on the bleak, storm-scalped peak. One of the richest displays of organic colouring I ever beheld was near the summit of Mont Chenebettaz, a hill about 10,000 feet high, immediately above the great St. Bernard Hospice. The whole face of an extensive rock was covered with a most vivid yellow lichen, which shone in the sunshine like the golden battlement of an enchanted castle. There, in that lofty region, amid the most frowning desolation, exposed to the fiercest tempest of the sky, this lichen exhibited a glory of colour such as it never showed in the sheltered valley. I have two specimens of the same lichen before me while I write these lines, one from the great St. Bernard, and the other from the wall of a Scottish castle, deeply embosomed among sycamore trees; and the difference in point of form and colouring between them is most striking. The specimen nurtured amid the wild storms of the mountain peak is of a lovely primrose hue, and is smooth in texture and complete in outline; while the specimen nurtured amid the soft airs and the delicate showers of the lowland valley, is of a dim rusty hue, and is scurfy in texture, and broken in outline. And is it not so with the Christian who is afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted? Till the storms and vicissitudes of God's providence beat upon him again and again, his character appears marred and clouded by selfish and worldly influences. But trials clear away the obscurity, perfect the outlines of his disposition, and give brightness and beauty to his piety—

"Amidst my list of blessings infinite
Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled;
For *all* I bless Thee, *most* for the *severe*."

—*Macmillan.*

9. Afflictions do not debar us from usefulness.

(213.) If thou canst not help the great cause of God in any other mode, at anyrate there is open to thee that of fervent prayer. How much may be done for the Master's kingdom by the "king's remembrancers," who put Him in mind day by day of the agonies of His Son, and of His covenant and promise to give Him a widening dominion! I doubt not that many sick-beds in England are doing more for Christ than our pulpits. Oh! what showers of blessings come down in answer to the prayers and tears of poor godly invalids, whose weakness is their strength, and whose sickness is their opportunity. In all buildings there must be some unseen stones, and are not these very often the most important of all? In the very foundation of a church I should place those who are mighty in prayer. They are hidden as it were beneath the sods of obscurity where we cannot see them, but they are upbearing the entire structure. My dear afflicted brethren and sisters, when at any time you are cut off from the active ministries which have been your delight, solace yourselves with this, that your sacred patience under suffering, and your fervent prayers for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom, are a sacrifice of a sweet smell, holy, acceptable unto God.

—*Spurgeon.*

10. Afflictions prepare us for greater happiness and honour.

(214.) Not only does the Lord always advance by afflictions the spiritual and everlasting good of the faithful, but sometimes also turns them to their greater benefit even in the things of this life. As we may see in the example of Joseph, who was sold as a slave that he might be made a great commander, and lost his patrimony at home that he might receive a much more large inheritance in a strange country; and therefore he professes that when his brethren intended evil against him, God disposed it to the good, not of himself alone, but of many others.

And thus also Job by his afflictions was not only assured of heavenly glory, but also got endless fame on earth, and was not alone enriched much more with God's spiritual graces, but also had a twofold increase in his worldly estate.

Neither ought this to seem strange, that God through His infinite wisdon and power should be able to bring happiness out of misery, comfort out of crosses, and so much good out of these afflictions which both to the flesh and the world seem so evil; seeing it is a familiar course with earthly physicians, by medicines to make men weaker that they may recover strength, and sicker for the present that they may be more healthy ever after; and with surgeons to cut, lance, and torment their patients with torturing corrosives, that they may cure their wounds and give them perfect ease for the time to come.

—*Downame*, 1644.

11. Afflictions are among the means which God uses to make us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

(215.) "Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." They assuredly are right who recognise in this "He purgeth" no direct, but only a secondary, allusion to temptations and afflictions, as the means by which the purging is effected. It is the whole process of sanctification, the circumcision of the Spirit, by whatever discipline brought about, of which Christ is speaking, and to which He pledges His Father here. At the same time, seeing that afflictions play so large, so necessary a part in the process of sanctification, it is in a secondary sense most true that there is here a reference to these. Regarded as a means of this purifying, as an evidence of the intention of the Heavenly Husbandman that the fruit-bearing branches shall be more fruitful still, these may be welcomed, may be contemplated in some sort as rewards of obedience. St. James bids the faithful to welcome them, for the blessing they bring with them (i. 2–4, 12, and compare Heb. xii. 11; Rom. v. 3–5). To how many dealings of God with His own, mysterious, inscrutable, inexplicable otherwise, will this, kept properly in mind, furnish us with a key! Oftentimes the fine gold of some saint appears to us as if cleansed from all its dross; but the inexorable refiner, who sees with other eyes than ours, and detects remains of dross where we see only gold, flings it again into the furnace, that so it may be purer yet. Augustine has a striking image in illustration. Many a time, he observes, a portrait seems perfect in the judgment of all eyes save those of the artist who drew it. Others would fain see him now to hold his hand; they count that he cannot improve it, perhaps may mar it; but he returns it to the easel, touches and retouches still. And why? Because, being this artist, there floats before his mind's eye an ideal perfection, to which hitherto his work has not attained, but to which he would fain see it approach more nearly yet.

—*Trench.*

12. Our afflictions are but "for a moment."

(216.) Often at sea men are heartily sick, yet no man hardly there doth mind or pity them, because the malady is not supposed dangerous, and within a while the sight of land will relieve them. It is our case: we passing over this troublesome sea of life; from inexperience, joined with the tenderness of our constitution, the changes and crosses of fortune make us nauseate all things, and appear sorely distempered; yet is not our condition so dismal as it seems; we may grow hardier, and wear out our sense of affliction; however, the land is not far off, and by disembarking hence we shall suddenly be discharged of all our molestations. It is a common solace of grief, approved by wise men, *si gravis, brevis est; si longus, levis;* if it be very grievous and acute it cannot continue long, without intermission or respite; if it abide long, it is supportable; intolerable pain is like lightning, it destroys us, or is itself instantly destroyed. However, death at length (which is never far off) will free us; be we never so much tossed with storms of misfortune, that is a sure haven; let what pains or diseases soever infest us, that is an infallible remedy for them all. Shall I die? I shall then cease to be sick; I shall be exempted from disgrace; I shall be enlarged from prison; I shall be no more pinched for want; no more tormented with pain. Death is a winter, that as it withers the rose and lily, so it kills the nettle and thistle; as it stifles all worldly joy and pleasure, so it suppresses all care and grief; as it hushes the voice of mirth and melody, so it stills the clamours and the sighs of misery, as it defaces all the world's glory, so it covers all disgrace, wipes off all tears, silences all complaint, buries all disquiet and discontent.

Barrow, 1630–1677.

13. Our light affliction "is but for a moment."

(217.) Oh, comfort one another, Christians, with this; though your life be evil with troubles, yet 'tis short; a few steps, and you are out of the rain. There is a great difference between a saint in regard of the evils he meets with, and the wicked; as two travellers riding contrary ways, both taken in the rain and wet; but one rides from the rain, and so is soon out of the shower; but the other rides into the rainy corner; the farther he goes the worse he is. The saint meets with troubles as well as the wicked, but he is soon out of the shower; when death comes, he has fair weather; but the wicked, the farther he goes, the worse; what he meets with here is but a few drops, the great storm is the last. The pouring out of God's wrath shall be in hell, where all the deeps of horror are opened, both from above of God's righteous fury, and from beneath of their own accusing and tormenting consciences.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(218.) Affliction may be compared to frost; it will break, and spring-flowers will come on. "Sorrow and sighing shall fly away." Affliction hath a sting, but withal a wing, sorrow shall fly away; this land-flood shall be dried up.

—*Watson*, 1696.

14. Our present sorrows are not to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed in us.

(219.) As the globe of the earth, which, improperly for its great show and bigness, we term the world, and is, after the mathematician's account, many thousands of miles in compass, yet, being compared unto the greatness of the starry sky's circumference, is but a centre or a little prick: so the sorrows of this life temporal, in respect of the joys eternal in the world to come, bear not any proportion, but are to be reputed as nothing, or as a dark cloud that cometh and goeth in a moment.

—*Boys*, 1560-1643.

15. Our present sorrows will give zest to our future joys.

(220.) By our afflictions our ensuing prosperity is made more delightful and grateful; these bitter crosses make us to relish much better the sweetness of God's blessings. The sparing of the coarsest fare makes it to have a good relish, and to become pleasant to the taste and appetite (Prov. xxvii. 7). The day's brightness, if it were continual, would become tedious; and the glorious light of the sun would bring weariness, unless it were made grateful by the night's darkness.

In a word, pleasure itself would not long please us, if the glutting satiety of these sweetmeats were not taken away by abstinence, or sauced, as it were, with the sour sauce of intermingled miseries. Health when it is continually enjoyed is scarce thought on, but then it is sweet and most highly prized when we have long wanted it. Liberty, though it be precious as life, is but little regarded of those who have never felt the misery of restraint; but after long imprisonment it becomes most delightful. Riches are most esteemed by those who have formerly been pinched with poverty, and meat is most savoury when it is sauced with hunger. That victory is fullest of joy which is hardly obtained after a long, doubtful, and dangerous fight; and the safe harbour is then descried with most comfort of the passengers, after they have escaped the perils of tempestuous storms. The delights of the spring are much more delightful because they follow the nipping frosts and foul weather of lowering winter. All pleasures become much more pleasing, when they succeed and are interchanged with miseries. In all human affairs there can scarce be any true joy, unless doleful sorrows have gone before, and the bitterness of some passed griefs doth the more commend the sweetness of ensuing gladness.

Therefore, seeing by these afflictions the Lord doth but sauce His benefits that we may enjoy them with the more delight, and takes away for a while the earthly blessings that after they are restored they may bring with them the greater pleasure, let us by this consideration be moved to bear these crosses with patience: and as the usurer, though he make an idol of his god, yet is content to want it for a time, because when the term is expired he expects to have it with some increase; so, though our hearts too much adhere to earthly things, yet let us be content to forbear their company for a while, seeing upon their return the joy and comfort which we take in them shall be much increased. —*Downame*, 1644.

16. Afflictions bring us even now into closer communion with God.

(221.) Hast thou seen the rainbow in the blue sky, when the bright sun shineth without a cloud in the summer's heaven? Hast thou seen it in the driving tempest, when the whole horizon gathered blackness? No; but when the cloud of rain was

in the sky, and the sun looked upon it from the other side of heaven, then did the falling drops receive the slanting beams, and untwisting their seven colours, return them to the eye of the beholder, a beautiful bow, "a faithful witness," the truth of God. And thus it is not chiefly in the bright season of worldly comfort that the faithful witness of God is seen and felt; nor is it always in the season of affliction; for affliction may be unsanctified. But when the Sun of Righteousness sendeth forth His bright beams into the cloud of tribulation, then is the faithfulness of God perceived, then is His love felt, then are His promises enjoyed, then "we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience," &c.

—*Salter*, 1840.

VII. *OUR AFFLICTIONS ARE INTERMITTENT.*

(222.) Our troubles are not at all times alike troubles to us. Even the sea ceases its motion at times, and its surf forgets to murmur. Griefs and cares, bitter memories, and heavy troubles intermit their tyranny, and come again with redoubled oppressions. Like tides, sorrow seems sometimes to flow out, and leave the sands bare. But again they sometimes rush in upon us like tides, as if they feared that something should have snatched from them their lawful prey. —*Beecher.*

VIII. *IS NOT IN ITSELF SANCTIFYING.*

(223.) To the wicked the issue is sad; first, in regard of sin, they leave them worse, more impenitent, hardened in sin, and outrageous in their wicked practices. Every plague on Egypt added to the plague of hardness on Pharaoh's heart. He that for some while could beg prayers of Moses for himself, at last comes to that pass, that he threatens to kill him if he come to him any more. Oh, what a prodigious height do we see many come to in sin, after some great sickness or other judgment! Children do not more shoot up in their bodily stature after an ague, than they in their lusts after afflictions. Oh, how greedy and ravenous are they after their prey, when they once get off their clog and chain from their heels! When physic works not kindly, it doth not only leave the disease uncured, but the poison of the physic stays in the body also. Many appear thus poisoned by their afflictions, by the breaking out of their lust afterward.

Secondly, In regard of sorrow. Every affliction on a wicked person produceth another, and that a greater than itself. The greatest wedge comes at last, which shall rive him fit for the fire. The sinner is whipt from affliction to affliction, as the vagrant from constable to constable, till at last he comes to hell, his proper place and settled abode, where all sorrows will meet in one that is endless.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(224.) One may have trouble for sin, yet not be a new creature. Trouble of spirit may appear, while God's judgments lie upon men; when these are removed, their trouble ceaseth. "When He slew them, then they sought Him; nevertheless they did flatter Him with their lips" (Ps. lxxviii. 36). Metal that melts in a furnace, take it out of the furnace, and it returns to its former hardness: many in time of sickness seem to be like melted metal: what weeping and wringing of hands! what confessions of sin will they make! Do not these look like new creatures? But as soon as they recover, they are as bad as ever; their pangs go off again, and it never comes to a new birth.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(225.) Affliction has a tendency, especially if long continued, to generate a kind of despondency and ill-temper; and spiritual incapacity is closely connected with pain and sickness. The spirit of prayer does not necessarily come with affliction. If this be not poured out upon the man, he will, like a wounded beast, skulk to his den, and growl there.

—*Cecil*, 1743–1810.

(226.) Affliction has its dangers as well as prosperity. The one is a smooth sea with rocks beneath the shining surface. The other is a troubled ocean in a dark and stormy night.

(227.) The apostle rejoiced, not that the Corinthians sorrowed, but that they sorrowed unto repentance. Sorrow has two results; it may end in spiritual life, or in spiritual death; and in themselves one of these is as natural as the other. Sorrow may produce two kinds of reformation—a transient, or a permanent one—an alteration in habits, which originating in emotion, will last so long as that emotion continues, and then after a few fruitless efforts, be given up—a repentance which will be repented of; or, again, a permanent change, which will be reversed by no after-thought—a repentance not to be repented of. Sorrow is in itself, therefore, a thing neither good nor bad; its value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life, or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hot-house, a great power also in the coffin; it expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigour to vegetable life; and warmth, too, develops, with tenfold rapidity, the weltering process of dissolution. So, too, with sorrow. There are spirits in which it develops the seminal principle of life; there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(228.) Trust not in any unsanctified afflictions, as if these could permanently and really change the true condition of your heart. I have seen the characters of the writing which the flames had turned into a film of buoyant coal; I have seen the thread which has been passed through the fire retain, in its cold grey ashes, the twist it had got in spinning; I have found every shivered splinter of the flint as hard as the unbroken stone: and let trials come, in providence, sharp as the fire and ponderous as the crushing hammer, unless a gracious God send along with these something else than these, bruised, broken, bleeding as thy heart may be, its nature remains the same. —*Guthrie.*

IX. *ITS DIVERSE EFFECTS.*

(229.) The stalk and the ear of corn fall upon the threshing-floor under one and the same flail, but the one is shattered in pieces, the other preserved. From one and the same olive, and from under one and the same press, is crushed out both oil and dregs, but the one is tunned up for use, the other thrown out as unserviceable; and by one and the same breath the fields are perfumed with sweetness, and annoyed with unpleasant savours. Thus afflictions are inci-

dental to good and bad, may and do befall both alike, but by the providence of God not upon the same account. Good men are put into the furnace for their trial, bad men for their ruin; the one is sanctified by afflictions, the other made far worse than before; the self-same affliction is as a loadstone to the one, to draw him to heaven, as a millstone to the other, to sink him down into hell.

—*Pinto*, 1584.

(230.) There is as much difference between the sufferings of the saints and those of the ungodly as there is between the cords with which an executioner pinions a condemned malefactor and the bandages wherewith a tender surgeon binds his patient.

—*Arrowsmith*, 1602–1659.

(231.) Afflictions sent by Providence melt the constancy of the noble-minded, but confirm the obduracy of the vile. The same furnace that hardens clay liquefies gold; and in the strong manifestations of divine power Pharaoh found his punishment, but David his pardon. —*Colton*, 1832.

(232.) How different are summer storms from winter ones! In winter they rush over the earth with their violence; and if any poor remnants of foliage or flowers have lingered behind, these are swept along at one gust. Nothing is left but desolation; and long after the rain has ceased, pools of water and mud bear tokens of what has been. But when the clouds have poured out their torrents in summer, when the winds have spent their fury, and the sun breaks forth again in glory, all things seem to rise with renewed loveliness from their refreshing bath. The flowers, glistening with rainbows, smell sweeter than before; the grass seems to have gained another brighter shade of green; and the young plants which had hardly come into sight, have taken their place among their fellows in the borders, so quickly have they sprung among the showers. The air, too, which may previously have been oppressive, is become clear, and soft, and fresh. Such, too, is the difference when the storms of affliction fall on hearts unrenewed by Christian faith and on those who abide in Christ. In the former, they bring out the dreariness and desolation which may before have been unapparent. The gloom is not relieved by the prospect of any cheering ray to follow it; of any flowers or fruits to show its beneficence. But in the true Christian soul, "though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning." A sweet smile of hope and love follows every tear; and tribulation itself is turned into the chief of blessings.

—*Spurgeon.*

(233.) "You smell delightfully fragrant," said the Gravel-walk to a bed of Camomile flowers under the window.

"We have been trodden on," replied the Camomiles.

"Does that cause it?" asked the Gravel-walk. "Treading on me produces no sweetness."

"Our natures are different," answered the Camomiles. "Gravel-walks become only the harder by being trodden upon; but the effect on our own selves is, that if pressed and bruised when the dew is upon us, to give forth the sweet smell which you now perceive." —*Bowden.*

X. *SHOULD BE ANTICIPATED AND PREPARED FOR.*

(234.) Look for them. The first day that we begin to be Christians we must reckon of the cross. Christ has drawn up the form of our indenture, to which every one must yield and consent before he can call Him Master. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." In Luke it is, "take up his cross daily." Though there be fair days as well as foul in Christianity, yet we must every day be ready. As porters stand in the street waiting for a burden for them to carry if they be hired to it, so must a Christian every day be prepared to take up his burden, if God shall call him to it. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(235.) Be prepared for afflictions. To this end would Christ have us reckon upon the cross, that we may be forewarned. He that builds a house does not take care that the rain should not descend upon it, or the storm should not beat upon it, or the wind blow upon it; there is no fencing against these things, they cannot be prevented by any care of ours; but that the house may be able to endure all this without prejudice. And he that builds a ship, does not make this his work, that it should never meet with waves and billows, that is impossible; but that it may be light and staunch, and able to endure all weathers. A man that takes care for his body does not care for this, that he meet with no change of weather, hot and cold, but how his body may bear all this. Thus should Christians do; not so much to take care how to shift and avoid afflictions, but how to bear them with an even quiet mind. As we cannot hinder the rain from falling upon the house, nor the waves from beating upon the ship, nor change of weather and seasons from affecting the body, so it is not in our power to hinder the falling out of afflictions and tribulations: all that lies upon us, is to make provision for such an hour, that we be not overwhelmed by it. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(236.) Do not imagine that because you have hitherto experienced but little trouble, your path shall always be smooth and easy. No; it is a thorny wilderness that you have to pass through, and a troubled ocean that you have to navigate ere you can reach the desired haven. The mariner, when scarcely launched upon the deep, does not expect that the breeze shall be alike gentle to the end of his voyage; he prepares for storms, that he may be ready to meet them when they come. In like manner, you also will do well to prepare for seasons of adversity and trial. —*Simeon*, 1758–1836.

AMBITION.

1. Is in itself a beneficial impulse.

(237.) One of the strongest incitements to excel in such arts and accomplishments as are in the highest esteem among men, is the natural passion which the mind of man has for glory; which though it may be faulty in the excess of it, ought by no means to be discouraged. Perhaps some moralists are too severe in beating down this principle, which seems to be a spring implanted by nature to give motion to all the latent powers of the soul, and is always observed to exert itself with the greatest force in the most generous dispositions. The men whose characters have shone the brightest among the ancient Romans appear to have been strongly animated by this passion. —*Hughes.*

2. Yet the craving for prominence is often the mark of a poor nature.

(238.) The nettle mounteth on high; while the violet shrouds itself under its own leaves, and is chiefly found out by its fragrancy. Let Christians be satisfied with the honour that cometh from God only.

—*Salter*, 1840.

3. It is usually unwise.

(239.) Seek not great things for yourselves in this world, for if your garments be too long, they will make you stumble; and one staff helps a man in his journey, when many in his hands at once hinders him; but labour to do great things for God, and God will do great things for you.

—*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

(240.) Who would not be covetous, and with reason, if health could be purchased with gold? Who not ambitious, if it were at the command of power, or restored by honour? But, alas! a white staff will not help gouty feet to walk better than a common cane; nor a blue ribbon bind up a wound so well as a fillet; the glitter of gold or of diamonds will but hurt sore eyes, instead of curing them; and an aching head will be no more eased by wearing a crown instead of a common night-cap.

—*Sir. W. Temple.*

4. It blinds the understanding.

(241.) Ambition is to the mind what the cap is to the falcon, it first blinds us, and then compels us to lower, by reason of our blindness.

—*E. Cook.*

5. It is unsatiable.

(242.) Ambition is like the sea which swallows all the rivers and is none the fuller; or like the grave whose insatiable maw for ever craves for the bodies of men. It is not like an amphora, which being full receives no more, but its fulness swells it till a still greater vacuum is formed. In all probability, Napoleon never longed for a sceptre till he had gained the bâton, nor dreamed of being emperor of Europe till he had gained the crown of France. Caligula, with the world at his feet, was mad with a longing for the moon, and could he have gained it the imperial lunatic would have coveted the sun. It is in vain to feed a fire which grows the more voracious the more it is supplied with fuel; he who lives to satisfy his ambition has before him the labour of Sisyphus, who rolled up hill an ever-rebounding stone, and the task of the daughters of Danaus, who are condemned for ever to attempt to fill a bottomless vessel with buckets full of holes.

—*Spurgeon.*.

6. It causes men to set aside all moral restraints.

(243.) What are not men ready to do to gratify an inordinate and insatiate ambition! You know how the old Romans built their military roads. They projected them in a mathematical line, straight to the point of termination, and *everything had to give way*, there could be no deviation. And so on went the road, bridging rivers, filling up ravines, hewing down hills, levelling forests, cutting its way through every obstacle! Just so men set their lust upon self-emolument, some height of ambition, the attainment of place, rank, power, and hew their way toward it, not minding what gives way. No obstacle is insurmountable, health, happiness, home-comfort, honesty, integrity, conscience, the law of God, everything is sacrificed to the god of ambition!

—*A. T. Pierson.*

7. It exposes us to bitter disappointments.

(244.) Ambition may rear turrets in emulation of heaven, and vainglory build castles in the air; but they shall have no roof, as the latter shall have no foundation. Philip threatened the Lacedemonians, that, as he entered their country, he would utterly extinguish them. They wrote him no other answer but *Si* (if); meaning, it was a condition well put in, for he was never like to come there.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(245.) Could we know the secret heart-breaks and wearinesses of ambitious men, we should need no Wolsey's voice crying, "I charge thee, fling away ambition;" but we should flee from it as from the most accursed blood-sucking vampire which ever uprose from the caverns of hell." —*Spurgeon.*

8. The penalties of successful ambition more than outweigh its pleasures.

(246.) Envy, a mischief not to be avoided of the great. This shadow follows that body inseparably. All the curs in the street are ready to fall upon that dog that does away with the bone; and every man hath a cudgel to fling at a well-loaded tree; whereas a mean condition is no eyesore to any beholder. Low shrubs are not wont to be struck with lightning; but tall oaks and cedars feel their flames. While David kept his father's sheep at home, he might sing sweetly to his harp in the fields without any disturbance; but when he once comes to the court, and finds applause and greatness creep upon him, now emulation, despite, and malice, dog him close at the heels wheresoever he goes. Let him leave the court, and flee into the wilderness; there these bloodhounds follow him in hot suit. Let him run into the land of the Philistines; there they find him out, and chase him to Ziklag. And if at the last he hath climbed up to his just throne, and there hopes to breathe him after his tedious pursuit, even there he meets with more unquietness than in the desert; and, notwithstanding all his royalty, at last cries out, "Lord, remember David and all his troubles." How many have we known whom their wealth hath betrayed, and made innocent malefactors! who might have slept securely upon a hard bolster, and, in a poor estate, outlived their judges and accusers! Besides, on even ground, a fall may be harmless; but he that falls from on high cannot escape bruising. He therefore that can think the benefits of eminence can countervail the dangers which haunt greatness, let him affect to overtop others: for me, let me rather be safely low than high with peril. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(247.) As for worldly greatness, affect neither the thing nor the reputation of it. Look up, if you please, to the top of steeples, masts, and mountains, but stand below if you would be safe. Though the chimney be the highest part of the house, it is not the cleanest or the sweetest part; it is more scorched with the fire and suffocated with the smoke than other parts.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(248.) The tallest trees are most in the power of the winds, and ambitious men most exposed to the blast of fortunes. —*E. Cook.*

9. Its triumphs are soon ended.

(249.) I cannot but look upon all the glory and dignity of this world, lands and lordships, crowns

and kingdoms, even as on some brain-sick, beggarly fellow, that borrows fine clothes, and plays the part of a king or lord for an hour on a stage, and then comes down, and the sport is ended, and they are beggars again. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

10. It must be checked in its commencement.

(250.) The smallest root of it, if not quickly plucked up, presently becomes a tree, the deep and strong roots whereof twine about the heart.
—*Fenelon.*

11. There is a Christian ambition by which we should all be inspired.

(251.) He who diffuses the most happiness and mitigates the most distress within his own circle is undoubtedly the best friend to his country and the world, since nothing more is necessary than for all men to imitate his conduct, to make the greatest part of the misery of the world cease in a moment. While the passion, then, of some is to shine, of some to govern, and of others to accumulate, let one great passion alone influence our breasts, the passion which reason ratifies, which conscience approves, which Heaven inspires,—that of being and doing good. —*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

ANGELS, THE.

1. Reasonableness of belief in their existence.

(252.) There are many who deny the existence of any spiritual beings save God and man. The wide universe is to them a solitary land, without inhabitants. There is but one oasis filled with living creatures. It is the earth on which we move; and we, who have from century to century crawled from birth to death, and fretted out our little lives upon this speck of star-dust which sparkles amid a million, million others upon the mighty plain of infinite space, we are the only living spirits. There is something pitiable in this impertinence. It is a drop of dew in the lonely cup of a gentian, which imagines itself to be all the water in the universe. It is the summer midge which has never left its forest pool, dreaming that it and its companions are the only living creatures in earth or air.

There is no proof of the existence of other beings than ourselves, but there is also no proof of the contrary. Apart from revelation, we can think about the subject as we please. But it does seem incredible that we alone should represent in the universe the image of God; and if in one solitary star another race of beings dwell, if we concede the existence of a single spirit other than ourselves, we have allowed the principle. The angelic world of which the Bible speaks is possible to faith.
—*Stopford Brooke.*

2. How little we know of them.

(253.) Little is said [in the Bible] of angels. They are like the constellations in space: there is light enough to reveal, to show that they are; but more is needed to reveal all their nature and functions. —*Henry Batchelor.*

3. Their appearance to the shepherds.

(254.) There is something so unspeakably great and glorious in this union of earthly obscurity with heavenly splendour, of angels with shepherds, of the form of a servant with the majesty of a king, that the well-known saying, "It is not thus invented," can never be better applied than to the whole narrative. —*J. J. Van Oosterzee.*

4. Inseparable from our conceptions of Christ.

(255.) Their airy and gentle coming may well be compared to the glory of colours flung by the sun upon the morning clouds, that seem to be born just where they appear. Like a beam of light striking through some orifice, they shine upon Zacharias in the temple. As the morning light finds the flowers, so they found the mother of Jesus; and their message fell on her, pure as dewdrops on the lily. To the shepherds' eyes, they filled the midnight arch like auroral beams of light; but not as silently, for they sang more marvellously than when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. They communed with the Saviour in His glory of transfiguration, sustained Him in the anguish of the garden, watched Him at the tomb; and as they had thronged the earth at His coming, so they seem to have hovered in the air in multitudes at the hour of His ascension. Beautiful as they seem, they are never mere poetical adornments. The occasions of their appearing are grand, the reasons weighty, and their demeanour suggests and befits the highest conception of superior beings. Their very coming and going is not with earthly movement. They are suddenly seen in the air, as one sees white clouds round out from the blue sky in a summer's day, that melt back even while one looks upon them. We could not imagine Christ' history without angelic lore. The sun without clouds of silver and gold, the morning on the fields without dew-diamonds, but not the Saviour without His angels. —*Beecher.*

5. How they set us an example.

(256.) No sooner did one angel of the Lord announce the manifestation of God in the flesh, than the whole multitude of the heavenly host immediately are on the wing, breaking forth into the harmonious praises of their Creator, that by their example they might teach us, as often as any one of our brethren should proclaim aloud the lessons of Divine wisdom, or as often as we ourselves should ponder on any sacred truths we have heard or read, that we should at once give praise to the Lord by word of mouth and in our hearts and lives.
—*Bede*, 672–725.

6. Their interest in man.

(257.) The interest felt by the angels in all that concerns the Gospel, and the eternal interests of men, put on their probation, form a very humbling contrast to our cold indifference in what concerns us much more nearly than them. It is as if, on a ship nearing a lee shore in the midst of tremendous breakers, while every inhabitant of the neighbouring coast was watching her progress with beating hearts, and longing to see her delivered, the passengers and crew should pursue their wonted amusements; or, hanging over the straining sides, idly speculate on the number of billows, and sport with the raging foam. Alas! with the hosts of heaven there is all sympathy and intense interest—with perishing men, all apathy and madness.

7. Their care for God's children.

(258.) Lot's guests were his best friends; he had entertained angels, and they now deliver him; he

would have preserved them, and they did preserve him. Where should the angels lodge, but with Lot? The houses of holy men are full of those heavenly spirits, though they be not seen; their protection is comfortable, though not visible. In our tents they pitch their tents; and when devils would mischief us, they turn them out of doors. It is the honour of God's saints to be attended by angels while in life, and to be exalted by angels when they die. Lazarus was "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." As, in a family, the greater children carry the less, so God has charged His elder sons, the angels, to bear up our souls.

—*Adams*, 1653.

8. Their joy in the conversion of sinners.

(259.) "A child lost in the forest!" Such was the cry which startled the inhabitants of a remote and thinly-populated district in the wilderness. After a search of three days, the child was found, faint and famished, and well-nigh dead with weariness and terror. With songs and shouts they bore him back in their arms, swift runners going before, and crying "FOUND, FOUND!" The entire hamlet was stirred by the tidings, and broke forth into thanksgivings. All participated in the happiness of the parents; and though there were a hundred children in the settlement, more joy was felt that night over the one little wanderer rescued from death, than over the ninety and nine that had been exposed to no danger.

This touching incident well illustrates the joy of angels over the repentant sinner—that thrill of rapture every conversion sends through all the ranks of the blessed. And why do they so rejoice? Conversion brings a new servant to their Lord. It is the accession of a new individual to that holy kingdom of which God and His Christ are the head. Satan loses a vassal, and God reclaims a subject. In every individual converted and saved, they also behold a living manifestation of divine mercy, a new trophy in the temple of Christ's praise, a new jewel added to His crown, a new star lighted up in the firmament of His glory. And then, as they reflect on the misery he escapes, the gloom, and the flame, and the groans of the prison-house from which he has been delivered, and think of the overflowing glories and transports of a blessed immortality awaiting him in their happy society, is it any wonder that they should burst forth in triumphant hosannas, and make all heaven ring with this outgushing joy?

We may illustrate this by an incident which occurred in connection with the wreck of the ill-fated steamer *Central America*. A few days after that startling event, which sent hundreds to a watery grave, and plunged the nation in grief, a pilot-boat was seen, on a fair, breezy morning, standing up the bay of New York. The very appearance of the vessel gave token that she was freighted with tidings of no common interest. With every sail set, and streamers flying, she leaped along the waters as if buoyant with some great joy; while the glad winds that swelled her canvas, and the sparkling waves that kissed her sides, and urged her on her way, seemed to laugh with conscious delight. As she drew nearer an unusual excitement was visible on her deck; and her captain, running out to the extreme point of the bowsprit, and swinging his cap, appeared to be shouting something with intense earnestness and animation. At first, the distance prevented his being distinctly understood. But soon, as the vessel came farther into the harbour, the words, *Three more saved! Three more saved!* reached the nearest listeners. They were caught up by the crews of the multitudinous ships that lay anchored around, and sailors sprang wildly into the rigging and shouted, "*Three more saved!*" They were heard on the wharves; and the porter threw down his load, and the drayman stopped his noisy cart, and shouted, "*Three more saved!*" The tidings ran along the streets; and the newsboys left off crying the last murder, and shouted, "*Three more saved!*" Busy salesmen dropped their goods, bookkeepers their pens, bankers their discounts, tellers their gold, and merchants, hurrying on the stroke of the last hour of grace to pay their notes, paused in their headlong haste, and shouted, "*Three more saved!*" Louder and louder grew the cry—fast and faster it spread—along the crowded piers of the Hudson and East River—up by the graves of Trinity, the hotels of Broadway, the marble palaces of the Fifth Avenue—over the heights of Brooklyn—across to Hoboken and Jersey City—away, away, beyond tower and pinnacle, beyond mansion and temple, beyond suburb and hamlet—till a million hearts pulsated with its thrill, and above all the sounds of the vast metropolis, mightier than all, hushing all, rose the great, exultant shout, "*Three more saved! Three more saved!*"

If cold and selfish men will thus stop short in the eager quest of gain or of pleasure, to let the voice of humanity speak out, and to express their joy that three fellow-beings have been rescued from the ocean depths, shall we deem it an incredible thing that the holy and loving denizens of heaven should rejoice when a sinner repents, and is delivered from the abyss of hell? —*Ide.*

(260.) I have read that when the Declaration of Independence was being made in Philadelphia, in 1776, the people were so anxious to know the exact moment when the document was completed, that they placed a man at the door of the hall where the delegates were assembled, and another man on the stairs leading to the tower, and another man with his hand on the rope of the bell; and then, when the last signer of the Declaration had affixed his name, the man at the door shouted upward, "*Ring!*" and the man on the stairs heard it, and shouted upward, "*Ring!*" and the man with his hand on the bell of the rope heard it, and sounded the tidings over the city.

If to-night, in the strength of Christ, you would make your declaration of independence from the power of sin, there would be great rejoicing on earth and in heaven. I would cry upward to the angels poising in mid-air, *Ring!* and they to those standing on the battlements of heaven, *Ring!* and those on the battlements to the dwellers in the temples and in the mansions, *Ring!* and all heaven would ring, and ring, at the news of a soul redeemed.

—*Talmage.*

ANGER.

1. Defined.

(261.) Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, . . . defines anger to be "a desire, accompanied by mental uneasiness, of avenging one's self, or, as it were, in-

flicting punishment for something that appears an unbecoming slight, either in things which concern one's self, or some of one's friends." And he hence infers that, if this be anger, it must be invariably felt towards some *individual*, not against a *class* or description of persons. —*Whately.*

2. Differs from hatred.

(262.) There is a great difference between the sin of one who is angry, and the cruelty of one who holds another in hatred. For even with our children are we angry; but who is ever found to hate his children? Among the very cattle, too, the cow, in a sort of weariness, will sometimes in anger drive away her suckling calf; but anon she embraces it with all the affection of a mother. She is in a way disgusted with it when she butts it; yet, when she misses it, she will seek after it. Nor do we discipline our children otherwise than with a degree of anger and indignation; yet we should not discipline them at all, but in love to them.

So far, then, is every one who is angry from hating, that sometimes one would be rather convicted of hating if he were not angry; for suppose a child wishes to play in some river's stream, by whose force he would be like to perish, if you see this and patiently suffer it, this would be hating—your patient suffering him in his death. How far better is it to be angry than to suffer him to perish. Great is the difference, indeed, between one's exceeding due limits in some words through anger, which he afterwards wipes off by repenting of it, and the keeping an insidious purpose shut up in the heart. —*Augustine*, 353–429.

(263.) Anger is a transient hatred; or, at least, very like it. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(264.) Adam Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, seems to consider as the chief point of distinction between anger and hatred, the necessity to the gratification of the former that the object of it should not only be punished, but punished by means of the offended person, and on account of the particular injury inflicted. Anger requires that the offender should not only be made to grieve in his turn, but to grieve for that particular wrong which has been done by him. The natural gratification of this passion tends, of its own accord, to produce all the political ends of punishment: the correction of the criminal, and example to the public. —*Whately.*

3. A compound of pride and folly.

(265.) He does anger too much honour who calls it madness, which being a distemper of the brain, and a total absence of all reason, is innocent of all the ill effects it may produce, whereas anger is an affected madness, compounded of pride and folly, and an intention to do commonly more mischief than it can bring to pass.

—*Lord Clarendon*, 1608–1673.

4. Different kinds of anger.

(266.) If of two evils we ought to choose the least, sudden anger upon slight and inadequate occasions is, at anyrate, better than secret and cunning malice, which burns the longer the more it is concealed, and generally breaks out, at its own time, into inextinguishable revenge.

Irascibility is like a flame in flax or straw, which suddenly blazes up, and as suddenly dies; and those subject to it are for the most part upright, truthful, and honourable persons, who, when the transitory heat is past, repay by their liberality any injury they may have done.

Slow wrath, however, is like the flame of sulphur, or like fire in green wood, which, the longer it takes to kindle, burns with all the more intense heat. Persons who, when they receive an affront, knavishly smile, keep silence, and pretend indifference, generally treasure up rancour in their breasts, and wait for some convenient time to discharge it with greater vengeance. They are like goats, which deliberately recede from their adversary, when they mean to give him a hard blow, and level him with the ground. Of such persons it is well to beware.

—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

5. Impulses to anger must be carefully repressed.

(267.) When anger rises, think of the consequences. —*Confucius.*

(268.) If anger is not restrained, it is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it. —*Seneca.*

(269.) If we have eaten poison, we seek forthwith to vomit it up again with all speed; and if we be fallen into any disease, we use the means we can to provide a remedy; so, likewise, when we feel any unruly motions of anger, and the fiery flames thereof be once kindled in our hearts, we must be careful to repress them, as we would be to quench the fire in our houses. —*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(270.) If anger arises in thy breast, instantly seal up thy lips, and let it not go forth: for, like fire when it wants vent, it will suppress itself. It is good in a fever to have a tender and smooth tongue; but it is better that it be in anger; for if it be rough and distempered, there it is an ill sign, but here it is an ill cause. Angry passion is a fire, and angry words like breath to fan them together; they are like steel and flint, sending out fire by mutual collision. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(271.) Never do anything that can denote an angry mind; for, although everybody is born with a certain degree of passion, and, from untoward circumstances, will sometimes feel its operation, and be what they call "out of humour," yet a sensible man or woman will never allow it to be discovered. Check and restrain it; never make any determination until you find it has entirely subsided; and always avoid saying anything that you may wish unsaid. —*Lord Collingwood.*

6. Must be moderately expressed.

(272.) They who put on a supreme anger, or express the less anger with the highest reproaches, can do no more to him that steals, than to him that breaks a crystal; *non plus æquo, non diutius æquo*, was a good rule for reprehension of offending servants; but no more anger, no more severe language than the thing deserves: if you chide too long, your reproof is changed into reproach; if too bitterly, it becomes railing; if too loud, it is immodest; if too public, it is like a dog.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612-1667.

7. Is not to be too long retained.

(273.) As fire when it is covered with ashes, yet it is not quenched; even so anger or choler, though it be dissembled, covered, or retained in the heart awhile, yet it is not so quenched, but it hatcheth hatred, which by little and little so converteth itself into his substance, as in short time it becometh inseparable from his nature.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(274.) It is observable that the New Testament precept on the subject of anger is, in so many words, a restraint and not a prohibition. "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Anger in itself is no sin, but it has a tendency to become so rapidly if it be harboured too long. Like the manna it corrupts and breeds worms if kept over night in the close chamber of the heart. Then it will appear in the morbid shapes of spite, malice, revenge. The Christian rule is to throw it all away before the fermentation commences. —*Goulburn.*

8. Its Unrighteousness.

(275.) The angry man, like the two hot disciples that called fire from heaven, ordains himself the judge, and would have God turn his executioner.

—*Adams*, 1653.

9. Its Folly.

(276.) The choleric man is like one that dwells in a thatched house, who, being rich in the morning, by a sudden fire is a beggar before night.

How foolish is the bee that loses her life and her sting together. She puts another to a little pain, but how dearly does she pay for it.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(277.) To be angry, is to revenge the faults of others upon ourselves. —*Pope*, 1688–1744.

10. The folly of meeting anger with anger.

(278.) Like as if a man join fire to fire, he maketh the flame the greater: even so, if a man think to suppress another man's anger by being angry himself, he shall both lose his labour, and rather increase the other man's anger.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(279.) A mad dog that bites another makes him as mad as himself; so, usually the injuries and reproaches of others foster up our revenge, and then there is no difference between us.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

11. Silence is the best reply to offensive sayings.

(280.) It is reported of Titus Vespasian, that when any one spake ill of him, he was wont to say that he was above false reports; and if they were true, he had more reason to be angry with himself than the relator. And the good Emperor Theodosius commanded no man should be punished that spake against him: "for what was spoken slightly," said he, "was to be laughed at; what spitefully, to be pardoned; what angerly, to be pitied; and if truly, he would thank him for it." Oh, that there were but such a frame of spirit in this carping age of ours, wherein men, like tinder, are ready to take fire upon the least spark that falls, to quarrel sometimes on the most inoffensive word that can be spoken; whereas the best way is to be silent. *Sile et funestam dedisti plagam* (Say nothing, and you pay a talking man to the purpose). Thus it was that Hezekiah would not answer Rabshakeh, nor Jeremiah Hananiah, nor our blessed Saviour His railing adversaries. He reviled not His revilers; He threatened not His opponents. (Jer. xxviii. 11; Matt. xxvi. 62; 1 Pet. ii. 23.) —*Spencer*, 1654.

12. It often works irreparable mischief.

(281.) He that is inebriated with passion is unfit for an action; like Samson's foxes, he scatters firebrands abroad, to the hurt of all that are near him.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(282.) Your anger may sting venomously. Your jealousy may do a mischief in one short hour that your whole life cannot repair. Your cruel pride may do a whole age's work in a day. You cannot take back the injuries that you have done to those whose hearts lie throbbing next to yours. Ah! when winter has frozen my heliotropes, it makes no difference that the next morning thaws them out. There lie the heliotropes—a black, noisome heap; and it is possible for you to chill a tender nature so that no thawing can restore it. You may relent, but frost has been there, and you cannot bring back freshness and fragrance to the blossom. You cannot sweeten the embittered heart to which your words have been like scorpions. It is a terrible thing for a man to have the power of poisoning the hearts of others, and yet carry that power carelessly. He cannot find place for repentance, though he seeks it carefully with tears. —*Beecher.*

13. Irritableness is a characteristic of weak and base natures.

(283.) Anger is certainly a kind of baseness; as it appears well in the weakness of those subjects in whom it reigns,—children, women, old folks, sick folks. Only men must beware that they carry their anger rather with scorn than with fear; so that they may seem rather to be above the injury than below it; which is a thing easily done, if a man will give law to himself in it. —*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(284.) It is the base and vile bramble, the fruit of the earth's curse, that tears and rends what is next to it. —*Adams*, 1653.

(285.) Wise men are not too nimble at an injury. For as, with fire, the light stuff and rubbish kindle sooner than the solid and more compacted; so anger sooner inflames a fool than a man composed in his resolutions. —*Feltham*, 1668.

14. How the tendency to it is to be overcome.

(286.) There is no other way but to meditate and ruminate well upon the effects of anger,—how it troubles man's life; and the best time to do this is to look back upon anger when the fit is thoroughly over. Seneca saith well, "that anger is like rain, which breaks itself upon that it falls." The Scripture exhorteth us "to possess our souls in patience:" whosoever is out of patience is out of possession of his soul. —*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

APOSTLES, THE

1. Were trained for their task.

(287.) Such men Christ took as might be no occasion to their hearers to ascribe the work to their efficiency; but yet, such men, too, as should be no examples to insufficient men to adventure upon that

great service; but men, though ignorant before, yet docile and glad to learn. In a rough stone, a cunning lapidary will easily foresee what his cutting, and his polishing, and his art will bring that stone to. A cunning statuary discerns in a marble stone under his feet where there will arise an eye, and an ear, and a hand, and other lineaments, to make it a perfect statue. Much more did our Saviour Christ, who was Himself the author of that disposition in them (for no man has any such disposition but from God), foresee in these fishermen an inclinableness to become useful in that great service of His Church. Therefore, He took them from their own ship, but He sent them from His cross. He took them, weather-beaten with north and south winds, and routh-cast with foam and mud, but He sent them back suppled, and smoothed, and levigated, quickened and animated with that spirit which He had breathed into them. He took fishermen, and He sent fishers of men. He sent them not out to preach, as soon as He had called them to Him; He called them *ad discipulatum* before He called them *ad apostolatum;* He taught them before they taught others. —*Donne*, 1573-1631.

2. Their natural unfitness for the task assigned them.

(288.) When kings send out ambassadors to represent their person and their interests in foreign courts, they choose out from amongst the people men of high name and reputation, well skilled in the ways of the world and the policy of states; whom, having clothed with powers plenipotentiary, and appointed with officers and servants of every kind, they send forth accredited with royal letters to all courts and kingdoms whither they may come, furnished with grace and splendour to feast the common eye, and laden with rich gifts to take the cupidity or conciliate the favour of those with whom they have to do. Also, when a nation fitteth out a journey or voyage of discovery, they choose out men of fortitude, humanity, and skill, upon whom to bestow a valorous and steady crew, who will not be daunted by the dangers, nor baffled by the difficulties of the work; and having called in the whole science and art of the country, to fortify and accommodate the danger-hunting men, they launch them forth amidst the hearty cheers and benedictions of their country. And when a nation arrayeth its strength to battle for its ancient rights and dominions; or when a noble nation armeth in the cause of humanity to help an insulted sister in the day of her need, as we Britons have oft been called upon to do, the nation is shaken to her very centre with commotion, and every arm and sinew of the land straineth to the work. Fleets and armies, and munitions of war; the whole chivalry, the whole prowess, strength and policy, and oft the whole wealth of the land muster in the cause; and the chief captains forsake their wives and children, and peaceful homes; and the warlike harness is taken from the hall where it hung in peace; and the bold peasantry come trooping from their altars and their household hearths; and "the trumpet speaketh to the armed throng:" they gather into one, and descend unto the shores of the surrounding sea, whither every fleet ship and gallant sailor have made ready to bear them to the place where the rights of the nation, or the insulted rights of humanity, cry upon their righteous arm for redress; and their kinsmen follow them with their prayers, and their wives and children, their fathers, and the households of their fathers, with the assembled congregations of the people, commit them and their righteous cause to the safe conduct and keeping of the Lord of Hosts.

But when the King of Heaven sendeth forth these twelve ambassadors to the nations, fitteth out these discoverers of the people that sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and furnisheth forth this little army to subvert the thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers of darkness which brooded over the degenerate earth, to bring forth the lost condition of humanity, and establish its crown of glory as at the first, He took men of no name nor reputation, endowed with no Greek, with no Roman fame, by science untaught, by philosophy unschooled, fishermen from the shores of an inland sea; the class of men, which of all classes is distinguished for no exploit in the story of the world; Galileans, a people despised of the Jews, who were themselves a despised people. As at first, when God wished to make a man in His own image, after His own likeness, He brought not the materials from heavenly regions, neither created a finer quintessence of matter for the high occasion, but took from the ground a handful of dust, thereon to impress His divine image, and thereinto to breathe the spirit of lives: so the Son of God, Himself a servant, despised and rejected of men, when He chose vessels to bear His name before Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, preferred that they should be empty of human greatness, without any grace or comeliness in the sight of man, without any odour of a good name, or rich contents of learning or knowledge;—that the treasure being in earthen vessels, the praise might be of God.

—*Irving.*

3. The wonderfulness of their success.

(289.) Do the Greeks charge the Apostles with want of learning? This same charge is their praise. And when they say that the Apostles were rude, let us follow up the remark, and say, that they were also untaught, and unlettered, and poor, and vile, and wanting in acuteness, and insignificant persons. It is not a slander on the Apostles to say so, but it is even a glory that, being such, they should have outshone the whole world. For these untrained, and rude, and illiterate men, have completely vanquished the wise, and powerful, and the tyrants, and those who flourished in wealth and glory, and all outward good things, as though they had not been men at all: from whence it is manifest that great is the power of the Cross; and that these things were done by no human strength. For the results do not keep the course of nature, rather the good done was above all nature. Now, when anything takes place above nature, and exceedingly above it, on the side of rectitude and utility, it is quite plain that these things are done by some Divine power and co-operation. And observe: the fisherman, the tentmaker, the publican, the ignorant, the unlettered, coming from the far distant country of Palestine, and having beaten off their own ground the philosophers, the masters of oratory, the skilful debaters, alone prevailed against them in a short space of time; in the midst of many perils, the opposition of people and kings, the striving of nature herself, length of time, the vehement resistance of inveterate custom, demons in arms, the devil in battle-array, and stirring up all—

kings, rulers, people, nations, cities, barbarians, Greeks, philosophers, orators, sophists, historians, laws, tribunals, divers kinds of punishments, deaths innumerable, and of all sorts. But, nevertheless, all these were confuted, and gave way when the fishermen spake; just like the light dust, which cannot bear the rush of violent winds. Now, what I say is, let us learn thus to dispute with the Greeks; that we be not like beasts and cattle, but "prepared" as concerning "the hope which is in us." And let us pause for a while to work out this topic, no unimportant one; and let us say to them, How did the weak overcome the strong; the twelve, the world? Not by using the same armour, but in nakedness contending with men in arms.

For, say, if twelve men, unskilled in matters of war, were to leap into the midst of an immense and armed host of soldiers, themselves not only unarmed but of weak frame also; and to receive no harm from them, nor yet be wounded, though assailed with ten thousand weapons; if, while the darts were piercing them through, with bare naked body, they overthrew all their foes, using no weapons but striking with the hand, and in conclusion killing some, and others took captive and led away, themselves receiving not so much as a wound, would any one have ever said that the thing was of man? And yet the trophy of the Apostles is much more wonderful than that. For a man's escaping a wound is not so wonderful by far, as that the ordinary and unlettered person,—that a fisherman,—should overcome such a body of talent; and neither for fewness, nor for poverty, nor for dangers, nor for prepossession of habit, nor for so great austerity of the precepts given in charge, nor for the daily deaths, nor for the multitude of those who were deceived, nor for the great reputation of the deceivers, be turned from his purpose.

—*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

(290.) Had it been published by a voice from heaven, that twelve poor men, taken out of boats and creeks, without any help of learning, should conquer the world to the cross, it might have been thought an illusion against all the reason of men; yet we know it was undertaken and accomplished by them. They published this doctrine in Jerusalem, and quickly spread it over the greatest part of the world. Folly outwitted wisdom, and weakness overpowered strength. The conquest of the East by Alexander was not so admirable as the enterprise of these poor men.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

4. Their success is a proof that they wrought miracles.

(291.) A few persons of an odious and despised country could not have filled the world with believers, had they not shown undoubted credentials from the Divine person who sent them on such a message. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

5. Their boldness.

(292.) Many interdictions rung peals of menaces in the Apostles' ears, that they "should speak no more in the name and word of Christ;" they did all rather, like bells, toll them into the Church, to preach it more fervently. The princes of the nations would have hedged it in with their prohibitions; but the word of heaven and edict of God's spiritual court of glory scorned the prohibitions given by their temporary laws. They might easier have hedged in the wind, or pounded the eagle.

—*Adams*, 1653.

6. Their influence compared with that of the ancient philosophers.

(293.) Where are all the sects of philosophers, the Platonists, the Peripatetics, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the rest that filled Greece with their fame, and so many volumes with fancies and error? Like a torrent that rolls down with great noise from the top of a mountain, so for a time the speculations of their lofty minds poured along in a flood of swelling, frothy eloquence; but now (and for many ages since) the very channel is dried up wherein they ran, so that scarce any visible ruins remain in Athens itself of the schools where they taught the greatest among them. Plato, adorned with the title of divine, could never see his commonwealth framed by him with so much study, to be satisfied in one city. Whereas if we consider the gospel of Christ, it is hard to determine whether the doctrine be more simple or the Apostles the first masters of it to outward appearance; yet, without learning or human strength, in a short space they triumphed over that eloquence of the Greeks, the power of the Romans, the rage of the barbarous nations. They abrogated laws, changed customs, and renewed the face of the world.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

ARGUMENTS.

1. Their value.

(294.) *Testimony* is like an arrow shot from a long bow, the force of it depends on the strength of the hand that draws it: *argument* is like an arrow from a cross-bow, which has great force though shot by a child. —*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

2. How they are to be estimated.

(295.) Reasons of things are rather to be taken by weight than tale. —*Collier*, 1650–1726.

3. Are not to be accumulated on one side of a question only.

(296.) Hunting after arguments to make good one side of a question, and wholly to neglect those which favour the other, is wilfully to misguide the understanding; and is so far from giving truth its due value, that it wholly debases it. —*Locke*.

4. Should not be used too profusely.

(297.) Whereas men have many reasons to persuade, to use them all at once weakeneth them. For it argueth a neediness in every one of the reasons, as if one did not trust to any of them, but fled from one to another. —*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

5. Value of probable arguments.

(298.) Probable arguments are like little stars, every one of which will be useless as to our conduct and enlightening, but when they are tied together by order and vicinity, by the finger of God and the hand of an angel, they make a constellation, and are not only powerful in their influence, but like a bright angel to guide and to enlighten our way. And, although the light is not great as the light of

the sun or moon, yet mariners sail by their conduct; and, though with trepidation and some dangers, yet very regularly they enter into the haven. This heap of probable inducements is of no power as a mathematical and physical demonstration, which is in discourse as the sun is in the heaven, but it makes a milky and a white path, visible enough to walk securely. And next to these tapers of effective reason, drawn from the nature, and from the events, and the accidents, and the expectation, and experiences of things, stands the grandeur of a long and united authority. The understanding thus reasoning, that it is not credible that this thing should have escaped the wiser heads of all the great personages in the world, who stood at the chair of princes, or sat in the ruler's chair, and should not only appear to two or three bold, illiterate, or vicious persons, ruled by lusts, and overruled by evil habits. But in this we have the same security and the same confidence that timorous persons have in the dark; they are pleased, and can see what is and what is not if there be a candle; but in the dark they are less fearful if they be in company.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

6. Lawfulness of arguments ad hominem.

(299.) In the persuasion of a truth, it is lawful to use such arguments whose strength is wholly made prevailing by the weakness of him that is to be persuaded. Such as are arguments *ad hominem*, that is, proportionable to the doctrines, customs, usages, belief, and credulity of the man.

The reasons are these:—

1. Because ignorant persons are not capable of such arguments as may demonstrate the question; and he that goes to draw a child to him, may pull him by the long sleeve of his coat, and need not hire a yoke of oxen.

2. That which will demonstrate a truth to one person, possibly will never move another.

But in all arguments which are to prevail by the weakness or advantages taken from the man, he that goes about to persuade must not say anything that he knows to be false; but he must comply and twist about the man's weakness, so as to be innocent all the way. Let him take him that is weak and wrap him in swaddling clothes, but not encompass him with snakes. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

7. Should be conducted calmly.

(300.) We see in experience, that confidence is generally ill-grounded, and is a kind of passion in the understanding; and is commonly made use of, like fury and force, to supply for the weakness and want of argument. If a man can prove what he says by good argument, there is no need of confidence to back and support it. We may at any time trust a plain and substantial reason, and leave it to make its own way, and to bear out itself. But if the man's reasons and arguments be not good, his confidence adds nothing of real force to them, in the opinion of wise men, and tends only to its own confusion. Arguments are like powder, which will carry and do execution according to its true strength; and all the rest is but noise.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

8. Folly of abuse in argument.

(301.) Upon the points in which we dissent from each other, argument will always secure the attention of the wise and good; whereas, invective must disgrace the cause which we may respectively wish to support. —*Parr.*

(302.) Nothing is easier than to use bad names; but bad names are bad arguments. When your opponent is driven to personal abuse, he is driven to his wit's end, and you may safely leave him. Never throw mud. You *may* miss your mark, but you *must* have dirty hands. —*Joseph Parker.*

9. The best mode of refuting sophistical arguments.

(303.) False reasoners are often best confuted by giving them the full swing of their own absurdities. Some arguments may be compared to wheels, where half a turn will put everything upside down that is attached to their peripheries; but if we complete the circle, all things will be just where we found them. Hence, it is common to say, that arguments that prove too much, prove nothing. I once heard a gentleman affirm, that all mankind were governed by a strong and overruling influence, which determined all their actions, and over which they had no control; and the inference deducible from such a position was, that there was no distinction between virtue and vice. Now, let us give this mode of reasoning full play. A murderer is brought before a judge, and sets up this strong and overruling propensity in justification of his crime. Now, the judge, even if he admitted the plea, must, on the criminal's own showing, condemn him to death. He would thus address the prisoner: You had a strong propensity to commit a murder, and this, you say, must do away the guilt of your crime; but *I* have a strong propensity to hang you for it, and this, I say, must also do away with the guilt of your punishment. —*Colton*, 1832.

ASSURANCE.

I. *IS DESIRABLE.*

(304.) The conceit of propriety hardens a man against many inconveniences, and adds much to our pleasure. The mother abides many unquiet nights, many painful throes and unpleasant savours of her child, upon this thought, "It is my own." . . . If we could think, It is my God that cheers me with His presence and blessings, while I prosper; that afflicts me in love, when I am dejected; my Saviour is at God's right hand; my angels stand in His presence—it could not be but God's favour could be sweeter, His chastisements more easy, His benefits more effectual. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(305.) Every man naturally loves that which is his own, and if the thing be good, it doth him the more good to look upon it. Let a man walk in a fair meadow, it pleaseth him well; but it will please him much more if it be his own. His eyes will be more curious in prying into every part, and everything will please him the better. So it is in a cornfield, in an orchard, in a house. So then, if God the Lord be lovely, how much more lovely should He be in our eyes, if He be our Lord God?

—*Holdsworth*, 1627.

II. *IS ESSENTIAL:*—

1. To the comfort and joy of the believer.

(306.) It is related of a man, that being upon the point of drowning in a great river, he looked up and

saw the rainbow in the clouds, and considering that God had set it there as a sign of His covenant, never more to drown the world by water, made this sad conclusion to himself: "But what if He save the world from a deluge of waters, and suffer me to be drowned here in this river, I shall be never the better for that. When I am once gone, all the world is gone with me." Thus it is in the matter of heaven and heavenly things, as in the point of calling and election, whereas it is said that many are called but few chosen; so that if a man cannot make out unto himself that he is none of the many so-called, and one of the few that shall be certainly saved, he must needs be but in a sad condition. What is the blood of Christ, though in itself sufficient to save ten thousand worlds, if it be not efficient in the application thereof unto his soul? He shall be never the better for it. What if the Gospel come to him in word only, and not in power, not in the Holy Ghost and full assurance? It would do him little good. What are promises, if he be not heir of them? What are mercies, if he be no sharer in them? What is heaven, if he have no evidence for it? And what is Christ (though all in all in Himself, yet nothing—nay, the further occasion of damnation to him), if he be not in Him? —*Alardus Æmstrelredamus*, 1518.

(307.) A man may praise God for the redemption of the world, &c., who has no consciousness of having secured an interest in it, but not like him who feels he has a property in it. How different will be their feelings! Just as great will be the difference of interest which will be felt by a stranger passing through a beautiful estate, and by the owner of it. One may admire the richness of the soil, the beauty of its crops, and the stateliness of its trees; but his interest in it will fall very far short of his who has the title and property in it. —*Salter*, 1840.

2. To his spiritual vigour.

(308.) Believe me, the life of grace is no dead level; it is not a fen country, a vast flat. There are mountains and there are valleys. There are tribes of Christians who live in the lowlands, like the poor Swiss of the Valais, who live between the lofty ranges of mountains in the midst of the miasma, where the air is stagnant, and fever has its lair, and the human frame grows languid and enfeebled. Such dwellers in the lowlands of unbelief are for ever doubting, fearing, troubled about their interest in Christ, and tossed to and fro; but there are other believers, who, by God's grace, have climbed the mountain of full assurance and near communion, their place is with the eagle in his eyrie, high aloft; they are like the strong mountaineer, who has trodden the virgin snow, who has breathed the fresh, free air of the Alpine regions, and therefore his sinews are braced, and his limbs are vigorous; these are they who do great exploits, being mighty men, men of renown. —*Spurgeon.*

III. *IS ATTAINABLE.*

(309.) As certain as he that hath a corporeal eye knoweth that he sees, so certainly he that is illuminated with the light of faith knoweth that he believeth. The glorious splendour of such an orient and splendid jewel cannot but show itself. and shine clearly to the heart wherein it dwells. Like a bright lamp set up in the soul, it does not only manifest other things, but also itself appears by its own light. When I see and rely upon a man promising me this or that, I know I see and rely upon him. Shall I by faith behold my blessed Redeemer lifted up, as an only antitype of the brazen serpent, for the everlasting cure of my wounded conscience, and rest upon Him, and yet know no such thing? —*Salter*, 1840.

(310.) Next, it is asked, "Can a man know within himself that he is a Christian? If so, does that constitute experimental religion?"

If it were not that men's minds have been greatly perplexed by diverse and often contrary instructions, so that they are really bewildered, I should almost be disposed to ridicule such a question. When I think of the truth itself, it seems preposterous that a man should not know whether he is a Christian or not. Suppose a man should ask you, "Do you know, sir, whether you are sick or whether you are well?" I think there is no difficulty in your being able to answer that question. You either are well, or, you are sick, or, you are a little unwell. You can state almost to a degree where you are on the scale of health.

Or, to take it out of the sphere of bodily sensation, suppose a man should ask you, "Do you know, sir, whether you are happy or unhappy?" Would you be in doubt as to that?

Suppose a man should come to you and say, "Have you any idea whether you are a man of truth and veracity or not?" If a man wants to know himself on that subject, can he not? Do you not generally have a pretty near estimate of what you are?

Suppose a man should ask you, "Are you a thief, or are you not?' Cannot a man know it if he is honest? It is hard work, I know, for some; but still it can be found out.

Or, put it in a different form still. Suppose a man should ask you, "Are you on the side of justice and liberty, or are you on the side of false aristocracy and oppression?" Can a man doubt which side he is on?

Again, suppose a man should ask you, "Are you a British subject or an American citizen? Do you belong to Great Britain or to the young Stars-and-Stripes country? Which government are you under, anyhow?"

Now, if I think simply of the truth, I aver that it is just as easy and natural that a man should know whether he is a Christian or not, as that he should know whether he is an American or a Briton, whether he belongs to Canada or the United States, whether he is sick or well, whether he is democratic or aristocratic. For religion is not a mystic veil that descends upon a man from afar, that he has no connection with, and that comes and goes as atmospheric conditions do. Religion has in it all the great distinctive elements of intelligent being—namely, reason, conviction, moral will, and distinct and classified emotions; and they belong to man in such relations that he can tell whether he has them or not, and whether he has them on one side or on the other.

But when I look at the feebleness of many persons' minds; when I see their want of discrimination; when I remember how they are blown about by many winds of doctrine; when I observe how some men have the idea that religion is mere ecstatic fervour, and how other men have the idea that religion is something widely different from that; when I call to mind the fact that the tests of religious ex-

perience have been varied by different schools and in different ways; and when I consider how a sensitive conscience and an emotive nature must be drifted hither and thither by these conflicting views —I am constrained to say that a man may be a Christian, and yet be in great doubt as to whether he is one or not. —*Beecher.*

IV. *YET EVEN BY GENUINE BELIEVERS IS NOT ALWAYS ATTAINED.*

(311.) Suppose thou hast not yet attained so much as to this inward peace, yet know thou hast no reason to question the truth of thy faith for want of this. We have peace with God as soon as we believe, but not always with ourselves. The pardon may be past the prince's hand and seal, and yet not put into the prisoner's hand. Thou thinkest them too rash (dost not?) who judged Paul a murderer by the viper that fastened on his hand. And what art thou, who condemnest thyself for an unbeliver, because of those troubles and inward agonies which may fasten for a time on the spirit of the most gracious child God hath on earth?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(312.) Assurance is a fruit that grows out of the root of faith; the fruits in winter appear not upon the tree. Because I see not a flourishing top, shall I deny the existence and sappiness of the root? Mary, when she wept at Christ's feet, had no assurance of His love, yet Christ sends her away with the encomium of her faith, acted before the comfort dropped from His lips. (Luke vii. 45–50.) The characters of faith may be written in the heart as letters engraven upon a seal, yet filled with so much dust as not to be distinguished; the dust hinders the reading of the letters, but does not raze them out. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(313.) A child of God may have the kingdom of grace in his heart, yet not know it. The cup was in Benjamin's sack, though he did not know it was there; thou mayest have faith in thy heart, the cup may be in thy sack, though thou knowest it not. Old Jacob wept for his son Joseph, when Joseph was alive; thou mayest weep for want of grace, when grace may be alive in thy heart. The seed may be in the ground, when we do not see it spring up; the seed of God may be sown in thy heart, though thou dost not perceive the springing of it up. Think not grace is lost, because it is hid.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(314.) Salvation, and the joy of salvation, are not always contemporaneous: the latter does not always accompany the former in present experience, though ultimately, as cause and effect, they must be united. Though they are not *parallel* lines, yet they are *converging* lines which must meet at last, however gradual be the tendency towards each other. They differ as life and health, as heirship and the means of knowing it. —*Salter*, 1840.

V. *EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO ATTAIN IT.*

(315.) Labour as to know heaven to be the only happiness, so also to be thy happiness. We may confess heaven to be the best condition, though we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, if we see the obtainment to be but probable and hopeful: but we can never delightfully rejoice in it, till we are somewhat persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man that hath not a bit to put in his mouth, to see a feast which he must not taste of? What delight hath a man that hath not a house to put his head in, to see sumptuous buildings of others? Would not all this rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his own misery? So, for a man to know the excellences of heaven, and not to know whether he shall ever enjoy them, may well raise desire, and provoke to seek it, but it will raise but little joy and content. Who will set his heart on another man's possessions? If your house, your goods, your cattle, were not your own, you would less mind them, and delight less in them. Oh, therefore, Christian, rest not till you can call this rest your own; sit not down without assurance.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(316.) You have a valuable house or farm. It is suggested that the title is not good. You employ counsel. You have the deeds examined. You search the record for mortgages, judgments, and liens. You are not satisfied until you have a certificate, signed by the great seal of the State, assuring you that the title is good. Yet how many leave their title to heaven an undecided matter! Why do you not go to the records, and find it? Give yourself no rest day nor night, until you can read your title clear to mansions in the skies.

—*Talmage.*

VI. *COUNSELS TO THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING TO ATTAIN IT.*

1. Avoid everything that would tend to cause you to return an untrue verdict.

(317.) Let not self-love, partiality, or pride on the one side, or fear on the other side, pervert your judgment in the trial, and hinder you from the discerning of the truth. Some men cannot see the clearest evidences of their unsanctified hearts, because self-love will give them leave to believe nothing of themselves which is bad or sad. They will believe that which is good and pleasant, be it never so evidently false. As if a thief could be saved from the gallows, by a strong conceit that he is a true man: or the conceit that one is learned would make him learned. Others, through timorousness, can believe nothing that is good or comfortable of themselves; like a man on the top of a steeple, who, though he know that he standeth fast and safe, yet trembleth when he looketh down, and can scarce believe his own understanding. Silence all the objections of an over-timorous mind, and it will doubt and tremble still. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(318.) Look not so much either at what you should be, or at what others are, as to forget what you are yourselves. Some look so much at the glory of that full perfection which they want, as that their present grace seemeth nothing to them; like a candle to one that hath been gazing on the sun. And some look so much at the debauchery of the worst, that they think their lesser wickedness to be holiness. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(319.) It concerns all who think it worth while to be in earnest with their immortal souls not to abuse themselves with a false confidence; a thing so easily taken up, and so hardly laid down.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

2. Remember that it is reasonable only in the regenerate.

(320.) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope." The new birth entitles to the new hope; if the soul be dead, the hope cannot be alive. And the soul may be dead, and yet put into a very handsome dress of external reformation and profession, as well as a dead body may be clad with rich clothes. A beggar's son got into the clothes of a rich man's child, may as well hope to be heir to the rich man's land, as thou, by an external reformation and profession, to be God's heir in glory. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

3. Remember that it is attained gradually.

(321.) True faith is at first nothing, but an embryo, it is minute and small; it is full of doubtings, temptations, and fears: it begins in weakness. It is like the smoking flax (Matt. xii. 20). It smokes with desires, but doth not flame with comfort; it is at first so small that it is scarce discernible. Such as, at the first dash, have a strong persuasion that Christ is theirs, who leap out of sin into assurance, their faith is false and spurious: that faith, which is come to its full stature on its birthday, is a monster. The seed that sprang up suddenly withered (Matt. xiii. 5). —*Watson*, 1696.

4. Remember that it is frequently not attained till late in life.

(322.) Have you never, in a summer morning, seen the sun come nimbly up only to make battle with the clouds? It is obscured when it first rises; but by ten o'clock it is seen again. By eleven o'clock it is obscured once more. Through all the forenoon it is stormy and cloudy by turns. All the afternoon there are dense vaporous clouds which shroud the sun's glory. And yet, as he draws near to the horizon the clouds lift, and with full-orbed majesty he descends into the open space, and looks back across the whole earth; and he is never so radiant as just before he sets. Having triumphed over the day, having come out victorious over the storm, he goes down in wondrous beauty.

So have I seen men and women go through sorrows and conflicts, through storms and suffering, during their mortal life, with here and there an experience of joy, till they came to their last years, when God said to them, "Stand a little while, my child, and shine;" and they stood, luminous, to teach men how real is the transformation of the soul, by love, into the likeness of God; and how beautiful was holiness as exemplified by them!

—*Beecher.*

5. Remember that some men, eminent for holiness and usefulness, have had painful doubts as to their acceptance with God.

(323.) The characteristic mark of early Christian experience was its certainty and overflowing joy. It was transcendent in its conviction of certainty; and nowhere can we find, in the personal experiences that are recorded or hinted at in the New Testament, wavering or doubt.

My venerable father after he came to Brooklyn, having been more than half a century a preacher and leader of souls, as simple-hearted a man and as honest as ever drew breath,—a thoroughly manly man,—after he was laid aside from preaching, said to his daughter one day, "I have been attempting to ascertain the grounds of my hope; and I have tried to deal with myself just as I would with an inquiring soul that thought it had a hope, and I have spent two days, and I have thoroughly looked at everything, and I have come to the conclusion that I have a right to the hope that I am a Christian."

Suppose George Washington, in his last sickness, had whispered to his doctor, "I have been looking over my whole career to know whether I have a right to call myself a patriot, to ascertain whether I have really loved my country; and in this review of my career I have come to the conclusion, with great caution, that, on the whole, I may think that I am patriotic in my spirit," what would be thought of it?

More than that, suppose a child that had been reared in the household, revering father and mother, coming to the age of thirty or forty years, through sorrow, through sickness, through joy, through light, through darkness, friended all the way by the parental presence, should sit down and write in his or her journal, "I have been greatly disturbed lest I should be deceived in regard to my feelings toward my father and my mother; I have made it a subject of calm investigation and review; and I have been led, at last, by the Divine Spirit to the conclusion that I may believe that I do love my father and my mother." What would any one think of the solemnity with which a child came to such a simple statement as that? —*Beecher.*

VII. *HOW IT IS TO BE ATTAINED.*

1. By the exercise of faith in God's promises to pardon the penitent.

(324.) First, exercise faith on forgiveness in God; and when the soul is fixed therein, it will have a ground and foundation whereon it may stand securely in making application of it to itself. Drive this principle, in the first place, unto a stable issue upon Gospel evidence, answer the objections that lie against it, and then you may proceed. In believing the soul makes a conquest upon Satan's territories. Do, then, as they do who are entering on an enemy's country,—secure the passages, fortify the strongholds as you go on, that you be not cut off in your progress. Be not as a ship at sea, which passes on, and is no more possessed or master of the water it has gone through, than of that whereunto it is not yet arrived. But so it is with a soul that fixes not on these foundation principles: he presses forwards, and the ground crumbles away under his feet, and so he wilders away all his days in uncertainties. Would men but lay this principle well in their souls, and secure it against assaults, they might proceed, though not with so much speed as some do, yet with more safety. Some pretend at once to fall into full assurance; I wish it prove not a broad presumption in the most. It is to no purpose for him to strive to fly who cannot yet go,—to labour to come to assurance in himself who never well believed forgiveness in God.

—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

2. By keeping grace in action.

(325.) Grace is never apparent and sensible to the soul, but while it is in action; therefore want of action must needs cause want of assurance. Habits are not felt immediately, but by the free

ness and facility of their acts: of the very being of the soul itself, nothing is felt or perceived, but only its acts. The fire that lieth still in the flint is neither seen nor felt, but when you smite it, and force it into action, it is easily discerned. The greatest action doth force the greatest observation, whereas the dead and inactive are not remembered or taken notice of. Those that have long lain still in their graves are out of men's thoughts as well as their sight, but those that walk the streets, and bear rule among them, are noted by all: it is so with our graces. That you have a habit of love or faith, you can no otherwise know but as a consequence by reasoning; but that you have acts, you may know by feeling. If you see a man lie still in the way, what will you do to know whether he be drunk, or in a swoon, or dead? Will you not stir him, or speak to him, to see whether he can go; or feel his pulse, or observe his breath, knowing that where there is life there is some kind of motion? I earnestly beseech thee, Christian, observe and practise this excellent rule: thou now knowest not whether thou have repentance, or faith, or love, or joy; why, be more in the acting of these, and thou wilt easily know it. Draw forth an object for godly sorrow, or faith, or love, or joy, and lay thy heart flat unto it, and take pains to provoke it into suitable action, and then see whether thou have these graces or not. As Dr. Sibbes observeth, "There is sometimes grief for sin in us when we think there is none." It wants but stirring up by some quickening word; the like he saith of love, and it may be said of every other grace. You may go seeking for the hare or partridge many hours, and never find them while they lie close and stir not; but when once the hare betakes himself to his legs, and the bird to her wings, then you see them presently. So long as a Christian hath his graces in lively action, so long, for the most part, he is assured of them. How can you doubt whether you love God in the act of loving, or whether you believe in the very act of believing! If, therefore, you would be assured whether this sacred fire be kindled in your hearts, blow it up; get it into a flame, and then you will know; believe till you feel that you do believe, and love till you feel that you love.

The acting of the soul upon such excellent objects doth naturally bring consolation with it. The very act of loving God in Christ, doth bring inexpressible sweetness with it into the soul. The soul that is best furnished with grace, when it is not in action, is like a lute well stringed and tuned, which while it lieth still doth make no more music than a common piece of wood; but when it is taken up and handled by a skilful lutist, the melody is most delightful. "Some degree of comfort," saith that comfortable doctor, "follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influence issue from the sun;" which is so true, that very heathens upon the discharge of a good conscience have found comfort and peace answerable: this is *præmium ante præmium*, a reward before the reward.

As a man, therefore, that is cold, should not stand still and say, "I am so cold that I have no mind to labour," but labour till his coldness be gone, and heat excited; so he that wants assurance of the truth of his grace, and the comfort of assurance, must not stand still and say, "I am so doubtful and uncomfortable that I have no mind to duty," but ply his duty, and exercise his graces, till he find his doubts and discomforts to vanish.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. By conference with experienced Christians.

(326.) If you cannot see the sincerity of your hearts, go to your faithful, able guides, and open the case to them, and let not passion prevail against the Scripture and reason which they bring. Yea, if in your trouble you cannot by all their helps perceive the uprightness of your hearts, I must tell you, you may stay yourselves much upon their judgment of your state. Though it cannot give you full assurance, it may justly help to silence much of your self-accusations, and give you the comfort of probability. If a physician that feels not what you feel, shall yet, upon your speeches and other evidences, tell you that he is confident your disease is not mortal, nor containeth any cause of fear, you may rationally be much encouraged by his judgment, though it give you no certainty of life. As wicked men through contempt, so many godly people through melancholy, do lose much of the fruit of the office of the ministry, which lieth much in this assisting men to judge of the life or death of their souls. "Alas!" say they, "he feels not what I feel: he useth to judge charitably, and he knoweth not me so well as I know myself." But when you have told him faithfully, as you do your physician, what it is that you know by yourself, he is able to pass a far sounder judgment of your life or death than yourselves can do, for all your feeling: for he knows better what those symptoms signify, and what is used to be the issue of such a case as yours. Be not, then, so proud or wilful as to refuse the judgment of your faithful pastors, about the state of your souls, in a confidence on your own. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

VIII. *REASONS FOR CHERISHING IT.*

1. Holiness in the life.

(327.) Both faith and hope are of a cleansing nature (Acts xv. 9; 1 John iii. 3). The devil is an unclean spirit; he fouls wheresoever he comes; and all sin is nasty and beastly. Faith and hope, like as neat housewives when they come into a foul and sluttish house, cleanse all the rooms of the soul, and make it a fit habitation for the spirit of God. Are our hearts lifted up, then, in a comfortable expectation of the performance of God's merciful promises? And are they, together with our lives, swept and cleansed from the wonted corruptions of our nature, and pollutions of our sin? This is an undoubted evidence of our calling and election. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(328.) Wherever God pardons sin, He subdues it (Micah vii. 19). Then is the condemning power of sin taken away, when the commanding power of it is taken away. If a malefactor be in prison, how shall he know that his prince hath pardoned him? If a jailer come and knock off his chains and fetters, and lets him out of prison, then he may know he is pardoned: so, how shall we know God hath pardoned us? If the fetters of sin be broken off, and we walk at liberty in the ways of God (Ps. cxix. 45), this is a blessed sign we are pardoned. —*Watson*, 1696.

2. A sense of the burdensomeness of sin.

(329.) In the drawing up of water out of a deep well, as long as the bucket is under water we feel not the weight of it, but so soon as it cometh above water it beginneth to hang heavy on the hand. When a man diveth under water he feeleth no weight of the water, though there be many tons of it over his head; whereas half a tubful of the same water, taken out of the river and set upon the same man's head, would be very burdensome unto him, and make him soon grow weary of it. In like manner, so long as a man is over head and ears in sin, he is not sensible of the weight of sin, it is not troublesome unto him; but when he beginneth once to come out of that state of sin wherein he lay and lived before, then beginneth sin to hang heavy on him, and he to feel the heavy weight of it. So, so long as sin is in the will, the proper seat of sin, a man feeleth no weight of it, but, like a fool, it is a sport and pastime unto him to do evil. And it is therefore a good sign that sin is removed out of his seat, out of his chair of state, when it becomes ponderous and burdensome to us, as the elements do when they are out of their natural place.

—*Spencer*, 1656.

3. Every evidence of spiritual life, however small.

(330.) A spark of fire is but little, yet it is fire as well as the whole element of fire; and a drop of water, it is water as well as the whole ocean.

When a man is in a dark place,—put the case it be in a dungeon,—if he have a little light shining in to him from a little crevice, that little light discovers that the day is broke, that the sun is risen.

Put the case, there be but one grape on a vine, it shows that it is a vine, and that the vine is not dead. So, put the case, there be but the appearance of but a little grace in a Christian, perhaps the Spirit of God appears but in one grace in him at that time, yet that one grace shows that we are vines, and not thistles, or thorns, or other base plants, and it shows that there is life in the root.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(331.) There is the same reason of the natural life and the spiritual. Life where it is, is discerned by breathing, sense, motion.

Where there is the breath of life, there must be a life that sends it forth. If, then, the soul breathes forth holy desires, doubtless there is a life whence they proceed.

Sense is a quick descrier of life: pinch or wound a dead man, he feels nothing; but the living perceiveth the easiest touch. When thou hast heard the fearful judgments of God denounced against sinners, and laid home to the conscience, hast thou not found thy heart pierced with them? hast thou not shrunk inward, and secretly thought, "How shall I decline this dreadful damnation?" When thou hast heard the sweet mercies of God laid forth to penitent sinners, hath not thy heart silently said, "Oh, that I had my share in them!" When thou hast heard the name of Christ blasphemed, hast thou not felt a secret horror in thy bosom? All these argue a true spiritual life within thee.

Motion is the most perfect discoverer of life. He that can stir his limbs, is surely not dead. The feet of the soul are the affections. Hast thou not found in thyself a hate and detestation of that sin wherein thou hast been miscarried? Hast thou not found in thyself a true grief of heart, for thy wretched indisposition to all good things? Without a true life of grace, these things could never have been. Are not thine eyes and hands many times lifted up, in an imploration of mercy? Canst thou deny, that thou hast a true, though but weak, appetite to the means, and further degrees of grace? What can this be, but that hunger and thirst after righteousness, to which our Saviour hath pronounced blessedness?

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(332.) When we behold primroses and violets fairly to flourish, we conclude the dead of winter is past, though as yet no roses or July flowers appear, which long after lie hid in their leaves or lurk in their roots, but in due time will discover themselves. Thus, if some small buddings of grace do but appear in the soul, it is an argument of far greater growth; if some signs be but above ground in sight, others are under ground in the heart; and though the former started first, the other will follow in order: it being plain that such a man is passed from death unto life, by this hopeful and happy spring of some signs in the heart.

—*T. Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(333.) It is not the degree of grace absolutely in itself considered, wherein sincerity doth consist, nor which we must inquire after in trial, but it is the degree in a comparative sense; as when we compare God and the creature, and consider which we desire, love, fear, &c., more; and, therefore, here it is far easier to try by the degree. You know that gold is not current except it be weight as well as pure metal. Now, if you put your gold in one end of the scale, and nothing in the other, you cannot judge whether it be weight or not; but if you put the weights against it, then you may discern it. If it be downright weight, you may discern it without either difficulty or doubt. If it be but a grain overweight, you may yet discern it; though it is possible it may be so little that the scales will scarcely turn, and then you will not discern so easily which is the heavier end. But if it want much, then you will as easily on the other side discern the defectiveness. So thus here. If God had said absolutely, "So much love you must have to me, or you cannot be saved," then it were hard to know when we reach the degree. But you must, as I said, put Christ and heaven in one end, and all things below in the other, and then you may well find out the sincerity in the degree. Every grain that Christ hath more than the creature is sincere and saving.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(334.) It may be, some weak believer may be saying, "Some of these marks I know to my experience; but others are dark to me, therefore, I doubt of all." To which we reply, if, indeed, you have one saving solid mark, and can really close with it, it may satisfy you, though you be in the dark in others. If a child cannot go, yet if it can suck; if it cannot suck, yet if it can cry; if it cannot cry, yet if it can breathe, it is a mark of life: so, there may be breathings in the soul, that are evidential of life and faith, when other things are hid. Oh, try yourselves, and look to God to search and try you! it is by His judgment you stand or fall.

—*Erskine*, 1680–1754.

IX. HINDRANCES TO ITS ATTAINMENT.

1. The weakness of our spiritual graces.

(335.) One common and great cause of doubting and uncertainty is the weakness and small measure of our grace. A little grace is next to none: small things are hardly discerned. He that will see a small needle, a hair, a mote, or atom, must have clear light and good eyes; but houses, and towns, and mountains are easily discerned. Most Christians content themselves with a small measure of grace, and do not follow on to spiritual strength and manhood. They believe so weakly, and love God so little, that they can scarce find whether they believe and love at all; like a man in a swoon, whose pulse and breathing is so weak and obscure that it can hardly be perceived whether they move at all, and, consequently, whether the man be alive or dead. The chief remedy for such would be to follow on their duty, till their graces be increased. Ply your work; wait upon God in the use of His prescribed means, and He will undoubtedly bless you with increase and strength. Oh! that Christians would bestow most of that time in getting grace which they bestow in anxious doubtings, whether they have any or none; and that they would lay out those serious affections in praying, and seeking to Christ for more grace, which they bestow in fruitless complaints of their supposed gracelessness! I beseech thee, Christian, take this advice as from God; and then, when thou believest strongly, and lovest fervently, thou canst not doubt whether thou do believe and love or not, any more than a man that is burning hot can doubt whether he be warm; or a man that is strong and lusty can doubt whether he be alive. Strong affections will make you feel them. Who loveth his friends, or wife, or child, or anything strongly, and doth not know it? A great measure of grace is seldom doubted of; or, if it be, you may quickly find when you seek and try. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

2. Worldly lusts.

(336.) If you cherish your sensual, fleshly lusts, and set your heart too eagerly on the world, or defend your unpeaceableness and passion, or neglect your own duty to God or man, and make no conscience of a true reformation, it is not any inquiries after signs of grace that will help you to assurance. You may complain long enough before you have ease, while such a thorn is in your foot.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

3. Distracting thoughts.

(337.) The heart is most confused, as well as dark and deceitful; it is like a house, or shop of tools, where all things are thrown together on a heap, and nothing keeps its own place. There are such multiplicity of cogitations, fancies, and passions, and such irregular thronging in of them, and such a confused reception, and operation of objects and conceptions, that it is a wonderful difficult thing for the best Christian to discern clearly the bent and actions, and so the state of his own soul. For in such a crowd of cogitations and passions, we are like men in a fair or crowd of people, where a confused noise may be heard, but you cannot well perceive what any of them say, except either some one near you that speaks much louder than all the rest, or else except you single out some one from the rest, and go close to him to confer with him of purpose. Our intellect and passions are like the lakes of water in the common roads, where the frequent passage of horses doth so muddy it that you can see nothing in it, especially that is near the bottom; when in pure, untroubled waters you may see a small thing. In such a confusion and tumult as is usually in men's souls, for a poor weak Christian to seek for the discovery of his sincerity, is, according to the proverb to seek for a needle in a bottle of hay.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

4. Forgetfulness of the true object of faith.

(338.) Assurance is often hindered by the mind being improperly directed to faith (as if it were a kind of abstract principle), rather than to the truth, or the object of faith; to the acts of their mind, instead of the truth of God. To such we would simply say, "Look unto Jesus." A man who hears good news and believes it, knows and can tell whence his joy arises. If addressed to him, and containing what is adapted to his circumstances, it fills him with gladness. This gladness does not arise from any reflection on the exercises of his mind in believing it, but from *the thing itself* believed. It were well for our peace if we looked more to the thing testified, than in what manner we have believed the tidings. —*Salter*, 1840.

5. A melancholy temperament.

(339.) A melancholy person can think of nothing with confidence and comfort; there is nothing but trouble, confusion, fears, and despair in his apprehension. He still seems to himself undone and hopeless. A person naturally timorous cannot choose but fear, if you show him the clearest reasons of assurance. These are like pain in sickness, which faith and reason will not cure, but should help us to strive against and bear. God will not impute our diseased misery to us as our damning sin.

It is one thing to have grace, and another thing to know that we have it; many have it, who doubt whether it be sincere. And it is an unspeakable mercy to have it, though you doubt of it. God knoweth His grace in us, and will own it, when we doubt of it or deny it. As long as this foundation of God is sure, that God knoweth who are His, and while we name Christ, we depart from iniquity, we are safe, though through fear we are uncomfortable.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

X. EVEN WHEN IT IS ATTAINED, IT IS INTERMITTENT, AND NOT ALWAYS CLEAR AND JOYFUL.

(340.) It is often day when the sun doth not shine, and though thick clouds breathed from the air, make a sad face of the sky, as if it were night, yet we cannot say, the sun is gone down. This is the condition of many men in a state of nature; in the state of salvation the sun is with them; they are children of the day, yet have they no joy of their salvation, their sun doth not shine, they have no clear day. Hence it is that assurance of salvation will not content the soul, except it may have the joy of salvation also. This was that which made David cry out, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." —*Lake*, 1626.

(341.) Look upon a coal covered with ashes; there is nothing appearing in the heap but only dead ashes; there is neither light, nor smoke, nor heat;

and yet, when those embers are stirred to the bottom, there are found some living gleams which do contain fire, and are apt to propagate it. Many a Christian breast is like this hearth, no life of grace appearing there for the time, either to his own sense or the apprehension of others. Whilst the season of temptation lasteth, all seems cold and dead; yet still, at the worst, there is a secret coal from the altar of heaven raked up in their bosom, which, upon the gracious motions of the Almighty, doth both bewray some remainders of that Divine fire and is easily raised to a perfect flame. Let no man, therefore, deject himself or censure others for the utter extinction of that spirit, which doth but hide itself in the soul for a glorious advantage.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(342.) Discomfort not thyself too much, my son, with the present disappearance of grace, during the hour of thy temptation. It is no otherwise with thee, than with a tree in winter season, whose sap is run down to the root; wherein there is no more to show of the life of vegetation by any buds of blossoms that it might put forth, than if it were stark dead: yet, when the sun returns, and sends forth his comfortable beams in the spring, it burgeons out afresh; and bewrays that vital juice, which lay long hidden in the earth. No otherwise, than with the hearth of some good housewife, which is, towards night, swept up; and hideth the fire, under the heap of her ashes: a stranger would think it were quite out: there is no appearance of light, or heat, or smoke; but, by that time she hath stirred it up a little, the bright gleeds show themselves, and are soon raised to a flame. Stay but till the spring, when the Sun of Righteousness shall call up thy moisture into thy branches; stay but till the morning, when the fire of grace which was raked up in the ashes shall be drawn forth and quickened; and thou shalt find cause to say of thy heart, as Jacob said of his hard lodging, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not" (Gen. xxviii. 16). Only do thou, not neglecting the means, wait patiently upon God's leisure: stay quietly upon the bank of this Bethesda, till the angel descend and move the water.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(343.) Temptation time is a dark time. When a man cannot see his own hand, though he lift it up before his eyes, then he is in the dark indeed. Now, possibly a good man may be in such a temptation, that he shall not be able to see the lifting-up of his own hand in prayer, saying, "I go to prayer, but I cannot pray at all; and that which I do perform, it is no duty." Sometimes it is so with him, that he cannot read his own graces nor see them. Though the fish lie playing upon the water, and you may see them in a fair sunshine; yet in a storm or night ye see them not, though they be in the pond or river still. So here, though when the light of God's countenance doth shine upon the soul, he is then able to see and read his own graces; yet if it be a storm, or the night of temptation, he cannot see them. Why? Not because they are not in his heart and life as before, but because he is in the dark. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(344.) True believers have seasons of unfruitfulness, in which they bring forth no good works, devout thoughts, or holy aspirations. They are then like the trees in winter, which are indeed destitute of leaves, but are not destitute of sap and life, and hence, when spring returns, bud and blossom, and bear afresh. The ungodly, however, resemble withered trees, which at all seasons alike are without either sap, or life, or fruit, and consequently are fit for nothing but the fire

—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(345.) Take heed that thou dost not mistake and think thy grace decays, when, may be, 'tis only thy temptations increase, and not thy grace decreases. If you should hear a man say, because he cannot to-day run so fast, when an hundredweight is on his back, as he could yesterday without any such a burthen, that therefore he was grown weaker, you would soon tell him where his mistake lies.

—*Salter*, 1840.

(346.) "What is the matter with the light, that you look so dismally dim this evening?" said the Wheelbarrow to the Lamp in the street.

"The light is the same as ever in its own nature," replied the Lamp, "but its present appearance is owing to what surrounds it in the atmosphere. When the air is free from smoke and mist, the light looks clear and bright; but when fog arises as now, the brightest Lamp will look dim, and shed but a feeble light."

"There is hardly enough to see one's way along now, truly," said the Barrow.

Inbred corruptions sometimes arise in the believer's heart like mists from the earth, which cloud his evidences, distress his soul, and cause him to walk in darkness, having no light (Isa. l. 10).

—*Bowden*.

XI. *WHEN ONCE VOUCHSAFED, IT IS NOT TO BE LIGHTLY SURRENDERED.*

(347.) Be careful to keep thy old receipts which thou hast had from God for the pardon of thy sins. There are some gaudy days, and Jubilee-like festivals, when God comes forth clothed with the robes of His mercy, and holds forth the sceptre of His grace more familiarly to His children than ordinary, bearing witness to their faith, sincerity, &c. And then the firmament is clear, not a cloud to be seen to darken the Christian's comfort. Love and joy are the soul's repast and pastime, while this feast lasts. Now when God withdraws, and this cheer is taken off, Satan's work is how he may deface and wear off the remembrance of this testimony, which the soul so triumphs in for its spiritual standing, that he may not have it as an evidence when he shall bring about the suit again, and put the soul to produce his writings for his spiritual state, or renounce his claim. It behoves thee, therefore, to lay them up safely: such a testimony may serve to non-suit thy accuser many years hence. One affirmative from God's mouth for thy pardoned state, carries more weight (though of old date) than a thousand negatives from Satan's.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(348.) Judge not of so great a thing by sudden apprehensions, or the surprise of a temptation, when you have not leisure to look up all the evidences of faith, and lay them together, and take a full, deliberate view of all the cause. It is a mystery so great as requireth a clear and vacant mind, delivered from prejudice, abstracted from diverting and deceiving things; which, upon the best assistance and with the greatest diligence, must lay altogether to discern the truth. And, if upon the best assistance and consideration, you have

been convinced of the truth, and then will let every sudden thought, or temptation, or difficulty seem enough to question all again, this is unfaithfulness to the truth, and the way to resist the clearest evidences, and never to have done. It is like as if you should answer your adversary in the court, when your witnesses are all dismissed, or out of the way, and all your evidences are absent, and perhaps your counsellor and advocate too. It is like the casting up of a long and intricate account, which a man hath finished by study and time; and when he hath done all, one questioneth this particular, and another that, when his accounts are absent: it is not fit for him to answer all particulars, nor question his own accounts, till he have as full opportunity and help to cast up all again.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

XII. *HOW IT MAY BE STRENGTHENED.*

(349.) Be much in the exercise of your hope. Repeated acts strengthen habits. Thus the little waddling child comes to go strongly by going often.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(350.) Resort to God daily, and beg a stronger hope of Him. That is the way the Apostle took to help the saints at Rome to more of this precious grace. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." God you see is the God of hope; and not only of the first seed and habit, but of the whole increment, and abounding of it in us also. He doth not give a saint the first grace of conversion, and then leave the improvement of it wholly to his skill and care; as sometimes a child hath a stock at first to set up, and never hath more help from his father, but by his own good husbandry advanceth his little beginnings into a great estate at last. But rather as the corn in the field, that needs the influences of heaven to flower and ripen it for harvest, as much as to quicken it in the clods when first thrown in. And therefore be sure thou humbly acknowledgest God by a constant waiting on Him for growth.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

XIII. *IT IS NOT TO BE ABUSED.*

(351.) If you have assurance of your justification, do not abuse assurance.

1. It is an abusing of assurance, when we grow more remiss in duty; as the musician, having money thrown him, leaves off playing. By remissness, or intermitting the exercises of religion, we grieve the Spirit, and that is the way to have an embargo laid upon our spiritual comforts.

2. We abuse assurance, when we grow presumptuous and less fearful of sin. What, because a father gives his son an assurance of his love, and tells him he will entail his land upon him, shall the son therefore be wanton and dissolute. This were the way to lose his father's affection, and make him cut off the entail; it was an aggravation of Solomon's sin, "his heart was turned away from the Lord, after He had appeared to him twice." It is bad to sin when one wants assurance, but it is worse to sin when one hath it. Hath the Lord sealed His love with a kiss? Hath He left a pledge of heaven in your hands, and do you thus requite the Lord? Will you sin with manna in your mouth? Doth God give you the sweet clusters of assurance to feed on, and will you return Him wild grapes? It much pleaseth Satan, either to see us want assurance, or abuse it; this is to abuse assurance, when the pulse of our souls beats faster in sin, and slower in duty. —*Watson*, 1696.

XIV. *FOR WHAT END IT IS BESTOWED.*

(352.) Assurance and comforts are desirable, but fruitfulness is absolutely necessary. If we do not diligently and faithfully mind our duty in the latitude of it, and apply not ourselves wholly to the work the Lord has set us to do, we shall be found unfruitful. And then what place, what ground will there be for comfort or assurance? What claim can we lay to the privileges we are so much taken with? The end why the Lord offers us comfort and assurance of His love, is to make us cheerful in His service, and to encourage us in His work, and engage our hearts in it thoroughly. Now, if we mind the means more than the end, we act irregularly and irrationally.

What will you think of a servant who minds his refreshments more than his work? Who takes more care and spends more time about his meals than in his labour and employment? Will you think him a profitable servant, or expect much fruit of his labour? You are too like such servants when you are eager for comforts and spiritual refreshments, but less active for God in a way of serviceableness, and more backward to do or suffer what He calls you to. This is to be more for yourselves than for Him; and while you are so disposed, He is not like to find much fruit on you.

—*Clarkson*, 1622–1687.

ATHEISM.

I. *ITS ABSURDITY EVINCED.*

1. By the existence of the universe.

(353.) If a man should go into a far country, and see stately edifices there, he would never imagine that these could build themselves, but that some greater power built them. To imagine that the work of the creation was not framed by God, is as if we should conceive a curious landscape to be drawn by a pencil without the hand of a limner.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(354.) I appeal to any man of reason, whether anything can be more unreasonable than obstinately to impute to chance an effect which carries, in the very face of it, all the arguments and characters of a wise design and contrivance? Was ever any considerable work, in which there was required a great variety of parts, and a regular and orderly disposition of those parts, done by chance? Will chance fit means to ends, and that in ten thousand instances, and not fail in any one? How often might a man, after he had jumbled a set of letters in a bag, fling them out on the ground before they would fall into an exact poem; yea, or so much as to make a good discourse in prose? And may not a little book be as easily made by chance, as this great volume of the world? How long might a man be in sprinkling colours upon canvas with a careless hand, before they would happen to make the exact picture of a man? And is a man easier made by chance than his picture? How long might twenty thousand

blind men, who should be sent out from the most remote parts of England, wander up and down before they would all meet upon Salisbury plains, and fall into rank and file in the order of an army? And yet this is much more easy to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter should rendezvous themselves into a world. A man that sees Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster, might with as good reason maintain (yea, with much better, considering the vast difference between that little structure and the huge fabric of the world), that it was never contrived or built by any man, but that the stones did by chance grow into those curious figures into which they seem to have been cut and graven; and that upon a time (as tales usually begin), the materials of that building, the stone, mortar, timber, iron, lead and glass, happily met together, and very fortunately ranged themselves into that delicate order, in which we see them now so closely compacted that it must be a very great chance that parts them again. What would the world think of a man that should advance such an opinion as this, and write a book for it? If they would do him right, they ought to look upon him as mad; but yet with a little more reason than any man can have to say that the world was made by chance. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(355.) As when a man comes into a palace, built according to the exactest rule of art, and with an unexceptionable conveniency for the inhabitants, he would acknowledge both the being and skill of the builder; so whosoever shall observe the disposition of all the parts of the world, their connection, comeliness, the variety of seasons, the swarms of different creatures, and the mutual offices they render to one another, cannot conclude less, than it was contrived by an infinite skill, effected by infinite power, and governed by infinite wisdom. None can imagine a ship to be orderly conducted without a pilot; nor the parts of the world to perform their several functions without a wise guide; considering the members of the body cannot perform theirs, without the active presence of the soul. The atheist, then, is a fool to deny that which every creature in his constitution asserts, and thereby renders himself unable to give a satisfactory account of that constant uniformity in the motions of the creatures.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(356.) We are told, that there was an innumerable company of little bodies, called atoms, from all eternity, flying and roving about in a void space, which at length hitched together and united; by which union they grew at length into this beautiful, curious, and most exact structure of the universe.

A conceit fitter for bedlam than an academy; and taken up, as it were, in direct opposition to common sense and experience. For, let any one take a vessel full of dust, and shake it from one end of the year to the other, and see whether ever it will fall into the figure of a horse, an eagle, or a fish; or let any one shake ten thousand letters together, till by some lucky shape they fall at length into an elegant poem or oration. That chance and blind accident, the usual parent of confusion and all deformity in men's actions, should yet in this out-do the greatest art and diligence in the production of such admirable, stupendous effects, is contrary to all the rules that human nature has been hitherto accustomed to judge by; and fit for none to assert but for him who, with his God, has also renounced his reason. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(357.) That the universe was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, I will no more believe than that the accidental jumbling of the alphabet would fall into a most ingenious treatise of philosophy. —*Swift.*

(358.) We will suppose that one who had never seen a watch, or anything of that sort, hath now this little engine first offered to his view; can we doubt but he would, upon the mere sight of its figure, structure, and the very curious workmanship which we will suppose appearing in it, presently acknowledge the artificer's hand. But if he were also made to understand the purpose which it serves, and it were distinctly shown him how all things in this little fabric concur to this purpose—the exact measuring of time—he would certainly both confess and praise the great ingenuity of the first inventor. But now, if a bystander, beholding him in this admiration, would undertake to show a profounder reach and strain of wit, and should say,—Sir, you are mistaken concerning the composition of this much-admired piece, it was not designed by the hand or skill of any one, there were only an innumerable company of little atoms, or very small bodies, much too small to be perceived by your sense, that were busily frisking and flying to and fro about the place of its nativity; and by a strange *chance* (or a stranger fate, and the necessary laws of that motion which they were unavoidably put into, by a certain boisterous undesigning weaver), they fell together into this small bulk, so as to compose it into this shape and figure, and with this same number and order of parts which you now behold, one squadron of these busy particles (little thinking what they were about) agreeing to make up one wheel, and another some other, and so on in that proportion which you now see,—all conspiring to fall together each in its own place, as that the regular motion failed not to ensue, which we now see is observed in it,—what man is there, either so wise or so foolish (for it is hard to determine whether the excess or the defect should best qualify him to be of this faith) as to be capable of believing this piece of natural history? And if one should give this account of the production of such a trifle, would he not be thought in jest? And should he persist in repeating the statement, would he not be thought, in good earnest, mad? Let but any sober reason judge then, whether we have not unspeakably more manifest madness to contend against, in such as suppose this world, and the bodies of living creatures, to have fallen into this frame and orderly disposition of parts wherein they are, without the direction of a wise and designing cause? And if the concourse of atoms could make this world, why not (as Tully says) a porch, or a temple, or a house, or a city, which were less operose and much more easy performances? —*Irving.*

(359.) Should you see a fine ship, well built, handsomely rigged, and completely equipped for a voyage, could you believe that she built herself? or that she was built by chance? or that she sprung like a bubble out of the sea? Would you not feel as certain that she was the work of some builder, as if you had stood by and seen him shape every timber, and drive every bolt? And can you, then, be made to believe that this great ship, the world, built itself? or that it was built by chance? or that it sprung out of nothing without any cause?

2. By the constitution of the human body.

(360.) When we examine a watch, or any other piece of machinery, we instantly perceive marks of design. The arrangement of its several parts, and the adaptation of its movements to one result, show it to be a contrivance; nor do we ever imagine the faculty of contriving to be in the watch itself, but in a separate agent. If we turn from art to nature, we behold a vast magazine of contrivances; we see innumerable objects replete with the most exquisite design. The human eye, for example, is formed with admirable skill for the purpose of sight, the ear for the function of hearing. As in the productions of art we never think of ascribing the power of contrivance to the machine itself, so we are certain the skill displayed in the human structure is not a property of man, since he is very imperfectly acquainted with his own formation. If there be an inseparable relation betwixt the ideas of a contrivance and contriver—and it is evident, in regard to the human structure, the designing agent is not man himself—there must undeniably be some separate invisible being who is his former. This great being we mean to indicate by the appellation of Deity.

– *Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

3. By the character of God's works.

(361.) A connoisseur in works of art, so soon as the dust of years has been wiped from an old picture, can name the master who painted the glowing canvas. So also, though time has left no record of their history, and no date stands carved on the crumbling ruins, an antiquarian can tell from its form when that arch was sprung; from their capitals, by what hands, long mouldering in the dust, these grand, impressive, silent pillars, were reared on their massive pedestals. The works of all great men, and those of all great ages, are marked by properties peculiar to themselves. And features entirely their own are eminently characteristic of all the works of God; so characteristic of these that the untutored Arab when challenged to prove in God the existence of a being whom he had never touched, nor heard, nor seen, regarded the scoffer with amazement; nor deigned to return any answer to his gibes, but one borrowed from the scenes of his native desert: "Just as I know," he replied, in terms worth a volume of divinity, "Just as I know," pointing to a footprint on the sand, "whether it was a man or a camel that passed my tent."

So distinguished by a Divine wisdom, power, and goodness, are God's works of creation and providence, that all nature, by the gentle voices of her skies and streams, of her fields and forests, as well as by the roar of breakers, the crash of thunder, the rumbling earthquake, the fiery volcano, and the destroying hurricane, echoes the closing sentence of this angel hymn, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory!"

—*Guthrie.*

4. By the preservation and government of the universe.

(362.) The wise government of all things evinces there is a God. God is the great superintendent of the world; He holds the golden reins of government in His hand, guiding all things most regularly and harmoniously to their proper end. Who that eyes providence, but must be forced to acknowledge there is a God? Providence is the queen and governess of the world; it is the hand that turns the wheel of the whole creation; providence sets the sun its race, the sea its bounds. If God should not guide the world, things would run into disorder and confusion. When one looks on a clock, and sees the motion of the wheels, the striking of the hammer, the hanging of the plummets, he would say there was some artificer did make it and put it into that order: so, when we see the excellent order and harmony in the universe, the sun, that great luminary, dispensing its light and heat to the world, without which, the world were but a grave or a prison; the rivers sending forth their silver streams to refresh the bodies of men, and prevent a drought; and every creature acting within its sphere, and keeping its due bounds; we must needs acknowledge there is a God, who wisely orders and governs all these things. Who could set this great army of the creatures in their several ranks and squadrons, and keep them in their constant march, but He, whose name is THE LORD OF HOSTS? And as God doth wisely dispose all things in the whole regiment of the creatures, so, by His power, He doth support them. Did God suspend and withdraw His influence never so little, the wheels of the creation would unpin, and the axle-tree break asunder. —*Watson*, 1696.

(363.) Who ever saw the various scenes of a theatre move by hazard in those just spaces of time, as to represent palaces, or woods, rocks and seas, as the subject of the actors required? And can the lower world four times in the circle of the year change appearance, and alter the seasons so conveniently to the use of nature, and no powerful mind direct that great work? —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(364.) Should you see a vessel go every year, for many years successively, to a distant port, and return at a set time, performing all her voyages with perfect regularity, and never going a cable's length out of her course, nor be a day out of her time, could any man persuade you to believe that she had no commander, pilot, or helmsman on board? That she went, and came back of her own accord, and had nothing to steer her but the wind? Would you have any more doubt that she was under the command of some skilful navigator, than if you were on board and saw him? Look then, once more, at this great ship, the world; see how regularly she makes her annual voyage round the sun, without ever getting out of her course, or being a day or an hour out of her time. Should she gain or lose a single day, in making this voyage, what would all your tables or nautical almanacks be good for? Now, ask yourselves, would she go and come with such perfect regularity and exactness of her own accord, or with no one to regulate her course? Can you any more doubt that she is under the direction of some wise and skilful commander, than if you saw Him regulating all her motions?

(365.) If reason demands that the creation of all things should be ascribed to God, to whom or to what are we to ascribe their conservation? The scoffer calls our attention to the fact, that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?" Let him explain to us how it comes to pass that they do so. Why is it that for so many hundred years fire has always burned, and water moistened, and that the sky has been blue, and the snow white? How is it that we never wake up

some morning to find that in the night there has been a fall of blue snow? How is it that this vast earth has swept through space, with inconceivable velocity, for so many thousands of years without once swerving from its course, or increasing or diminishing its distance from the sun? Is it by accident that the seasons succeed each other with unvarying regularity, so that we never have two summers or two winters together; or, to come to myself, how is it that my heart throbs, and my pulses beat, year after year; that food nourishes, and sleep refreshes me? Let the scoffer, I repeat, explain to us how it comes to pass that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," and that all the events of nature occur with such undeviating regularity, if behind all the forces of nature there is no God to inspire, guide, and control them.

Does it make any difference to the force of this argument, that no man has seen God at any time? Because God is hidden from us, shall we therefore refuse to believe that it is by Him that all the events of nature are controlled? Suppose that from some elevated position I could during the past week have surveyed the six Prussian armies marching on Paris, cavalry, infantry, artillery, baggage waggons, ambulances, all converging to one spot, would it have been reasonable or unreasonable, scientific or unscientific, to believe that they were all obeying the orders of one commander-in-chief? Would sound reason have demanded that I should refuse to believe this, until I had actually sat in General Moltke's tent, and heard him giving his directions, and looked over his shoulder as he penned his orders? But if the orderly march of an army without some master-mind to direct it is inconceivable, what shall we say of the harmonious progress, age after age, of the mighty forces of the universe? Is there not behind them One who directs and controls all their movements? —*R. A. Bertram.*

II. *THE FOLLY OF ITS APPEAL TO THE SENSES.*

(366.) It is a universal truth in regard to science, that it lies beyond the sphere of the senses. The presiding and central principle of astronomy, and to a great extent, of mechanics, is gravitation. We see and feel its effects; we feel the impact of a falling body; we see the change in the places of the planets; but who has seen gravitation itself? We see the spark produced by the electric power as it passes from the machine, its flash as it bursts from the cloud, the combined mass of neutral salt which the same power forms in uniting the acid and the alkali; but none of these things known to the senses is electricity itself. *This* who has seen or can see? The man who thinks he has seen gravitation or galvanism, as much mistakes their nature as he mistakes the nature of spirit who talks of seeing one. God is denied because not known to the senses. What is known to them? Effects only. And these are not our learning; they are our ignorance, the catechism we address to the sciences; which answer only by advancing above the region of sense.

In illustration of these general ideas, I know not that I can adduce anything more striking, although I do not by any means consider it as the weightiest example that could be brought forward, than the great and important discoveries of Mr. Faraday in regard to electricity. You are aware that those discoveries appear to have ascertained that electricity or galvanism (call it by which name you will), or the principle of voltaic galvanism, is the grand combining agent throughout the matter of the universe. You are aware that, in reference to the extent of its presence in the creation, Mr. Faraday appears to have ascertained that a single grain of water is held together by as much of this principle as would form a powerful flash of lightning, or equal to 800,000 charges of his powerful Leyden battery. And you are aware that, with all this, the change which Mr. Faraday has introduced into the definition of electricity is one which I am just going to describe; whereas formerly it was spoken of as a fluid, or as two fluids, the definition which Mr. Faraday has reason to substitute is, that it is an axis of power, having equal and opposite forces. In other words, that it is known to us solely as a power whose presence is indicated by its effects, the laws of whose working constitute for us its definition; but that as an object of sense in itself it is utterly unknown to us. —*A. J. Scott*, 1866.

III. *THE VASTNESS OF ITS ASSUMPTIONS.*

(367.) An atheist is one of the most daring beings in the creation, a contemner of God, who explodes His laws by denying His existence. If you were so unacquainted with mankind that this character might be announced to you as a rare or singular phenomenon, your conjectures, till you saw and heard the man, at the nature and the extent of the discipline through which he must have advanced, would be led toward something extraordinary. And you might think that the term of that discipline must have been very long; since a quick train of impressions, a short series of mental gradations, within the little space of a few months and years, would not seem enough to have matured such an awful heroism. Surely the creature that thus lifts his voice, and defies all invisible power within the possibilities of infinity, challenging whatever unknown being may hear him, was not as yesterday a little child, that would tremble and cry at the approach of a diminutive reptile. But indeed it is heroism no longer, if he *knows* there is no God. The wonder then turns on the great process by which a man could grow to the immense intelligence that can know that there is no God. What ages and what lights are requisite for *this* attainment! This intelligence involves the very attributes of the Divinity, while a God is denied. For unless this man is omnipresent, unless he is at this moment in every place in the universe, he cannot know but there may be in some place manifestations of a Deity by which even *he* would be overpowered. If he does not know absolutely every agent in the universe, the one that he does not know may be God. If he is not in absolute possession of all the propositions that constitute universal truth, the one which he wants may be, that there is a God. If he does not know everything that has been done in the immeasurable ages that are past, some things may have been done by a God. Thus, unless he knows all things, that is, precludes another Deity by being one himself, he cannot know that the Being whose existence he rejects does not exist. And yet a man of *ordinary* age and intelligence may present himself to you with the avowal of being thus distinguished from the crowd!

—*Foster*, 1770–1843.

IV. *ITS POWERLESSNESS.*

(368.) Our belief or disbelief of a thing does not alter the nature of the thing. We cannot fancy things into being, or make them vanish into nothing, by the stubborn confidence of our imaginations. Things are as sullen as we are, and will be what they are whatever we think of them. And if there be a God, a man cannot by an obstinate disbelief of Him make Him cease to be, any more than a man can put out the sun by winking.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

V. *IS USUALLY IMMORAL IN ITS ORIGIN.*

(369.) Men are atheistical because they are first vicious, and question the truth of Christianity because they hate the practice.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

VI. *DEGRADES MAN.*

(370.) They that deny a God destroy a man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. It destroys, likewise, magnanimity and the raising human nature. —*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

VII. *IS MORALLY AND SOCIALLY DANGEROUS.*

(371.) As the advantage of the armed over the unarmed is not seen till the moment of attack, so in that tranquil state of society in which law and order maintain their ascendency, it is not perceived, perhaps not even suspected, to what an alarming degree the principles of modern infidelity leave us naked and defenceless. But let the state be convulsed, let the mounds of regular authority be once overflowed, and the still small voice of law drowned in the tempest of popular fury (events which recent experience shows to be possible), it will then be seen that atheism is a school of ferocity; and that having taught its disciples to consider mankind as little better than a nest of insects, they will be prepared in the fierce conflicts of party to trample upon them without pity, and extinguish them without remorse.

—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

VIII. *IS A TRANSIENT EXPERIENCE IN AN HONEST MIND.*

(372.) I had rather believe all the fables in the legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind; and therefore God never wrought miracles to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it. It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion: for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no farther; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate, and linked together, it must needs fly to providence and Deity. —*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

IX. *IS RENOUNCED BY ATHEISTS OF ALL KINDS IN THE TIME OF AFFLICTION.*

(373.) The Persian messenger in his narrative to the king, of the overthrow of his army by the Grecians, related that those gallants, who before the fight, in the midst of their corps and bravery, denied God and providence, as secure of victory; yet afterwards, when furiously pursued by their enemies, they came to the river Strymon, that was frozen and began to thaw, then upon their knees they mournfully implored the favour of God, that the ice might hold and give them safe passage over from the pursuers. Nature in extremities has irresistible workings, and the inbred notions of the Deity, though long suppressed by imperious lusts, will then rise up in men's souls. Tullus Hostilius is another example, who disdained to express submission to God by acts of worship as a thing unbecoming his royal state; but when his stubborn, fierce mind was broken in his diseased body, he used all the servile rites of superstition, and commanded the people to join with him, thinking by his flattering devotions to appease the incensed Deity. Bion, the philosopher, was a declared atheist, till struck with a mortal disease, and then, as a false witness on the rack, confessed the truth, and addressed himself by prayers and vows to God for his recovery. Egregious folly, as the historian observes, to think that God would be bribed with his gifts, and was or was not according to his fancy! And thus it happens to many like him. As a lamp near expiring shines more clearly, so conscience, that burned dimly for a time, gives a dying blaze, and discovers Him who is alone able to save or to destroy. But how just were it to deal with them as Herofilus with Diodorus Cronus, a wrangler that vexed the philosophers, by urging a captious argument against the possibility of motion. For thus he argued: a stone, or whatever else, in moving itself, is either where it is, or where it is not; if where it is, it moves not; if where it is not, then it will be in any place, but where it is. While this disputing humour continued, one day he fell and displaced his shoulder, and sends in haste for Herofilus, of excellent skill in surgery. But he, desirous first to cure his brain, and then his shoulder, told him that his art was needless in that case: for, according to your own opinion, this bone in the dislocation either was where it was, or where it was not, and to assert either makes the displacing of it equally impossible. Therefore it was in vain to reduce it to the place from whence it was never parted. And thus he kept him roaring out with pain and rage till he declared himself convinced of the vanity of his irrefutable argument. Now, if, according to the impiety of atheists, there is no God, why do they invoke Him in their adversities? If there be, why do they deny Him in their prosperity? —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

ATONEMENT.

I. *DEFINED.*

(374.) Vicarious sufferings and obedience are penal inflictions, and acts of obedience to law which are rendered in our place or stead (vice), as well as in our behalf by our substitute. An alien goes to the army in the place of a drafted subject. He is the substitute of the man in whose place he goes. His labours, his dangers, his wounds, and his death, are vicarious. —*Hodge.*

II. *NECESSITY OF A MEDIATOR.*

(375.) After all, obedience will not make amends for past crimes; for obedience is a debt due of itself, and what is a debt of itself cannot be a compensation for another. What is a compensation must be something that does not fall under the notion or relation of a debt due before, but contracted by the injury done. Obedience was due from man if he had not sinned, and therefore is a debt as much due after sin as before it; but a new debt cannot be satisfied by paying an old. As suppose you owe a man money upon a bond, and also abuse him in his reputation, or some other concern; is there not a new debt contracted on that trespass, a debt of reparation of him in what you have wronged him? The paying him the money you owe him upon bond is not an amends for the injury you did him otherwise. They both in law fall under a different consideration. Or when a man rebels against a prince of whom he holds some land, will the payment of his quit-rent be satisfactory for the crime of his rebellion? So obedience to the law in our whole course was a debt upon us by our creation; and this has relation to the preceptive part of the law, and to God as a sovereign; but upon sin a new debt of punishment was contracted, and the penalty of the law was to be satisfied by suffering, as well as the precepts of the law satisfied by observing them. And this was a debt relating to the justice of God, as well as the other to the sovereignty of God. Now how can it be imagined that man, by paying the debt he was obliged to before, should satisfy the debt he has newly contracted? The debts are different: the one is a debt of observance, the other a debt of suffering, and contracted in two different states, the debt of obedience in the state of creation, the debt of suffering in the state of corruption; so that the payment of what was due from us as creatures cannot satisfy for what was due from us as criminals. All satisfaction is to be made in some way to which a person was not obliged before the offence was committed, as men wronged in their honour are satisfied by some acts not due to them before they were injured. So that all men taken together, yea the creatures of ten thousand worlds, cannot by the preceptive part of the law satisfy for one transgression of it, because whatever they can do is a debt due from themselves before.

—*Charnock*, 1620–1680.

(376.) The sense of mankind, with regard to the necessity of a mediator, may be illustrated by the following similitude:—Let us suppose a division of the army of one of the wisest and best of kings, through the evil counsel of a foreign enemy, to have been disaffected to his government; and that, without any provocation on his part, they traitorously conspired against his crown and life. The attempt failed; and the offenders were seized, disarmed, tried by the laws of their country, and condemned to die. A respite, however, was granted them during his majesty's pleasure. At this solemn period, while every part of the army and of the empire was expecting the fatal order for execution, the king was employed in meditating mercy. But how could mercy be shown? "To make light of a conspiracy," said he to his friends, "would loosen the bands of good government: other divisions of the army might be tempted to follow their example; and the nation at large be in danger of imputing it to tameness, fear, or some unworthy motive."

Every one felt in this case the necessity of a mediator, and agreed as to the general line of conduct for him to pursue. "He must not attempt," said they, "to compromise the difference by dividing the blame; that would make things worse. He must justify the king, and condemn the outrage committed against him; he must offer, if possible, some honourable expedient, by means of which the bestowment of pardon shall not relax, but strengthen just authority; he must convince the conspirators of their crime, and introduce them in the character of supplicants; and mercy must be shown them out of respect to him, or for his sake."

But who could be found to mediate in such a cause? This was an important question. A work of this kind, it was allowed on all hands, required singular qualifications. "He must be perfectly clear of any participation in the offence," said one, "or inclination to favour it; for to pardon conspirators at the intercession of one who is friendly to their cause would be not only making light of the crime, but giving a sanction to it."

"He must," said another, "be one who, on account of his character and services, stands high in the esteem of the king and of the public; for to mediate in such a case is to become, in a sort, responsible for the issue. A mediator, in effect, pledges his honour that no evil will result to the state from the granting of his request. But if a mean opinion be entertained of him, no trust can be placed in him, and, consequently, no good impression would be made by his mediation on the public mind."

"I conceive it is necessary," said a third, "that the weight of the mediation should bear a proportion to the magnitude of the crime, and to the value of the favour requested; and that for this end it is proper he should be a person of great dignity. For his majesty to pardon a company of conspirators at the intercession of one of their former comrades, or of any other obscure character, even though he might be a worthy man, would convey a very diminutive idea of the evil of the offence."

A fourth remarked, that, "He must possess a tender compassion towards the unhappy offenders, or he would not cordially interest himself on their behalf."

Finally. It was suggested by a fifth, "That, for the greater fitness of the proceeding, it would be proper that some relation or connection should subsist between the parties. We feel the propriety," said he, "of forgiving an offence at the intercession of a father or a brother; or, if it be committed by a soldier, of his commanding officer. Without some kind of previous relation or connection, a mediation would have the appearance of an arbitrary and formal process, and prove but little interesting to the hearts of the community."

Such were the reasonings of the king's friends; but where to find the character in whom these qualifications were united, and what particular expedient could be devised, by means of which, instead of relaxing, pardon should strengthen just authority, were subjects too difficult for them to resolve.

Meanwhile, the king and his son, whom he greatly loved, and whom he had appointed generalissimo of all his forces, had retired from the company, and were conversing about the matter which attracted the general attention.

"My son," said the benevolent sovereign, "what can be done in behalf of these unhappy men? To order them for execution violates every feeling of my heart; yet to pardon them is dangerous. The army, and even the empire, would be under a strong temptation to think lightly of rebellion. If mercy be exercised, it must be through a mediator; and who is qualified to mediate in such a cause? And what expedient can be devised by means of which pardon shall not relax, but strengthen just authority? Speak, my son, and say what measures can be pursued."

"My father," said the prince, "I feel the insult offered to your person and government, and the injury thereby aimed at the empire at large. They have transgressed without cause, and deserve to die without mercy. Yet I also feel for them. I have the heart of a soldier. I cannot endure to witness their execution. What shall I say? On me be this wrong! Let me suffer in their stead. Inflict on me as much as is necessary to impress the army and the nation with a just sense of the evil, and of the importance of good order and faithful allegiance. Let it be in their presence, and in the presence of all assembled. When this is done, let them be permitted to implore and receive your majesty's pardon in my name. If any man refuse so to implore, and so to receive it, let him die the death!"

"My son!" replied the king, "you have expressed my heart! The same things have occupied my mind; but it was my desire that you should be voluntary in the undertaking. It shall be as you have said. I shall be satisfied; justice itself will be satisfied; and I pledge my honour that you also shall be satisfied in seeing the happy effects of your disinterested conduct. Propriety requires that I stand aloof in the day of your affliction; but I will not leave you utterly, nor suffer the beloved of my soul to remain in that condition. A temporary affliction on your part will be more than equivalent to death on theirs. The dignity of your person and character will render the suffering of an hour of greater account, as to the impression of the public mind, than if all the rebellious had been executed; and by how much I am known to have loved you, by so much will my compassion to them, and my displeasure against their wicked conduct, be made manifest. Go, my son, assume the likeness of a criminal, and suffer in their place!"

The gracious design being communicated at court, all were struck with it. Those who had reasoned on the qualifications of a mediator saw that in the prince all were united, and were filled with admiration; but that he should be willing to suffer in the place of rebels was beyond all that could be asked or thought. Yet, seeing he himself had generously proposed it, would survive his sufferings, and reap the reward of them, they cordially acquiesced. The only difficulty that was started was among the judges of the realm. They, at first, questioned whether the proceeding were admissible. "The law," said they, "makes provision for the transfer of debts, but not of crimes. Its language is, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.'" But when they came to view things on a more enlarged scale, considering it as an expedient on an extraordinary occasion, and perceived that the spirit of the law would be preserved, and all the ends of good government answered, they were satisfied. "It is not a measure," said they, "for which the law provides; yet it is not contrary to the law, but above it."

The day appointed arrived. The prince appeared, and suffered as a criminal. The hearts of the king's friends bled at every stroke, and burned with indignation against the conduct which rendered it necessary. His enemies, however, even some of those for whom he suffered, continuing to be disaffected, added to the affliction by deriding and insulting him all the time. At a proper period, he was rescued from their outrage. Returning to the palace, amidst the tears and shouts of the loyal spectators, the suffering hero was embraced by his royal father; who, in addition to the natural affection which he bore to him as a son, loved him for his singular interposition at such a crisis: "Sit thou," said he, "at my right hand! Though the threatenings of the law be not literally accomplished, yet the spirit of them is preserved. The honour of good government is secured, and the end of punishment more effectually answered than if all the rebels had been sacrificed. Ask of me what I shall give thee! No favour can be too great to be bestowed, even upon the unworthiest, nor any crime too aggravated to be forgiven, in thy name. I will grant thee according to thine own heart! Ask of me, my son, what shall I give thee?"

He asked for the offenders to be introduced as supplicants at the feet of his father, for the forgiveness of their crimes, and for the direction of affairs till order and happiness should be perfectly restored.

A proclamation addressed to the conspirators was now issued, stating what had been their conduct, what the conduct of the king, and what of the prince. Messengers also were appointed to carry it, with orders to read it publicly, and to expostulate with them individually, beseeching them to be reconciled to their offended sovereign, and to assure them that, if they rejected this, there remained no more hope of mercy.

A spectator would suppose that in mercy so freely offered, and so honourably communicated, every one would have acquiesced; and if reason had governed the offenders, it had been so: but many among them continued under the influence of disaffection, and disaffection gives a false colouring to everything. The time of the respite having proved longer than was at first expected, some had begun to amuse themselves with idle speculations, flattering themselves that their fault was a mere trifle, and that it certainly would be passed over. Indeed, the greater part of them had turned their attention to other things, concluding that the king was not in good earnest.

When the proclamation was read, many paid no manner of attention to it; some insinuated that the messengers were interested men, and that there might be no truth in what they said; and some even abused them as impostors. So, having delivered their message, they withdrew; and the rebels, finding themselves alone, such of them as paid any attention to the subject expressed their mind as follows:—

"My heart," says one, "rises against every part of this proceeding. Why all this ado about a few words spoken one to another? Can such a message as this have proceeded from the king? What have we done so much against him that so much should be made of it? No petition of ours, it seems, would avail anything; and nothing that we could say or do could be regarded, unless presented in the name of a third person. Surely if we presented a petition in our own names, in which we beg pardon, and promise not to repeat the offence, this might suffice. Even this is more than I can find in my heart to comply with; but everything beyond it is unreason-

able; and who can believe that the king can desire it?"

"If a third person," says another, "must be concerned in the affair, what occasion is there for one so high in rank and dignity? To stand in need of such a mediator must stamp our characters with everlasting infamy. It is very unreasonable: who can believe it? If the king be just and good, as they say he is, how can he wish thus publicly to expose us?"

"I observe," says a third, "that the mediator is wholly on the king's side; and one whom, though he affects to pity us, we have, from the outset, considered as no less our enemy than the king himself. If, indeed, he could compromise matters, and would allow that we had our provocations, and would promise us redress, and an easier yoke in future, I should feel inclined to hearken; but if he have no concessions to offer, I can never be reconciled."

"I believe," says a fourth, "that the king knows very well that we have not had justice done us, and therefore this mediation business is introduced to make us amends for the injury. It is an affair settled somehow betwixt him and his son. They call it grace, and I am not much concerned what they call it, so that my life is spared; but this I say, if he had not made this or some kind of provision, I should have thought him a tyrant."

"You are all wrong," says a fifth: "I comprehend the design, and am well pleased with it. I hate the government as much as any of you; but I love the mediator; for I understand it is his intention to deliver me from its tyranny. He has paid the debt, the king is satisfied, and I am free. I will sue out for my right, and demand my liberty!"

In addition to this, one of the company observed, he did not see what the greater part of them had to do with the proclamation, unless it were to give it a hearing, which they had done already. "For," said he, "pardon is promised only to them who are willing to submit, and it is well known that many of us are unwilling; nor can we alter our minds on this subject."

After a while, however, some of them were brought to relent. They thought upon the subject-matter of the proclamation, were convinced of the justice of its statements, reflected upon their evil conduct, and were sincerely sorry on account of it. And now the mediation of the prince appeared in a very different light. They cordially said amen to every part of the proceeding. The very things which gave such offence, while their hearts were disaffected, now appeared to them fit, and right, and glorious. "It is fit," said they, "that the king should be honoured, and that we should be humbled; for we have transgressed without cause. It is right that no regard should be paid to any petition of ours, for its own sake; for we have done deeds worthy of death. It is glorious that we should be saved at the intercession of so honourable a personage. The dignity of his character, together with his surprising condescension and goodness, impress us more than anything else, and fill our hearts with penitence, confidence, and love. That which in the proclamation is called grace is grace; for we are utterly unworthy of it; and if we had all suffered according to our sentence, the king and his throne had been guiltless. We embrace the mediation of the prince, not as a reparation for an injury, but as a singular instance of mercy. And far be it from us that we should consider it as designed to deliver us from our original and just allegiance to his majesty's government! No, rather, it is intended to restore us to it. We love our intercessor, and will implore forgiveness in his name; but we also love our sovereign, and long to prostrate ourselves at his feet. We rejoice in the satisfaction which the prince has made, and all our hopes of mercy are founded upon it; but we have no notion of being freed by it previously to our acquiescence in it. Nor do we desire any other kind of freedom than that which, while it remits the just sentence of the law, restores us to his majesty's government. Oh, that we were once clear of this hateful and horrid conspiracy, and might be permitted to serve him with affection and fidelity all the days of our life! We cannot suspect the sincerity of the invitation, or acquit our companions on the score of unwillingness. Why should we? We do not on this account acquit ourselves. On the contrary, it is the remembrance of our unwillingness that now cuts us to the heart. We well remember to what it was owing that we could not be satisfied with the just government of the king, and afterwards could not comply with the invitations of mercy: it was because we were under the dominion of a disaffected spirit—a spirit which, wicked as it is in itself, it would be more wicked to justify. Our counsel is, therefore, the same as that of his majesty's messengers, with whom we now take our stand. Let us lay aside this cavilling humour, repent, and sue for mercy in the way prescribed, ere mercy be hid from our eyes!"

The reader, in applying this supposed case to the mediation of Christ, will do me the justice to remember that I do not pretend to have perfectly represented it. Probably there is no similitude fully adequate to the purpose. The distinction between the Father and the Son is not the same as that which subsists between a father and a son among men; the latter are two separate beings; but to assert this of the former would be inconsistent with the Divine unity. Nor can anything be found analogous to the doctrine of Divine influence, by which the redemption of Christ is carried into effect. And with respect to the innocent voluntarily suffering for the guilty, in a few extraordinary instances this principle may be adopted; but the management and the application of it generally require more wisdom and more power than mortals possess. We may, by the help of a machine, collect a few sparks of the electrical fluid, and produce an effect somewhat resembling that of lightning; but we cannot cause it to blaze like the Almighty, nor thunder with a voice like Him. —*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

III. *ITS SUFFICIENCY.*

(377.) When the Lord Jesus Christ offered up Himself a sacrifice unto God the Father, and had our sins laid upon Him, He did give more perfect satisfaction unto Divine justice for our sins than if you, and I, and all of us had been damned in hell unto all eternity. For a creditor is more satisfied if his debt be paid him all down at once, than if it be paid by the week: a poor man that cannot pay all down, will pay a groat a week, or sixpence a week; but it is more satisfaction to the creditor to have all paid at once. Should we have been all damned, we should have been but paying the debt a little, and a litle, and a little; but when Christ paid it, He paid it all down to God the Father. Had we gone to hell and been damned for ever, we had always been satisfying of God; aye, but God had never been satisfied: but now when Christ makes satisfaction,

God is satisfied. The creditor, if he be a merciful and a good man, is more truly satisfied where the debtor is spared; he does not desire that the debtor should be cast into prison, and there lie and rot; but he is better satisfied with the sparing of the debtor; let me have but my money, and so the debtor be spared, I am willing, nay, I desire it, says the good creditor. Now, if all we had been cast into everlasting burnings, indeed, the debt should have been a-paying, but there the debtor had been lost: but now when Christ comes and makes satisfaction unto Divine justice, ah! poor man is redeemed; here is the debtor spared. And, therefore, the Lord He is infinitely more satisfied by the satisfaction that Christ made upon the cross for our sins, than if we had gone to hell and been damned to all eternity. Oh, what a glorious and blessed satisfaction did this our High Priest make unto God the Father! —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(378.) When the sins of believers were laid on Him, then He did make full satisfaction unto God the Father and Divine justice for all our sins. This is a bottom of much comfort. For if the Lord Jesus Christ, our Surety, had not satisfied to the utmost farthing our great Creditor, God the Father, for all our debts, God the Father might come upon us, the debtors. But our Surety, the Lord Christ, hath given full satisfaction unto God the Father, that no more demands can be made upon us. And, indeed, else how could our Surety ever have come out of prison: He was under arrest, He was in the jail, in the grave; the Father, the great Creditor let Him out; and did not only let Him out, but the Lord Jesus Christ, He goes into heaven, and sits down there at the right hand of the Father; surely, if the Creditor had not been satisfied, the Surety should never have been released out of prison. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(379.) If the Lord Jesus Christ hath satisfied Divine justice as our great High Priest, then I may come with boldness unto the throne of grace. A debtor, so long as his debt is unpaid, he dare not come by the prison door; he is afraid of every sergeant, he is afraid of his friends that they should be sergeants: but when his debt is paid, then he dare go up and down with boldness. And so the poor soul, when he knows that his debt is paid, and Christ hath satisfied, then he may go with boldness unto the throne of grace.

But you will say, "I cannot have the comfort of this, because I cannot say that Christ hath satisfied for me: how shall I know that Jesus Christ is my High Priest, so as to have satisfied for me? Ah, if I did but know that the Lord Jesus Christ were my High Priest in this particular, so as to have satisfied for me, then should I have comfort indeed: how shall I discover that? I am afraid He hath not satisfied for me!"

And why not for thee? I shall tell you what I have heard concerning a young man that lay upon his death-bed, and went to heaven: while he was lying upon his death-bed, he comforted himself in this: That the Lord Jesus died for sinners. "Oh! blessed be the Lord!" says he, "Jesus Christ hath died for me!" Satan came in with this temptation to him: "Aye, but, young man, why for thee? Christ died for sinners, but why for thee? how can'st thou make that appear, that Christ died for thee?" "Nay, Satan," says he, "and why not for me? Ah! the Lord Jesus, He died for sinners, and therefore, Satan, why not for me?" So he held his comfort, and went up to heaven triumphing.

So say I to thee, poor drooping soul that labours under temptation; why not for thee? and say so unto Satan, why not for me?

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(380.) But you will say then, if the Lord Christ made this full satisfaction unto God the Father, how is it that believers, many of them have their consciences so perplexed in regard of sin, as if there were no satisfaction at all made? The reason is, because that men do not study this truth, but are ignorant of it. As, suppose that a man do owe three or four hundred pounds to a shopkeeper for wares that he hath taken up there: a friend comes, pays the debt, and crosses the book: but the debtor when he comes and looks upon the book is able to read all the particulars; and not being acquainted with the nature of crossing the book, he is able to read all the particulars, and he charges it still upon himself, because he does not understand the nature of this crossing the book, and he is as much troubled how he shall pay the debt, as if it were not paid at all. So now it is here: the Lord Jesus Christ hath come and crossed our book with His own blood; the sins are to be read in your own consciences, but we, being not acquainted with the nature of Christ's satisfaction, we charge ourselves, as if no sin at all were satisfied for us.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(381.) The extent of the atonement is frequently represented, as if a calculation had been made, how much suffering was necessary for the Surety to endure, in order exactly to expiate the aggregate number of all the sins of all the elect; that so much He suffered precisely, and no more; and that when this requisition was completely answered, He said, "It is finished, bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" (John xix. 30). But this nicety of computation does not seem analogous to that unbounded magnificence and grandeur which overwhelm the attentive mind in the contemplation of the Divine conduct in the natural world. When God waters the earth, He waters it abundantly (Psal. lxv. 10); He does not restrain the rain to cultivated or improvable spots, but with a profusion of bounty worthy of Himself His clouds pour down water with equal abundance upon the barren mountain, the lonely desert, and the pathless ocean. Why may we not say with the Scriptures, that Christ died to declare the righteousness of God (Rom. iii. 25, 26), to manifest that He is just in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus? And for anything we know to the contrary, the very same display of the evil and demerit of sin, by the Redeemer's agonies and death, might have been equally necessary, though the number of the elect were much smaller than it will appear to be when they shall all meet before the throne of glory. If God had formed this earth for the residence of one man only; had it been His pleasure to afford him the same kind and degree of light which we enjoy, the same glorious sun, which is now sufficient to enlighten and comfort the millions of mankind, would have been necessary for the accommodation of that one person. So, perhaps, had it been His pleasure to save but one sinner, in a way that should give the highest possible discovery of His justice and of His mercy, this could have been done by no other method

than that which He has chosen for the salvation of the innumerable multitudes who will in the great day unite in the song of praise to the Lamb who loved them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

IV. *FROM WHAT IT HAS REDEEMED US.*

(382.) Redemption being deliverance by means of the substituti n of a ransom, it follows that, although the ransom can only be paid to God, and to Him only as the Moral Governor of the universe, we may still be said to be redeemed from all that we are delivered from by means of the ransom paid in the sacrifice of Christ. Thus we are said to be redeemed "from our vain conversation" (1 Pet. i. 18), "from death" (Hosea xii. 14), "from the devil" (Col. ii. 15; Heb. ii. 14), "from all iniquity" (Titus ii. 14), and "from the curse of the law" (Gal. iii. 13; iv. 5), while it is, of course, not meant that the ransom is paid to the devil, or to sin, or to death, or to the law. It is simply absurd to claim that these different representations are inconsistent. A captive is redeemed by a price paid only to him that holds him in bondage, but by the same act may be redeemed from labour, from disease, from death, from the persecution of his fellow-captives, and from a slavish disposition. —*Hodge.*

V. *A CAUTION CONCERNING A FAMILIAR COMPARISON.*

(383.) Many important mistakes have arisen from considering the interposition of Christ under the notion of *paying a debt*. The blood of Christ is indeed the *price* of our redemption, or that for the sake of which we are delivered from the curse of the law; but this metaphorical language, as well as that of *head* and *members*, may be carried too far, and may lead us into many errors. In cases of debt and credit among men, where a surety undertakes to *represent* the debtor, from the moment his undertaking is accepted the debtor is free, and may claim his liberty, not as a matter of favour, at least on the part of the creditor, but of strict justice. Or should the undertaking be unknown to him for a time, yet as soon as he knows it he may demand his discharge, and, it may be, think himself hardly treated by being kept in bondage so long after his debt had been actually paid. But who in their sober senses will imagine this to be analogous to the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ? Sin is a debt only in a metaphorical sense; properly speaking it is a *crime*, and satisfaction for it requires to be made, not on pecuniary, but on moral principles. If Philemon had accepted of that part of Paul's offer which respected property, and had placed so much to his account as he considered Onesimus to have "owed" him, he could not have been said to have *remitted* his debt; nor would Onesimus have had to thank him for remitting it. But it is supposed of Onesimus that he might not only be in debt to his master, but have "wronged" hi m.

Perhaps he had embezzled his goods, corrupted his children, or injured his character. Now, for Philemon to accept of that part of the offer were very different from the other. In the one case he would have accepted of a pecuniary representative, in the other of a moral one, that is, of a mediator. The satisfaction in the one case would annihilate the idea of remission; but not of the other. Whatever satisfaction Paul might give to Philemon respecting the wound inflicted upon his character and honour as the head of a family, it would not supersede the necessity of pardon being sought by the offender, and freely bestowed by the offended.

The reason for this difference is easily perceived. Debts are transferable, but crimes are not. A third person may cancel the one, but he can only obliterate the *effects* of the other; the *desert* of the criminal remains. The debtor is accountable to his creditor as a private individual, who has power to accept of a surety, or, if he please, to remit the whole without any satisfaction. In the one case he would be just, in the other merciful; but no place is afforded by either of them for the *combination* of justice and mercy in the same proceeding. The criminal on the one hand, is amenable to the magistrate, or to the head of a family, as a public person, and who, especially if the offence be capital, cannot remit the punishment without invading law and justice, nor, in the ordinary discharge of his office, admit of a third person to stand in his place. In extraordinary cases, however, extraordinary expedients are resorted to. A satisfaction may be made to law and justice, as to the *spirit* of them, while the *letter* is dispensed with. The well-known story of Zaleucus, the Grecian lawgiver, who consented to lose one of his eyes to spare one of his son's eyes, who, by transgressing the law, subjected himself to the loss of both, is an example. Here, as far as it went, *justice and mercy were combined* in the same act; and had the satisfaction been much fuller than it was, so full that the authority of the law instead of being weakened should have been abundantly magnified and honoured, still it had been *perfectly consistent with free forgiveness.*

Finally, in the case of the debtor, satisfaction being once accepted, justice requires his complete discharge; but in that of the criminal, where satisfaction is made to the wounded honour of the law and the authority of the lawgiver, justice, though it *admits* of his discharge, yet no otherwise *requires* it than as it may have been matter of promise to the substitute.

I do not mean to say that cases of this sort afford a competent representation of redemption by Christ. That is a work which not only ranks with extraordinary interpositions, but which has no parallel; it is a work of God, which leaves all the petty concerns of mortals infinitely behind it. All that comparisons can do is to give us some idea of the *principle* on which it proceeds.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

VI. *WAS MADE FOR ALL MEN.*

(384.) As the sun is the general giver of light to the whole world, although there be many who do receive no light at all of it; or as there was among the Jews, upon the year of jubilee, a general delivery of all bondmen, although many abode still in their bondage and refused the grace of their delivery: even so the redemption of mankind by Christ is available for all, although reprobate and wicked men, for want of the grace of God, do not receive the same; yet there is no reason that it should lose its title and glory of universal redemption because of the children of perdition, seeing that it is ready for all men and all be called unto it.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(385.) The holy fathers do, by several like simili-

tudes, endeavour to illustrate this matter, and somewhat to assoil the difficulty (*i.e.*, that, as a matter of fact, all men are not saved). They compare our Saviour to the sun, who shines indifferently to all the world, although there be some private corners and secret caves, to which his light doth not come; although some shut their windows or their eyes, and exclude it; although some are blind, and do not see it. That mystical Sun of Righteousness (saith St. Ambrose) is risen to all, come to all, did suffer and rise again for all—but if any one doth not believe in Christ, he defrauds himself of the general benefit. As if one shutting the windows should exclude the beams of the sun, the sun is not therefore not risen to all. They compare our Lord to a physician, who professes to relieve and cure all that shall have recourse to His help; but doth cure only those who seek for remedy, and are willing to take the medicine; because all (saith St. Ambrose again) do not desire cure, but most do shun it, lest the ulcer should smart by medicaments; therefore *volentes curat, non astringit invitos;* He cures only the willing, doth not compel those that are unwilling; they only receive health, who desire medicine. Evangelical grace, say they, is like a fountain standing openly, to which all men have free access; at which all men may quench their thirst, if they will inquire after it, and go thereto. "The fountain of life," saith Arnobius, "is open to all; nor is any man hindered or driven from the right of drinking it." The covenant of grace is, say they, a door standing open to all, whereinto all have liberty to enter. "When an entrance," saith St. Chrysostom, "being open to all, and there being nothing that hinders, some being wilfully naught abide without, they have no other but their own wickedness to impute their destruction unto."

And again he puts the question, "If Christ enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, how is that so many remain unenlightened?" &c. To which he answers, that "If some wilfully shutting the eyes of their minds will not receive the beams of this light, it is not from the nature of light that those remain still in darkness, but from the wickedness of those who wilfully deprive themselves of the gift of it," &c.

—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(386.) Suppose a great kingdom, consisting of several provinces, should have revolted from their sovereign; disclaiming his authority, neglecting and disobeying his laws; that the good prince, out of his goodness and piety toward them (and upon other good considerations moving him thereto, suppose the mediation of his own son), instead of prosecuting them with deserved vengeance, should grant a general pardon and amnesty, in these terms, that whoever of those rebels willingly should come in, acknowledge his fault, and promise future loyalty, or obedience to his laws declared to them, should be received into favour, have impunity, enjoy protection, and obtain rewards from him. Further, for the effectuating of this gracious intent, suppose that he should appoint and commissionate messengers, empowering and charging them to divulge the purport of this act of grace to all the people of that kingdom. Admit now, that these messengers should go forth and seat themselves only in some provinces of that kingdom, proclaiming this universal pardon (universal as to the design, and as to the tenor thereof), only in those, neglecting others; or that, striving to propagate it farther, they should be rejected and repelled; or that from any the like cause the knowledge thereof should not reach to some provinces; it is plain, that indeed the effect of that pardon would be obstructed by such a carriage of the affair; but the tenor of that act would not thereby be altered; nor would the failure in execution (consequent upon the ministers' or the people's misbehaviour) detract from the real amplitude of the prince's intent; no more than the wilful incredulity, refusal, or non-compliance of some persons, where the business is promulgated and notified, would prejudice the same. It is plain the prince meant favourably toward all, and provided carefully for them; although by accident (not imputable to him) the designed favours and benefits do not reach all. The case so plainly suits our purpose, that I need not make any application. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

VII. *THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE DECLARATIONS OF SCRIPTURE CONCERNING IT ARE TO BE STUDIED.*

(387.) It is necessary to know what God hath revealed concerning the way of pardon by Christ: it is impossible to know more than He has revealed. If men would forbear to explicate further, there would be more Christianity and less controversy.

—*Whichcote.*

(388.) In studying all Divine truths, but specially a truth like this (which involves the nature of God, His mysterious dealings, and the relations which it has pleased Him to establish between Himself and man—topics the most arduous in the whole range of theology), we must be careful to accept with the utmost simplicity the intimations of holy Scripture. It would be presumptuous to go into such a subject at all, except so far as those intimations lead us by the hand. In every such investigation, it should be present to our minds from first to last, that in estimating the ways of God, we are like little children estimating the ways of matured and sage men,—men enriched with all the fruits of a long experience and an extensive observation. The unitarian professes an inability to receive the doctrine of the atonement, as it is held by Christians, on the ground that it conflicts with his natural instincts. His sense of justice, he tells us, revolts from the notion of an innocent victim bearing the sins of a guilty world: to represent God as requiring such a sacrifice, in order to the expiation of human guilt, is to paint Him as a ruthless and relentless tyrant, determined to have His blow and to gratify His revenge somewhere, even should it fall upon the unoffending. That this view of what the Scripture says upon the subject is not simply exaggerated, but falsified, we shall presently see.

What I am now concerned to remark is, that our natural instincts, and even our so-called moral sense, are no safe guide upon a subject which soars so infinitely above our limited capacity. We are children; and in considering the means by which our Heavenly Father will save us, it is wisdom to accept simply His own instructions, desperate folly and presumption to criticise those instructions by our childish notions and puerile instincts. My meaning will be more vividly apprehended, if I draw out the illustration in detail.

A father, inured to life upon the mountains, and acquainted by experience with all the natural phenomena of an Alpine district, is under the necessity of

crossing a very perilous glacier with children of four or five years old. His first counsel for their safety is the obvious and usual one—that each holding by a cord, one end of which is in his own hand, they shall keep at as great a distance from him, and from one another, as the length of the cord admits. The children are of such an age that the direction, "Hold this, and keep at as great a distance from me as you possibly can," can just be made intelligible to them,—the grounds of it (plain enough to an adult, that the weight of the party may be distributed along the ice, and not brought to bear on one particular spot, which might thus give way) are, it may be, out of the reach of a child's capacity.

Let us suppose that the children, in fright and discomfort, begin to reason about this counsel, and to judge of it by their natural instincts; conceive that one of them should think and say as follows:—"Can this direction come from our father, who is so affectionate a parent, who loves to have us close around him under ordinary circumstances, hanging round his neck and sitting on his knees? Can he say upon this occasion, 'Come not near me, child, at the peril of thy life?' Say it he may, but I will not believe such to be his meaning, for it is an ungenial idea, conflicting with all my natural instincts, which are to cling round him in the moment of danger, and, moreover, with confidence in his affection."

But shortly afterwards a further direction is given. Night falls upon the mountain summits, its blackness only relieved by the flickering snows. The wearied children are irresistibly impelled to lie down without any covering, in which case death would overtake them before the morning. The father discovers a corner, where the snowdrift lies deep. He burrows in it with all the energy of a man who knows that life depends upon his exertions, and proposes that in the cavities so made the children shall lie, the cold snow piled over them as if they were buried in it, and only the smallest possible aperture allowed for the passage of the breath. Adults, of course, would be aware that this would be the only method under the circumstances (and a sure method) of preserving and cherishing the vital heat of the body; but not so the children. Snow, applied only to parts of the person, and not as a general wrapper, is bitterly cold; and the children, unable to understand how the great white mantle of winter really wards off the cold of the atmosphere from the seeds of plants and flowers, imagine cruelty in this direction of the father, and shudder at the sight of the bed which he has prepared for them.

My brethren, a little child, feeling thus and reasoning thus on such an occasion, presents a very just image of a man who rejects (or qualifies, so as to meet his own notions) the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, on the ground that it conflicts with his natural instincts, violates his moral sense, and presents to us (as it does undoubtedly, under one aspect of it) the severity of God. The allowing these grounds to weigh with us against the simple statements of Scripture is not wisdom, is not independence of thought, is not a high reach of mind,—it is simply folly.

The question is not between Revelation and reason, but rather between reason and natural instincts; reliance upon which (in defiance of reason) is folly. For it is reason surely to accept, and folly to reject or modify the Word of the all-wise and all-loving One on points on which He alone is competent to inform us.

The child who keeps at a distance from his father, and buries himself in the snow, is a wise child, because, renouncing the guidance of his instincts, he places faith in one manifestly his superior in capacity. The child who clings round his father's neck upon the glacier, and stretches his limbs beneath the open sky, in distrust of his parent's directions, is a foolish child; for what is greater folly than to refuse to be guided by a recognised superior in wisdom? And it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that one who, in investigating such a subject as the method of human salvation, follows the guidance of his natural instincts in preference to that of Revelation, is a weak person, not a man of bold and courageous thought. Simple dependence upon God, where God alone can teach, is the truest independence of mind. —*Goulburn.*

(389.) When I look at the work of the atonement, I look at a grand and glorious transaction that lies back, in the order of nature, of the purpose of election, and that in its original applicability is limited by no design of God. It is for the world—"that whosoever believeth may not perish but have everlasting life." I see in it a work designed to show the benignity of God; showing how God can be just, and yet the justifier of Him that believeth; how he can maintain His truth and yet forgive; how He can welcome rebels to His favour and yet show that He hates their sins; how He can admit them to the fellowship of angels, and yet not have them revolt at the accession to their number, or lose their confidence in God, as if He were disposed to treat the evil and the good alike. And I love to contemplate it as it stands in its original glory—as it is an emanation of the Divine goodness. I love to contemplate it, not in reference to the comparatively narrow question of selfishness, "who shall or who shall not be saved; not narrowed down by a reference to a sordid commercial transaction of debt and purchase; but with reference to the display of the Divine perfections—the exhibition of the mercy and the goodness of God. So I love to stand on the shore of the ocean, while surge after surge breaks at my feet; and the blue expanse stretches out illimitably before me; and ships ride proudly over the deep; and to contemplate it not with reference to the question whether it will safely bear a cargo of mine across it or not, but as a glorious exhibition of the power and greatness of God. So I love to stand on some eminence, and look down upon the landscape, and to survey the spreading forests, and the river, and the fields, and the waterfalls, and the villages, and the churches, not with the narrow inquiry, "What is all this worth?" but what a view is there here of the goodness of God, and the greatness of His compassion to the children of men! So I stand at Niagara, and as God "pours" the water "from His hollow hand," and the soul is filled with emotions of unutterable sublimity, I will not ask what is all this worth for a mill-seat? but I will allow the scene to lift my soul up to God; to teach me lessons of His power and greatness, and to show me the littleness of all that man can do. And so I will look on the glorious work of the atonement. I will look at it, and ask the question, who is or who is not to be benefited by it? I will ask what new manifestation there is in it of the character of God? what is there to elevate the soul? what is there to make me think more highly of the love, the truth, and the justice of my Maker? what is there to ex-

pand the soul, and to elevate it above the sordid views and grovelling propensities of this world?

—*Barnes*, 1871.

VIII. *NOT THE CAUSE, BUT THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE FOR SINNERS.*

(390.) We do not suppose that compassion towards them has been purchased, but that it was originally so great that He was willing to stoop to sacrifice in order to rescue and save them. A father has a beloved son. He embarks on the ocean in the pursuits of commerce, and falls into the hands of an Algerine pirate. He is chained, and driven to the slave market, and sold, and conveyed over burning sands as a slave, and pines in hopeless bondage. The news of this reaches the ears of the father. What will be his emotions? Will the suffering of that son make a change in his character? If required, he would gather up his silver, and his gold, and his pearls, and leave his own home, and cross the ocean, and make his way over the burning sands, that he might find out and ransom the captive. But think you he would be a different man now from what he was? Has the captivity of that son made a change in him? No. His sufferings have called out the original tenderness of his bosom, and have merely developed what he was. He so loved that child that the forsaking of his own home, and the perils of the ocean, and the journey over burning sands, were regarded as of no consequence if he could seek out and save him. These sacrifices and toils would be trifles; if he might again press his lost son to his bosom, and restore him to his desolate home. It is the love—the strong original love in his bosom, that prompts to the sacrifice, and that makes toil and peril welcome. So of God. Such was His original love for man, that He was willing to stoop to any sacrifice to save him; and the gift of a Saviour was the mere expression of that love. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

IX. *ITS RELATION TO THE UNIVERSE.*

(391.) The mediation of Christ is represented in Scripture as bringing the whole creation into union with the church or people of God. In the dispensation of the fulness of times it is said that God would "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him." Again, "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and (having made peace through the blood of His cross) by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether things in earth, or things in heaven."

The language here used supposes that the introduction of sin has effected a disunion between men and the other parts of God's creation. It is natural to suppose it should be so. If a province of a great empire rise up in rebellion against the lawful government, all communication between the inhabitants of such a province and the faithful adherents to order and obedience must be at an end. A line of separation would be immediately drawn by the sovereign, and all intercourse between the one and the other prohibited. Nor would it less accord with the inclination than with the duty of all the friends of righteousness, to withdraw their connection from those who were in rebellion against the supreme authority and the general good. It must have been thus with regard to the holy angels, on man's apostacy. Those who at the creation of our world had sung together, and even shouted for joy, would now retire in disgust and holy indignation.

But, through the mediation of Christ, a reunion is effected. By the blood of the cross we have peace with God; and being reconciled to Him, are united to all who love Him throughout the whole extent of creation. If Paul could address the Corinthians, concerning one of their excluded members, who had been brought to repentance, "To whom ye forgive anything, I also;" much more would the friends of righteousness say, in their addresses to the Great Supreme, concerning an excluded member from the moral system, "To whom Thou forgivest anything, we also!" Hence angels acknowledge Christians as brethren, and become ministering spirits to them while inhabitants of the present world.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

X. *REASONABLENESS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS FOR HIS PEOPLE.*

(392.) The believer can clear God as just in receiving the debt at Christ's hand, from that near union that is betwixt Christ and His people. The husband may lawfully be arrested for his wife's debt, because this union is voluntary; and it is to be supposed, he did, or ought to have considered what her estate was before he contracted so near a relation to her. A suit may justly be commenced against a surety, because it was his own act to engage for the debt. To be sure, Christ was most free in engaging Himself in the sinner's cause. He knew what a sad plight man's nature was in; and He had an absolute freedom to please Himself in His choice; whether He would leave man to perish, or lend His helping hand towards his recovery; He had also an absolute power of His own life, which no mere creature hath; so that it being His own offer (upon His Father's call) to take our nature in marriage, thereby to interest Himself in our debt, and for the payment of it, to disburse and pour out His own precious blood to death, how dare proud flesh call the justice of God to the bar, and bring His righteousness in this transaction into question, for which God promised Himself the highest expressions of love and thankfulness at His creatures' hands?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

XI. *VICARIOUS SUFFERING THE LAW OF THE UNIVERSE.*

(393.) *But why must my Lord be wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities?* Why must He be chastised for my peace? It may help some, if we go round about for our answer, if we appeal to dumb, yet speaking, nature. How is it that the ground has to be wounded by spade and plough, and put, as it were, to the torture under harrows before it will produce bread-corn for us? How is it that when the corn is produced it must also be subjected to torture,—must be bruised under millstones, ground and reground, before it will make bread for us? How is it that even then the bread is not committed to the stomach, before it has been further bruised and mangled by the teeth? How is it that plants, flowers, and fruits only yield their latent virtues when bruised? How is it that there can be no wine till the grapes have been pressed or trodden? Why is vegetable life sacrificed for us? Why is animal life slain for us? Why does every creature come into the world through the gate

of sorrow? Why is man born to labour? Why is the sweat of the brow associated with labour? Why are labour and sorrow the price which must be paid for knowledge? Why are the holiest things most hidden? Why is God hidden from us? How is it that all things are secreted within chaff, or skin, or shell, and that violence must be done to chaff, skin, or shell, in order to reach the hidden good? How is it that death is the gate of life? If you find the answers to these questions, it will help you to the opening of the higher question: How is it that the bread of God, the Spirit of Life, the mercy of the Eternal Father, is not adapted to our need, till it comes to us through the humbled, bruised, tortured, crucified Son of God? If you cannot answer the former questions, you will learn, at least, that the whole of nature labours under the same difficulty as "Christ crucified." You will see that good comes into this world through a strait gate, the better comes in through a still straiter gate, and the best comes in through the straitest gate of all. Indeed the absolutely best is not known in our world. Nature will grow thorns and thistles without labour and culture, but if you will have cornfields and vineyards, you must chastise nature, and afflict your own body and soul with hard labour. Children will grow up in ignorance and vice, without the care of parents and the labour of teachers; but not in knowledge and virtue. Still less, without earnest painstaking, will they grow up for heaven. The fact is, evil thrives here, but good suffers. The higher and the purer the good, the more it suffers. However it be accounted for, "this whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain," brings forth in labour and sorrow, runs through its brief course of vanity, and ends in death. Let those, therefore, who turn sulky and grumble, because they find the Cross of Christ in the Bible, have the goodness to remove the stumblingblock from Nature. For my part I find the Cross of Christ, not an untrue revelation of what was a Divine condition, before Jesus was born, or the prophecies written. Upon whose shoulders did the burden of this fallen and degenerate creation rest from time immemorial? Who was grieved and smitten to the heart, by the Titans of rebellion and wickedness that were before the flood? Is it not always the head of the house who feels most sorely the disorder, the evils, and the sorrows of his house? And who is the Head of this great house which we call universe? Is it its own head, or is God its Head? God, certainly. Then the chief pressure of its evil condition must lie upon Him, must it not? Surely. What countenance then, or authority, from nature, have men for objecting to the Cross of Christ? The Cross of Christ did not make a new truth: it was rather the manifestation of a world-old truth.

—*Pulsford.*

(394.) The points in the doctrine of the Atonement which present most difficulty to the natural understanding, are, first, the necessity of any suffering in order to procure human redemption; and, secondly, the imputation to the innocent of the sins of the guilty. It may alleviate these difficulties for such minds as love to see a unity of principle in God's dealings, to remark, first, that almost all temporal blessings are purchased at the expense of sorrow somewhere. Since the entrance of sin into the world, it seems to be the one condition of our every blessing, nay, in many instances, of life itself, that some one shall suffer to procure them. We move in the midst of comforts, most of which are furnished by the severe toil of the handicraftsman. Our lives are supported by animal food, and in providing animal food, some innocent creature is made to bleed and die. The structure of civilisation is built up upon the groans and toils of the few. It is then surely in accordance with a law which seems to pervade God's universe, that the highest, the inappreciable blessing of redemption, should be purchased by the deepest anguish that ever rent the human soul asunder.

Secondly, the fact is certain, however we may explain it, that sins are visited upon others than their agents. The spendthrift and intemperate father entails upon his son, in the ordinary course of things, an enfeebled constitution, and all the miseries of poverty. We may quarrel with these facts if we please; but they confront us wherever we turn our eyes, and we cannot deny them. Why is an innocent person to suffer even one single pang of bodily pain for the sins of the guilty? I care not to say why; for to our limited capacities many of God's dealings are utterly inscrutable; but I cannot be blind to the fact that so it is in the world of nature. And if God deals thus in the world of nature, why should we refuse to believe that His dealings in the world of grace will be characterised by the same great feature, that (in Scripture phraseology) "Christ was made sin for us, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"? —*Goulburn.*

(395.) Society, the whole fabric of the moral world, is carried on, and is held together by a law, by a scheme of natural intervention or mediation; I think you could scarcely name a joy you have ever felt; or a trouble from which you have ever escaped, which you cannot trace to the intervention of another, and not rarely to an intervention effected with pain to the intervener.

Think of the little babe; there it lies, joyous and redolent with the promise of the activities of life, yet utterly helpless and dependent upon others' care. But think also of the pale face of her whose strength scarcely suffices to nestle her little one in her nerveless arms. Nay, without my bidding, some of you perforce recall to memory, how the mother's pulse ceased to beat before she could utter a parent's blessing on a child. And what is all this? what is it but a redemption of a life, at the cost of the sufferings of another!

Pass onwards a few years, and trace that child now walking with elastic step at his father's side—but look upwards at the father's face; you will not be surprised to find many a deep furrow there, furrows that bear testimony to the father's anxieties and father's toils—anxieties and toils, that the bright boy who walks at his side may have a good offset for the battle of life before him, nay, anxieties and toils sometimes deep and inevitable for the bare supply of that child's daily bread. And what means all this? What is it but redemption again, sometimes procured at the cost of labour, and suffering, and tears!

And when is it that you cease to hear men speak of their "friends"? What other word so common among us? Need I remind you what that word "friend" practically implies? Alas! for the most part it implies, not the confiding interchange of thought; not the sweet comparison of experience.

and of hope, and of aspiration; not the pleasant suggestions which arise from community of taste; for such high privileges are reserved for those only who by patient continuance in well-doing have acquired the right and the capacity to enjoy them; but that commonest of words a "friend," bears testimony to that commonness of weakness which looks for aid in another's strength; to that commonness of wants which seeks their supply in another's abundance; it bears testimony to that commonness of troubles which not rarely can be removed solely at the cost of another's pains, even greater than those which they assuage. There is not, there cannot be, a man before me who may not trace, again and again, instances of what I mean in his own personal history. "I speak of what we know and feel within."

And think again, for a moment, even of the arts and conveniences of life; of the appliances, the inventions, the discoveries which God hath ordained to ennoble life; such results come at no man's light bidding; the discovery, the invention may come, and in fact must at last like a flash; but the happy, the final thought comes to the man of genius only after days and nights, or even years of patient endurance in intellectual toil. And when it does come to him, not seldom the health is failing, or the lamp of life is flickering and burnt low; or other men step in, reaping the harvest of his toil, and leaving him little more than the gleanings of the field, the sowing whereof was all his own. Look at the countenances of the chief among those able men who now throng your town,* and on their brows you will find many a trace of the midnight struggle with thought, ageing them before they have reached their prime. Herein is that saying true, "One soweth, and another reapeth." These men labour, you and I "enter into their labours."

And so I might proceed with other instances of a like import. If the time allowed, I might more than briefly allude to the well-known names of noble men and of noble women still living among us, who like apostles and martyrs of old, count not their lives dear unto them, if only they may help the helpless, cheer the cheerless, raise the fallen, and impart the joy of hope to the spirit of the dying. But I forbear; for one continuous system of redemption and of vicarious suffering has been ordained of God as the very law and the plan of our natural being.

Now, such being the scheme, such the manner after which it has pleased the Eternal Creator to impart the joys, to assuage the sorrows, and to enlighten the ignorance of His creatures in this their natural life which endures but for threescore years and ten; I ask you, Is there anything which can reasonably jar upon our feelings, if we find that the Eternal Father in His marvellous beneficence has interposed after a like, though a higher manner, on behalf of His children in those higher relations of theirs which endure for ever? —*Pritchard.*

XII. *OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.*

1. Salvation by the suffering of another is not inconsistent with the Divine justice.

(396.) Men say that it is unjust that one man should suffer for another; however willing may be the sufferer, however he may put aside the rights of his own innocence, it is revolting to our reason to suppose that God will or can accept such a sacrifice as effectual towards the forgiveness of the guilty. Yet, I suppose there is nothing in human history more plain than that men suffer the natural punishments for things of which they are not guilty. We speak as if the Saviour's sacrifice were the only fact hard to be accepted in the Divine economy, as if an objection established against this one tenet would leave all the rest of the Divine Government plain, and easy to be understood. That is not the case. How do we make it just that all from their birth should need atonement, that they should be incapable of holiness? How do we account for the ruined health and morals of the children where the father has been licentious? how for the devastation of whole countries in a warfare waged upon the quarrel of kings? how for the calamities which shipwreck, and earthquake, and contagion bring on the unoffending? how for the light and prosperity enjoyed by European races, whilst the African nations grovel in degradation? Men are not, and cannot be, regarded only as free and responsible units, each planted apart from all his neighbours and thoroughly independent of them all; as perfectly free on the one hand, and on the other, completely responsible for all their acts without help or hindrance from any other. Man has his individual life; but he is also one of a family, of a city, of a nation; and his lot is bound up with that of others in all these relations. When the shells are crashing through the roofs of the bombarded town, they will shatter alike the warrior and the man that longs for peace. When the pestilence that walketh in darkness and destroyeth in the noonday is marching through our streets and alleys, it mows down alike those whose careless habits have encouraged the disease, and those who have purged their dwellings from those pollutions on which infection feeds. The Most High is just indeed; but He is also a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers on the children. Through such enactments does His justice work itself out. One day we may understand His ways, and learn that His moral government proceeds on laws as beautiful and as harmonious as those which regulate the world of nature.

But, in the meantime, let us not argue upon God's justice, as if we understood it thoroughly. So far from its being a paradox that another should exercise an influence over our moral being, examples of such an influence will occur to every one. And a being quite separated from all other natures, and owing nothing of his character or his actions to others around him, cannot even be conceived of any existing under our human nature. If it is unjust that your sins, out of which you cannot help yourselves, should receive great help from another whose you are, in whom as the Word and Wisdom of God you live, and move, and have your being, why are you allowed to profit by other men's toil and labour in anything whatever? All that you are and have has come from others, now through the most wearing labour, now through perils that have even cost life itself. There is, therefore, nothing repugnant to the known facts of God's government, in the belief that one may exert an influence over others, both for good and evil; it is not utterly abhorrent to the Divine justice that one should be permitted to lift off the weight of others' sins, unless it is also abhorrent to it that sins should be trans-

* The sermon from which this extract was made was preached on the occasion of a visit of the *British Association* to Norwich.

mitted from father to child, or the profligate be allowed to entice the innocent to share his sin.

The power of others over us is one of the most difficult forms of that obscure enigma—the existence of evil in the world. But of all solutions the least satisfactory to my own mind would be that which allowed it for evil and denied it for good; which admitted that the sins of the first Adam may be inherited, but denied that the second Adam could relieve them; which was able to say, "In Adam all die," but found it a blasphemy against the justice of heaven to add, "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive." —*Thomson.*

2. **The redemption of the human race is not a task unworthy of the Divine greatness.**

(397.) God is as incapable of being indifferent towards His lost mankind, as is a mother towards her lost child. Lost mankind are not only His lost, but His lost children. His piece of money is Money indeed, for originally it came out of the mine of His Eternal Nature. Heathen poets, Christian Apostles, and modern philosophy are agreed that mankind "are His offspring." And does not the Source of all hearts feel? And is He not concerned for His lost? In the Divinity of indifference I cannot believe. I could far more easily believe that the Divine Heart carries a huge grief; and that "the Man of Sorrows" only partially represents the tenderness of Infinite Love. In human hearts, in mother's love, in angelic love, and in the Person of Jesus, the affections of God have a wide and wonderful revelation; but what the Divine Affections are in their Fountain-head must be beyond all revealing and conceiving. And yet I am strongly inclined to think that, to many, one great offence of the Gospel is, that it is too gracious, too tender, too womanly. They can believe in a God afar off, but they cannot believe in God "nigh at hand." They can conceive God to have Almighty Power, Infinite Wisdom and Justice, but they cannot give Him credit for Infinite Affection. They know that a woman will light a candle and go into every hole and corner, stooping and searching, until she find that which she has missed; but they have no idea that this can be a true parable of God's concern for His lost children. They are not surprised to find a heart in my Lady Franklin: they are not surprised at any measures that she may set on foot to recover the lost one. They are not surprised that the British and American Governments should be concerned to seek, and if possible, to save Sir John and his crew. No one said, they are not worth the expense and labour of seeking, because they are few. Not far from a million pounds were sacrificed in this search. Besides money, good brothers were not found backward to expose their own lives to danger, in the distant hope of finding and relieving their missing brothers. Have the English Government and people so great a concern to recover their lost, and has God none? Better say that a drop contains more than the ocean, that a candle gives more light than the sun, that there are higher virtues in a stream than in its source, and that the creature has more heart than God. Otherwise confess, that the Gospel is infinitely worthy of the Heart of God; and never more imagine the Great Father to find rest under the Loss of His human family, in the consolation: "They are nothing compared with My universe, they will never be missed." —*Pulsford.*

3. **This world is not too small a sphere for such a wonderful display of the Divine love.**

(398.) Let creation be ever so extensive, there is nothing inconsistent with reason in supposing that some one particular part of it should be chosen out from the rest, as a theatre on which the great Author of all things would perform His most glorious works. Every empire that has been founded in the world has had some one particular spot where those actions were performed, from which its glory has arisen. The glory of the Cæsars was founded on the event of a battle fought near a very inconsiderable city; and why might not this world, though less than "twenty-five thousand miles in circumference," be chosen as the theatre on which God would bring about events that should fill His whole empire with glory and joy? It would be as reasonable to plead the insignificance of Actium or Agincourt in objection to the competency of the victories there obtained (supposing them to have been on the side of righteousness), to fill the respective empires of Rome and Britain with glory, as that of our world to fill the whole empire of God with matter of joy and everlasting praise. The truth is, the comparative dimension of our world is of no account. If it be large enough for the accomplishment of events which are sufficient to occupy the minds of all intelligences, that is all that is required. —*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

XIII. *NO DIFFICULTIES IN OUR UNDERSTANDING THE METHOD OF THE ATONEMENT SHOULD HINDER US FROM GRATEFULLY ACCEPTING IT.*

(399.) When I see men busy about the *method* of atonement, I marvel at them. It is as if a man that was starving to death should insist upon going into a laboratory to ascertain in what way dirt germinated wheat. It is as if a man that was perishing from hunger should insist upon having a chemical analysis of bread. —*Beecher.*

AVARICE.

1. **Defined.**

(400.) Avarice is nothing but a higher form of the wish to obtain property—so high that it cuts off one's sympathy from others; and lowers the impression of the value of things which are more valuable than riches. It becomes first a kind of intemperance; and then it becomes like intemperance itself, a disease; and finally it becomes insanity. There are few misers; but there are a great many men who have the first touches of miserism in them. There is a closeness, a tenacity with which men hold money. There is a growing indisposition to use it for any other purpose than to increase it. There is a spirit by which men see in riches only capital to be invested for the sake of its interest, which is to them good to be invested again. So they roll their possessions, as boys used to roll the snow in winter. In rolling, it increases in magnitude, and is at last vaster than they can shove. And when they have amassed it, what do they do? They let it stand where it is, and the summer finds it, and melts it all away. It sinks to water again; and the water is sucked up, and goes to make snow once more for other foolish boys to

roll into heaps. Men go on amassing wealth, either in the early stages, or the middle stages, or the latter stages of avarice, desiring it, not for what it can do, not for what it is as a quickener, as a helper, as a teacher, as a purveyor of God's bounty, but purely and simply because it is wealth.
—*Beecher.*

2. Is a result of atheism.

(401.) Because men believe not Providence, therefore they do so greedily scrape and hoard. They do not believe any reward for charity, therefore they will part with nothing.
—*Barrow*, 1631–1713.

3. Its Insidiousness.

(402.) Beware of growing covetousness, for of all sins this is one of the most insidious. It is like the silting up of a river. As the stream comes down from the land, it brings with it sand and earth, and deposits all these at its mouth, so that by degrees, unless the conservators watch it carefully, it will block itself up, and leave no channel for ships of great burden. By daily deposit it imperceptibly creates a bar which is dangerous to navigation. Many a man when he begins to accumulate wealth commences at the same moment to ruin his soul, and the more he acquires, the more closely he blocks up his liberality, which is, so to speak, the very mouth of spiritual life. Instead of doing more for God he does less; the more he saves the more he wants, and the more he wants of this world the less he cares for the world to come. —*Spurgeon.*

4. Degrades the character.

(403.) The avaricious man is like a pig, which seeks its food in the mud, without caring where it comes from. —*Vianney.*

5. Leads to dishonesty and falsehood.

(404.) The love of money can never keep good quarter with honesty; there is a mint of fraud in the worldly breast, and it can coin lies as fast as utterance. —*Adams*, 1653.

6. The imagination of the covetous.

(405.) The fancy is a mint-house, and most of the thoughts a covetous man mints are worldly: he is always plotting and projecting about the things of this life; like a virgin that hath all her thoughts running upon her suitor. —*Watson*, 1696.

7. Is insatiable.

(406.) It is not abundance, nor masses of gold and silver, that can quench this insatiable thirst; but thereby it is rather increased. For as more wood put to the fire augments the flame and the heat, so the desire of many by addition of wealth is multiplied. —*Altersol*, 1618.

(407.) The countryman in the fable would needs stay till the river was run all away, and then go over dry-shod; but the river did run on still, and he was deceived in his expectation. Such are the worldling's inordinate desires: the deceitful heart promiseth to see them run over and gone, when they are attained to such a measure, and then they are stronger, wider, and more unruly than before; for a covetous heart grasps at no less than the whole world—would fain be master of all, and dwell alone, like a wen in the body, which draws all to itself. Let it have never so much, it will reach after more; add house to house, and field to field, till there be no more place to compass. Like a bladder, it swells wider and wider, the more of this empty world is put into it. So boundless, so endless, so inordinate are the corrupt desires of worldly-minded men! —*Spencer*, 1656.

(408.) A ship may be overladen with silver, even unto sinking, and yet space enough be left to hold ten times more. So a covetous man, though he have enough to sink him, yet never hath he enough to satisfy him, like that miserable caitiff, mentioned by Theocritus, first wishing that he had a thousand sheep in his flock, and then when he has them, he would have cattle without number. Thus a circle cannot fill a triangle, so neither can the whole world (if it were to be compassed) the heart of man; a man may as easily fill a chest with grace, as the heart with gold. The air fills not the body, neither doth money the covetous mind of man.
—*Trapp*, 1601–1669.

(409.) Covetousness is a disease of the mind, and an unnatural thirst which is inflamed by that which should quench it. Every desire that is natural is satisfied and at rest, when it hath once obtained the thing it desired. If a man be hungry, he is satisfied when he hath eaten; or if he be thirsty, his thirst is allayed and quenched when he hath drank to such a proportion as nature doth require; and if he eat and drink beyond this measure, nature is oppressed, and it is a burden to him. But covetousness is the thirst, not of nature, but of a diseased mind. It is the thirst of a fever, or of a dropsy; the more a man drinks the more he desires, and the more he is inflamed. In like manner, the more the covetous man increaseth his estate, the more his desires are enlarged and extended, and he finds continually new occasions and new necessities.

If this be the nature of this vice, the more it gets still to covet the more, then nothing can be more unreasonable than to think to gratify this appetite; because, at this rate, the man can never be contented, because he can never have enough. Nay, so far as it is from that, that every new accession to his fortune sets his desires one degree farther from rest and satisfaction. For a covetous mind having no bounds, it is very probable that the man's desire will increase much faster than his estate; and then the richer he is, he is still the poorer, because he is still the less contented with his condition. However, it is impossible that the man's desire should ever be satisfied; for desire being always first, if the man's desire for riches advanceth and goes forward as fast as riches follow, then it is not possible for riches ever to overtake the desire of them, no more than the hinder wheels of a coach can overtake those which are before; because, as they were at a distance at first setting out, so let them go never so far or so fast, they keep the same distance still.
—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(410.) The thirst for gold, like the drunkard's, is insatiable. The more it is indulged, the more the flame is fed, it burns the fiercer. —*Guthrie.*

(411.) Just as our views expand the higher we ascend the steep of a vast mountain, so do our wishes widen the further we advance in wealth.
—*Mursell.*

(412.) The love of money, like all other passions, grows by what it feeds on. Indulgence serves only to strengthen it, and to render it the more

insatiable. What seemed a fortune before it was attained, dwindles into comparative poverty when it has been actually acquired. The height which looked so lofty when viewed from the plain, sinks down almost to the level of the plain itself, when, standing on its summit, the climber contrasts it with the far loftier eminences which have now come into view. He finds himself only as yet at the bottom of a vast mountain chain; the higher he ascends, the more distinctly this fact appears; and just so it is with the love of money. The sum that looked so large in his eye at the outset, shrinks by and by into a trifle. Once it seemed wealth, now it appears the barest competence. It is measured every year by a new standard—the standard of a higher grade of society—of a more ambitious style of living—of new wants and more expensive tastes. Things which at one time would have been accounted luxuries, having now become the merest necessaries of life. That which at an earlier stage of his career would have been accounted extravagance, has now almost the aspect of meanness. The point at which he is prepared to say that it is enough, is like the horizon, to which the traveller, however far and however fast the journeys, never gets any nearer. The case now described is, to the full, as common in our day, as it could have been in the time of Solomon.

—*Buchanan.*

8. Is especially the sin of old age.

(413.) There may be a forsaking of a particular sin that has been delightful and predominant without sincerity towards God, for another lust may have got possession of the heart, and take the throne. There is an alternate succession of appetites in the corrupt nature, according to the change of men's temper or interests in the world. As seeds sown in that order in a garden, that 'tis always full of a succession of fruits and herbs in season; so original sin that is sown in our nature, is productive of divers lusts, some in the spring, others in the summer of our age, some in the autumn, others in the winter. Sensual lusts flourish in youth, but when mature age has cooled these desires, worldly lusts succeed; in old age there is no relish for sensuality, but covetousness reigns imperiously. Now he that expels one sin, and entertains another, continues in a state of sin; 'tis but exchanging one familiar for another; or, to borrow the prophet's expression, "'Tis as one should fly from a lion, and meet with a bear" that will as certainly devour him.

—*Salter*, 1840.

9. Sometimes overreaches itself.

(414.) A very rich merchant, who had an only son, made his will, by which he gave all his wealth, which amounted to three hundred thousand francs, to certain monks, leaving them to give to his son such a sum as they wished. The merchant died; the monks took all to themselves without wishing to give anything to the heir. The latter complained to the viceroy, who, having seen the will, asked the monks what they offered to the son. "Ten thousand francs," they replied. "You wish, then, to have all the rest?" "Yes, my lord, we demanded the execution of the will." "That is just," said the viceroy, "but you do not understand it properly; it is said that the son shall have that which *you* wish, you grant ten to the heir; it is two hundred and ninety thousand francs that *you* want. Ah well! following the clause of the will, this sum is set apart for the son. I order you to give it to him; the ten thousand francs remaining are therefore yours." They were obliged to submit.

—*W. M. Taylor.*

10. Its folly.

(415.) I doubt not many covetous men take a great deal of pleasure in ruminating upon their wealth, and in recounting what they have; but they have a great deal of tormenting care and fear about it, and if they had not, it is very hard to understand where the reasonable pleasure and happiness lies of having things to no end. It is, at the best, like that of some foolish birds, which, they say, take pleasure in stealing money, that they may hide it; as if it were worth the while for men to take pains to dig silver out of the earth, for no other purpose but to melt it down and stamp it, and bury it there again.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(416.) A covetous man is like a dog in a wheel, that roasteth meat for others. —*E. Cook.*

11. Its misery.

(417. Poverty is in want of much, but avarice of everything. —*Publius Syrus.*

(418.) What can be more miserable, than for a man to toil and labour his whole life, and to have no power to enjoy any fruit of his labours? to bear like an ass a golden burden all the day, and, without any further use of it, at night to have it taken away, reserving nothing to himself but a galled conscience? —*Downame*, 1644.

12. Its odiousness.

(419.) It is a common saying that a hog is good for nothing whilst he is alive: not good to bear or carry, as the horse; nor to draw, as the ox; nor to clothe, as the sheep; nor to give milk, as the cow; nor to keep the house, as the dog; but *ad solam mortem nutritur* (fed only to the slaughter). So a covetous rich man, just like a hog, doth no good with his riches whilst he liveth, but when he is dead his riches come to be disposed of. "*The riches of a sinner are laid up for the just.*"

—*Willet*, 1562–1621.

(420.) The avaricious man is like the barren, sandy ground of the desert, which sucks in all the rain and dews with greediness, but yields no fruitful herbs or plants for the benefit of others.

13. Inconsistent with the hope of salvation.

(421.) If a man, sick on his bed, burning of a fever, fetching his breath with straightness and shortness, looking like earth, say he is well in health, we do not believe him: so if we see men swelling with pride, flaming with lust, looking earthy with covetousness, and yet flattering themselves with hope of salvation, we cannot credit them, all the world cannot save them.

—*Adams*, 1654.

14. Excludes from heaven.

(422.) The covetous is like a camel, with a great hunch on his back; heaven's gate must be made higher and broader, or he will hardly get in.

—*Adams*, 1654.

BACKSLIDERS.

1. Should be regarded with compassion.

(423.) The story of Hagar with her son Ishmael is set down by so heavenly a pen, that a man cannot read it without tears. She is cast out of Abraham's house with her child, that might call her master father. Bread and water is put on her shoulder, and she wanders into the wilderness; a poor relief for so long a journey, to which there was set no date of returning. Soon was the water spent in the bottle; the child cries for drink to her that had it not, and lifts up pitiful eyes, every glance whereof was enough to wound her soul; vents the sighs of a dry and panting heart; but there is no water to be had, except the tears that ran down from a sorrowful mother's eyes could quench its thirst. Down she lays the child under a shrub, and went, as heavy as ever mother parted from her only son, and sat her down upon the earth, as if she desired it for a present receptacle of her grief, of herself; "a good way off," saith the text, "as it were a bow-shot," that the shrieks, yellings, and dying groans of the child might not reach her ears; crying out, "Let me not see the death of the child." Die she knew he must, but as if the beholding it would rend her heart and wound her soul, she denies those windows so sad a spectacle: "Let me not see the death of the child. So she lift up her voice and wept." Never was Hagar so pitiful to her son Ishmael, as the Church is to every Christian. If any son of her womb will wander out of Abraham's family, the house of faith, into the wilderness of this world, and prodigally part with his "own mercy" for the gaudy, transient vanities thereof, she follows with entreaties to him and to heaven for him. If he will not return, she is loath to see his death; she turns her back upon him, and weeps. He that can with dry eyes and unrelenting heart behold a man's soul ready to perish, hath not so much passion and compassion as that Egyptian bondwoman. —*Adams*, 1654.

2. God's compassion for them.

(424.) He pities the backslider; just as the general on the field of battle pities the wounded who are carried bleeding by their comrades to the rear. "Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." —*Macduff.*

3. Their duty.

(425.) The Christian's care should be to get his armour speedily repaired; a battered helmet is next to no helmet in point of present use; grace in decay is like a man pulled off his legs by sickness; if some means be not used to recover it, little service will be done by it, or comfort received from it. Therefore Christ gives the Church of Ephesus (to whom Paul wrote the Epistle) this counsel: "To remember from whence she was fallen, to repent, and do her first works." —*Salter.*

4. What reclaimed backsliders are to do with their "old hope."

(426.) One of the very first questions, where persons have been professors of religion, and have for various reasons backslidden and declined into a carnal and secular life, and their moral sense and conscience have begun to be quickened, always is, "What shall I do with my old hope?" One would think, from their talk, that a hope was a literal, visible, tangible thing, like a title-deed, and that, however one's old hope may have been neglected, when he starts again he must connect it with his new hope, or else there will be a flaw in the title!

My own impression about this is, that an old hope is just like the Jews' manna on the second day. It is said, if I remember correctly, that it *stank*. The Lord did not let them pick up manna for more than one day. If any of them thought they would—if any of them, greedy, as men are now-a-days, picked up enough for two days, it stank in their vessels. I think our hope in the Lord Jesus Christ is to be gathered up every day fresh, and that if any man undertakes to keep it, it spoils in the keeping. And whether a man thinks he has been a Christian or not, and whether he has been deceived or not, has little to do, it seems to me, with his present duty.

Let me put a case to you—

A man has learned to read of a very poor master. He makes up his mind that he will take lessons of a rhetorical teacher. He takes his book and reads, and as he reads, drawls his words and runs them together, and makes bad work of it generally; and the teacher says: "Stop! *stop!* STOP! What sort of reading is that? That will never do in the world. You are no reader at all." And the man says, "Then I suppose I must go back and read my A B C's again." He has already learned them; he simply reads poorly, without proper emphasis, without any appreciation of the sense, and without indicating the pauses; and what has he to do but to start where he is, and do the right and best thing?

Suppose a man has been prescribing for himself for some ailment, and finding that he is getting no better, he calls a doctor, and the doctor says, "You have been mistaken about yourself; you have not understood your own symptoms; you have employed improper remedies; you have not hit the difficulty at all; you have aggravated your trouble" —would there be anything for that man to do except to stop just where he was, and take the new course, that under skilful direction, would lead to entire sanative restoration?

Now, it is precisely so in religious matters. A man who has begun a Christian life, and stopped; or a man who has begun a Christian life, and gone through devious and circuitous ways till he is quite out of the right path; or a man who has been swept away by worldly influences; such a man, the moment he comes to himself, says, or should say, "There is but one course for me." Right there, where he is, without stopping to think of the past or anything relating to it, he should begin to live a humble, loving, obedient life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Standing right in his tracks, he is to begin there and then, and just as he is, as though he had never had any hope or known anything about religion. Throw away all the hope you ever had, and take a new one.

I do not mean by this to bring contempt upon old experiences; but your transcendent duty is to begin instantly, in your place, to fulfil your obligations toward God and man. If you have been a Christian before, you will find it out; and if you have never been a Christian, it is time that you were one; and in either case the way is not to go

back and try to analyse and test old evidences, but to take a new start, with a new hope, and a new love, and a new purpose, for the Saviour.
—*Beecher.*

BACKSLIDING.

1. Its perilousness.

(427.) We find in Scripture many desperately sick, yet cured the first time by our Saviour, but where do we read in all the Scripture, where in all the Gospel, of any blind man's eyes twice enlightened? of any deaf ears twice opened? of any tied tongue twice loosened? of any possessed with devils twice dispossessed? of any dead twice raised? No doubt but that Christ could have done it, but we read not that ever He did it—the reason, that we should be most careful to avoid relapses into former sins, the recovery whereof is very uncertain, always difficult, and in some cases, as the apostle teacheth, impossible. —*Alphonous ab Avendanus*, 1590.

2. Is gradual in its progress.

(428.) A church is sometimes astounded by the fall of some professor in it: this is the fruit, not the seed or the beginning, of backsliding. So a man is laid on a sick bed, but the disorder has only now arrived at its crisis, it has for some time been working in his system, and has at last burst out and laid him low. So the sin of departing from God, and secretly declining, has been going on while the profession has still been maintained—the process of backsliding has been working silently, yet *surely*, until a temptation has at last opened the way for its bursting forth, to the scandal of God's people and true religion. "He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little." *In the sight of God* the man was fallen before, *we only now* have first discovered it. —*Salter*, 1840.

3. Is most frequently due to indulgence in little sins.

(429.) There is many a man who evinces, for a time, a steadfast attention to religion, walking with all care in the path of God's commandments, &c., but who, after awhile, declines from spirituality, and is dead, though he may yet have a name to live. But how does it commonly happen that such a man falls away from the struggle for salvation? Is it ordinarily through some one powerful and undisguised assault that he is turned from the faith, or over one huge obstacle that he falls not to rise again? Not so. It is almost invariably through little things. He fails to take notice of little things, and they accumulate into great. He allows himself in little things, and thus forms a strong habit. He relaxes in little things, and thus in time loosens every bond. Because it is a little thing, he counts it of little moment, utterly forgetting that millions are made up of units, that immensity is constituted of atoms. Because it is only a stone, a pebble, against which his foot strikes, he makes light of the hindrance; not caring that he is contracting a habit of stumbling, or of observing that whenever he trips there must be some diminution in the speed with which he runs the way of God's commandments, and that, however slowly, these diminutions are certainly bringing him to a stand.

The astronomer tells us, that, because they move in a resisting medium, which perhaps in a million of years destroys the millionth part of their velocity, the heavenly bodies will at length cease from their mighty march. May not, then, the theologian assure us that little roughness in the way, each retarding us, though in an imperceptible degree, will eventually destroy the onward movement, however vigorous and directed it may at one time have seemed? Would to God that we could persuade you of the peril of little offences! We are not half as much afraid of your hurting the head against a rock, as of your hurting the foot against a stone. There is a sort of continued attrition, resulting from our necessary intercourse with the world, which of itself deadens the movements of the soul; there is, moreover, a continued temptation to yield in little points, under the notion of conciliating; to indulge in little things, to forego little strictnesses, to omit little duties; and all with the idea that what looks so light cannot be of real moment. And by these littles, thousands, tens of thousands, perish. If they do not come actually and openly to a stand, they stumble and stumble on, getting more and more careless, nearer and nearer to indifference, lowering the Christian standards, suffering religion to be peeled away by inches, persuading themselves that they can spare without injury such inconsiderable bits, and not perceiving that in stripping the bark they stop the sap. —*Melvill*, 1798–1871.

BEAUTY.

I. *NATURAL BEAUTY.*

1. A revelation of God.

(430.) We cannot look round us without being struck by the surprising variety and multiplicity of the sources of beauty of creation, produced by form, or by colour, or by both united. It is scarcely too much to say, that every object in nature, animate or inanimate, is in some manner beautiful: so largely has the Creator provided for our pleasures through the sense of sight. It is one of the revelations which the Creator has made of Himself to man. He was to be admired and loved: it was through the demonstrations of His character that we could alone see Him and judge of Him: and in thus inducing or compelling us to admire and love the visible works of His hand, He has taught us to love and adore Himself. —*Macculloch*, 1773.

(431.) Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful. Beauty is God's handwriting—a wayside sacrament; welcome it in every fair face, every fair sky, every fair flower, and thank Him earnestly with your eyes. It is a charming draught, a cup of blessing.

2. The love of beauty.

(432.) It was a very proper answer to him who asked why any man should be delighted with beauty, that it was a question that none but a blind man could ask. —*Lord Clarendon*, 1608–1613.

3. Its moral uses.

(433.) How can a man consent to indulge in the beautiful while the world is lying in wickedness? How can a man take his time, and strength, and means, and employ them upon himself, when he should give them to the world? What is a man as a moral agent, as a neighbour, as a benefactor? What does he bring to work with but his educated

powers? And if the beautiful is an educator; if it makes a man diviner, richer, sweeter; if at every point where he touches men it augments the volume of his moral influence; if it makes him a more potential advocate of truth in the world, then indulgence in it is part and parcel of that education which qualifies him to be most useful among his fellow-men.

Here is a man of the olden time that is about to go down to battle; and his Christian friends and associates say to him, "How can you waste your means in buying your helmet, and corselet, and arm-plates? How can you spend so much money for your sword and spear?" Why, his power as a warrior lies in these things. And a man that goes into life with all forms of coarseness, and selfishness, and wickedness, is like a warrior that goes into battle without his sword, and spear, and helmet, and corselets, and arm-plates; and what he acquires from books, from works of art, from his contact with the higher influences that surround him, fit him for a better discharge of the duties which devolve upon him; and his power to do good is to be measured by the amount that he has in him, as a result of the education which he has received by reason of these things. And if it is said, "How can you, while the whole world is lying in wickedness, indulge in beauty?" I say, The world being in wickedness, I am going to educate myself in beauty, that I may be the better fitted to elevate it out of that wickedness. The beautiful is one of the elements with which I am to familiarise myself, in order that I may the more successfully engage in this work. God educates men for labouring in His kingdon on earth by spreading out before them the beauties which He has created in the natural world. The beautiful, therefore, may be made a moral instructor, and it may make the soul of man powerful; so that indulgence in it, instead of being selfish, is a part of one's lawful education. —*Beecher.*

II. *PERSONAL BEAUTY.*

1. Overrated.

(434.) I cannot understand the importance which certain people set upon outward beauty or plainness. I am of opinion that all true education, such at least as has a religious foundation, must infuse a noble calm, a wholesome coldness, an indifference, or whatever people may call it, towards such-like outward gifts, or the want of them. And who has not experienced of how little consequence they are in fact for the weal or woe of life? Who has not experienced how, on nearer acquaintance, plainness becomes beautified, and beauty loses its charm, exactly according to the quality of the heart and mind? And from this cause am I of opinion that the want of outward beauty never disquiets a noble nature or will be regarded as a misfortune. It never can prevent people from being amiable and beloved in the highest degree; and we have daily proof of this. —*Frederika Bremer.*

2. Not in itself a matter for pride.

(435.) Is it beauty that you are proud of? I have told you what sickness and death will do to that before. "When God rebuketh man for sin, He maketh his beauty to consume away as a moth; surely every man is vanity." And if your beauty would continue, how little good will it do you? and who but fools do look at the skin of a rational creature, when they would discern its worth? a fool, and a slave of lust, and Satan, may be beautiful. A sepulchre may be gilded that hath rottenness within. Will you choose the finest purse, or the fullest? Who but a child or a fool will value his book by the fineness of the cover, or gilding of the leaves, and not by the worth of the matter within? Absalom was beautiful, and what the better was he? "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. Mere physical beauty is morally worthless.

(436.) A beautiful person without true grace, is but a fair stinking weed; you know the best of such a one, if you look on him furthest off; whereas a sincere heart, without this outward beauty to commend it, is like some sweet flower (not painted with such fine colours on the leaves) better in the hand than eye, to smell on, than look on; the nearer you come to the sincere soul, the better you find him. Outward uncomeliness to true grace, is but as some old mean buildings you sometimes see stand before a goodly stately house, which hide its glory only from the traveller that passeth by at some distance; but he that comes in, sees its beauty, and admires it. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. Transitory.

(437.) Beauty, what is it, but a dash of nature's tincture laid upon the skin, which is soon washed off with a little sickness? what, but a fair blossom which, with one hot sun-gleam, weltereth and falls? —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

BELIEF.

1. On what ground is it to rest?

(438.) If the opinions of others whom we think well of be a ground of assent, men have reason to be Heathens in Japan, Mahometans in Turkey, Papists in Spain, and Protestants in England. —*Locke*, 1632–1704.

2. By what it is determined.

(439). It seems to be a law of the intellect, that belief necessarily follows the preponderance of apprehended proof, as the scale falls in which the weight is greatest. We can no more refuse to believe what is proved, or believe what is destitute of apparent proof, than the eye can reject or change the forms and colours thrown by external objects on the retina. —*Jackson.*

3. We are responsible for our belief.

(440.) Human consciousness, the judgment of mankind, and God, in all we know of Him, hold man responsible for his belief. Every man has within him an indestructible conviction of possessing a power over his opinions, and a sense of responsibility in reference to his beliefs. All men avow a readiness to change their opinions whenever they are furnished with a sufficient reason for so doing, and this avowal clearly implies the conviction on their part of a power in them to do so. As a matter of fact, all men are very sensitive about the light in which their opinions are regarded by others. They are ever ready to show dissatisfaction when charged with holding unworthy and erroneous opinions, and are prone to resent all such charges.

And why this displeasure and resentment if men are not conscious of possessing a power over their beliefs? An individual may wish to possess a different size of body or colour of skin, but he is not conscious of possessing a power over them as he knows he possesses over his opinions and beliefs. If an individual's colour or size subjects him to disadvantage, he feels the defects; but instead of expecting blame on account of the defects, he is rather an object of sympathy. But man does take shame to himself when charged with unworthy beliefs. —*Cooper.*

4. Importance of a correct belief.

(441.) Mind and heart will meet, though forbidden, like hidden lovers. —*Bailey.*

(442.) Does it make no difference what a man believes in respect to the character of God, the nature of the Divine government in this world, its claims upon us, and our obligations under it?

If a man believes that God sits above, indifferent to the affairs of this life and too quiescent to attend to the little disturbances of sin, and that He overlooks transgression, that man must inevitably come to a state of moral indifference. But if a man believes that God cannot possibly look upon sin with allowance, that He abhors iniquity, and that, unless we turn from our wicked ways, He will lay His hands on His sword, and set Himself forth as the maintainer of law, and justice, and integrity, that man cannot help being morally solicitous. Does it make no difference what a man believes on these subjects?

Go into New York, and in the sixth ward you will find two representative men, one says, "I voted for the judge, and helped to put him where he is, and he will wink at my crimes. I can drink as much as I please, on Sundays and on week-days, and he will not disturb me. He is easy and good-natured, and he is not going to be hard with me if I do break the laws a little." And the man, because he believes that the judge does not care for his wickedness, and will not punish him, grows bold and corrupt in transgression. But at length he is arraigned, he is brought before the court, and he finds there, instead of the bribed judge, a white-faced man—not red-faced; one of those men with a long head upward—not backward and downward; a man with a full sense of the value of justice and truth. The culprit begins his shuffling excuses. The justice listens to none of them; he reads the law, and says, "Your conduct is herein condemned," and sends him away to receive his just deserts. When the man has expiated his crime, he goes around in the same ward, and says, "You must walk straight hereafter. The judge that sits on the bench now is not the jolly old judge that used to sit there. If you go before him he will make you smart." Does it not make a difference what a man believes about a judge? If he believes that he is a lenient, conniving judge, does it not make him careless? and if he believes that he is a straightforward, just judge, does it not make him afraid of transgression?

Now lift up the judge's bench, and make it the judgment-seat; and take out the human judge, and put God Almighty there. If men believe Him to be an all-smiling God—a God all sunshine; an all-sympathising God—a God who is nothing but kindness, goodness, and gentleness, they say to themselves, "We will do as we have a mind to do." Take away that miserable slander upon the revealed character of God, and lift up the august front of Justice, on whose brow love proudly sits, and let men see that there is a vast heart of love and gentleness indeed, but one that will by no means clear the guilty, and they will take more heed to their conduct. Does it, then, make no difference what a man believes about God's nature, and His manner of dealing with men? It makes all the difference between laxity and earnestness, between an endeavour to live truly and no endeavour at all in that direction; between right and wrong conduct.

Let us, then, look at this a little in the light of the experience of men in this world. In regard to the truths of the physical economy of the globe, does it make any difference what a man believes? Would it make any difference to a machinist whether he thought lead was as good for tools as steel? Would it make any difference to a man in respect to the industries of life if he thought that a triangle was as good as a circular wheel in machinery? In respect to the quality of substance, the forms of substances, the combination of substances, and the nature of motive powers, does success depend upon *sincere* believing or on *right* believing? Suppose a man should think that it made no difference what he believed, and should say to himself, "I wish to raise corn, but I have not the seed; so I will take some ashes and plant them; and I believe sincerely that they are as good as corn"—would he have a crop of corn? What would his sincerity avail? The more sincere he was the worse it would be for him; for if he were not sincere he might slip away and get a little corn, and plant that. In all material things, the more sincere you are, if you are right, the better; but the more sincere you are if you are wrong, the worse. In the latter case, sincerity is the mallet that drives home the mischief.

How is it in respect to commercial matters? Just now a great many are manufacturing things for the army. Does it make no difference whether a man thinks that corn-stalks and sticks are as good as muskets? Does it make no difference whether a man thinks that cotton and wool, dust and sweepings, are as good for blankets as real wool? Does it make no difference with the sale of man's goods, whether they are manufactured of one material or another? If a business man believes right in respect to his business, he prospers; and if he believes wrong he does not prosper.

How is it in respect to navigation? Does any man say, "I have my own theories about astronomy, and I will sail my ship according to them? I do not believe the talk of the books on this subject; and it does not make much difference what a man believes respecting it." Does it make no difference what a man believes about charts? Suppose the shipmaster should say, "I know the chart says that here are three fathoms of water, that here are two, and that here is one, but I do not believe it; I know that my ship draws sixteen feet of water, but I believe that I can run it over a twelve-feet bar"—does it make no difference what he believes? It makes all the difference between shipwreck and safety.

Throughout the whole realm of physical truth, a man is bound to believe, not only sincerely, but *correctly*. In business, in manufacturing, in navigation, in all things that relate to the conduct of men in secular affairs, men must be right—not merely sincere.

Take one thing further. There are affectional and social truths. Does it make no difference what a man believes in respect to these? Is there no difference between pride, vanity, and selfishness, on the one hand, and tenderness, sympathy, and love, on the other? If a man has social intercourse, does it make no difference what view he takes of these things? Will it make no difference with his conduct if he thinks that pride and love are about the same thing, and that one is a proper substitute for the other? His sincerity makes the mischief worse, in such a case.

It is only when we come to moral grounds that men begin to urge this maxim with any considerable degree of confidence. They reject it in its application to material truths, to physical sciences, to business, to social intercourse in life, and hold the necessity of correct belief. It is not until they come to religious truths that men begin to say, "It does not make much difference what a man believes."

Let us take the lower forms of moral truth, and see if it is so in our daily intercourse. You go to church, and hear your minister preach about the necessity of believing certain great doctrines, and on your way home you say, "It is not of so much importance what a man believes, if he is only sincere in it." When you get home, you find that there is an altercation between the boy and the nurse. There is a lie between them somewhere. And the child calls back your theory, and says, in respect to the wrongfulness of lying, "Father, I do not think it makes much difference what one believes, if he is only sincere." What do you think about this theory now?

You are bringing up your children. You can bring them up to believe in truth and honesty, or otherwise. Do you not desire to bring them up to believe that honesty is the best policy? Do you not desire to bring them up to believe that purity stands connected with their prosperity in after life? Do you not feel the greatest solicitude about the teaching of their minds? Are you not determined that they shall be brought up to distinguish between truth and lies, honour and dishonour, purity and impurity, nobleness and vulgarity? How particular you are when it is moral truth applied to the reasoning of your children! How long would you keep a schoolmaster or a schoolmistress in a common school or an academy who held, in respect to these subjects, as you hold in respect to religious matters, that it does not make any difference what a person believes?

As it is with the lower forms of moral truth, so experience teaches us it is with the higher forms of moral truth. There is a definite and heaven-appointed connection between the things a man holds to be true, and the results that follow in that man's mind.

All truths are not indeed alike important, and all truths do not show the effects of being believed or rejected with equal rapidity. There are many truths which bear such a relation to our everyday life, that the fruit of believing or rejecting appears almost at once. These are spring truths, that come up and bear fruit early in the season. There are other truths that require time for working out their results. They are summer truths, and the fruit of belief or disbelief does not ripen till July or August. Other truths, in respect to showing the results of belief or disbelief, are like late autumnal fruits, that require the whole winter to develop their proper juices. But in these last the connection is just as certain, although it is longer in making itself appear, as in the first, where the distance between cause and effect is shortest and the development is most rapid.

—*Beecher.*

5. As a matter of fact, our destiny depends on the correctness of our belief.

(443.) There is the way of salvation, and thou must trust Christ or perish; and there is nothing hard in it that thou shouldst perish if thou dost not. Here is a man out at sea; he has got a chart, and that chart, if well studied, will, with the help of the compass, guide him to his journey's end. The pole-star gleams out amidst the cloud-rifts, and that, too, will help him. "No," says he, "I will have nothing to do with your stars; I do not believe in the North Pole; I shall not attend to that little thing inside the box; one needle is as good as another needle; I do not believe in your rubbish, and I will have nothing to do with it; it is only a lot of nonsense got up by people on purpose to make money, and I will have nothing to do with it." The man does not get to shore anywhere; he drifts about, but never reaches port, and he says it is a very hard thing, a very hard thing. I do not think so. So some of you say, "Well I am not going to read your Bible; I am not going to listen to your talk about Jesus Christ; I do not believe in such things." You will be damned, then, sir! "That's very hard," say you. No, it is not. It is not more so than the fact that if you reject the compass and the pole-star you will not get to your journey's end. If a man will not do the thing that is necessary to a certain end I do not see how he can expect to gain that end. You have taken poison, and the physician brings an antidote, and says, "Take it quickly, or you will die; but if you take it quickly, I will guarantee that the poison will be neutralised." But you say, "No, doctor, I do not believe it; let everything take its course; let every tub stand on its own bottom; I will have nothing to do with you, doctor." "Well, sir, you will die, and when the coroner's inquest is held on your body, the verdict will be, 'Served him right!'" So will it be with you if, having heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, you say, "Oh! pooh-pooh! I am too much of a common-sense man to have anything to do with that, and I shall not attend to it." Then, when you perish, the verdict given by your conscience, which will sit upon the King's quest at last, will be a verdict of "*Felo-de-se*"—"he destroyed himself." So says the old Book—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" —*Spurgeon.*

BENEFICENCE.

1. Our duty.

(444.) The sun shines on the moon and stars, and they shine upon the earth; so doth God shine in goodness upon us, that we might shine in our extensions of goodness unto others, especially unto them of the household of faith. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(445.) Faith, though it hath sometimes a trembling hand, it must not have a withered hand, but must stretch. —*Watson*, 1696.

2. God's rules for its exercise.

(446.) The measures that God marks out to thy charity are these: thy superfluities must give place to thy neighbour's great convenience; thy conveni-

ence must yield to thy neighbour's necessity; and, lastly, thy very necessities must yield to thy neighbour's extremity. —*South*, 1633-1716.

2. Its distastefulness to the insincere.

(447.) When men meet together at a tavern to drink or feast together, happy is that man, when the reckoning is brought, that can be rid of his money first: "I'll pay," says one; "I'll pay," says another; "You shall not pay a penny," says a third, "I'll pay all," &c.; and so it grows sometimes near unto a quarrel, because one man cannot spend his money before another. Thus in merry-making, but come to a work of mercy, how is it then? Is the money upon the table? Is every man ready to throw down, and make it a leading case to the rest of the company? No such matter; one puts it off to another: "Alas! I am in debt," says one; "I have no money about me," says another; then every finger is a thumb, and it is such a while before anything will be got out, that it would trouble any one to behold it. Then the question is not who shall be first, but who shall be last. A sad thing that, in way of courtesy, any man should be thus free, and when it comes to a work of mercy, thus bound up. —*Harris*, 1578-1658.

(448.) Two pious sisters, Desire and Prayer, one day visited a certain personage by the name of Pocket.

The same was a member of a large and influential family of Pockets; some of whom were of a most generous disposition, free in giving and liberal in every good cause that sought support; whilst some others were remarkable for their narrowness of mind, and therefore indisposition toward any charity, however worthy, that asked for aid.

After a little conversation on general subjects, Prayer remarked on the interest she took in the state of the poor heathen, "perishing for lack of knowledge."

"Oh, that they might be saved!" breathed Desire.

"AMEN," said Pocket.

"I am longing for the day when 'the knowledge of our Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea'" (Isa. ix. 9; Habk. ii. 14); remarked Desire with much fervency.

"Amen," said Pocket.

"And, seeing such glorious time will come, I felt encouraged to ask the King so to order events as to open the way in such direction," remarked Prayer.

"Amen," said Pocket.

"I have begged of the King to hear our daily petition, 'THY KINGDOM COME'" (Matt. xi. 10), said Prayer.

"Amen," said Pocket.

"It is promised, that through the Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ 'shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth'" (Ps. lxxii. 8), observed Desire.

"Amen," said Pocket.

"How is it to be brought to pass?" asked Prayer; to which Desire replied, "By the blessing of God on the united efforts of the Church, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit;—Oh, that the day were come!"

"Amen," said Pocket.

"'Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession'" (Ps. ii. 8), said Desire, in the words of promise unto Prayer.

"Amen," said Pocket.

"God alone can effect this mercy," said Desire; "and that He may bless His Word preached to the perishing, in order 'that they may be saved,' we must send them men after God's own heart."

"Amen," said Pocket.

"Which good servants of the Lord must be sustained in their great work," observed Desire.

"Amen," said Pocket.

"They are men subject to human infirmities; who require habitations; who hunger and thirst, and need food and raiment: and I trust warm hearts and liberal friends will be found to administer according to their wants; knowing 'the labourer is worthy of his hire'" (Luke x. 7).

"Amen," said Pocket.

"We are to-day making calls on the Benevolent to aid in this glorious work of the WORLD'S EVANGELISATION," remarked Desire and Prayer.

"Amen," said Pocket.

"We have therefore come to ask your contribution for the spread of the Gospel, the salvation of the heathen, and the glory of the Redeemer," said Desire.

"AHEM!" said Pocket.

"The work cannot be carried on without money," observed Desire.

No reply from Pocket.

"What amount shall we say for you, sir?" asked Desire very sweetly.

No answer from Pocket.

"You said Amen just now to all our matters of petition," remarked Desire and Prayer together. "The best proof of your love to the cause is in cheerfully assisting its support, and therefore giving as the Lord in His mercy has prospered yourself."

"Cannot afford it, really," at last Pocket answered, very anxious to get rid of his visitors.

"Then after all you wish us to understand, you leave the Lord's cause to the support of others, and to excuse yourself?"

"AMEN," said Pocket. —*Bowden*.

3. Its wisdom.

(449.) It is a base thing to get goods to keep them. I see that God, who only is infinitely rich, holdeth nothing in His own hands, but gives all to His creatures. But, if we will needs lay up, where should we rather repose it, than in Christ's treasury? The poor man's hand is the treasury of Christ. All my superfluity shall be there hoarded up, where I know it shall be safely kept, and surely returned me. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(450.) The world teacheth me that it is madness to leave behind me those goods that I may carry with me. Christianity teacheth me that what I charitably give alive, I carry with me dead; and experience teacheth me that what I leave behind, I lose. I will carry that treasure with me by giving it, which the worldling loseth by keeping it; so, while his corpse shall carry nothing but a winding cloth to his grave, I shall be richer under the earth than I was above it. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

4. Its rewards.

(451.) To dispense our wealth liberally, is the best way to preserve it, and to continue masters

thereof; what we give is not thrown away, but saved from danger; while we detain it at home (as it seems to us) it really is abroad, and at adventures; it is out at sea, sailing perilously in storms, near rocks and shelves, amongst pirates; nor can it ever be safe till it is brought into this port, or insured this way: when we have bestowed it on the poor, then we have lodged it in unquestionable safety; in a place where no rapine, no deceit, no mishap, no corruption can ever by any means come at it. All our doors and bars, all our forces and guards, all the circumspection and vigilancy we can use are no defence or security at all in comparison to this disposal thereof: the poor man's stomach is a granary for our corn which never can be exhausted; the poor man's back is a wardrobe for our clothes which never can be pillaged; the poor man's pocket is a bank for our money which never can disappoint or deceive us; all the rich traders in the world may decay and break; but the poor man can never fail, except God Himself turn bankrupt; for what we give to the poor we deliver and intrust in His hands, out of which no force can wring it, no craft can filch it; it is laid up in heaven, whither no thief can climb, and where no moth or rust do abide. In spite of all the fortune, of all the might, of all the malice in the world, the liberal man will ever be rich, for God's providence is his estate; God's wisdom and power are his defence; God's love and favour are his reward; God's Word is his assurance; who hath said it, that "*He which giveth to the poor shall not lack*," no vicissitude therefore of things can surprise Him, or find Him unfurnished; no disaster can impoverish Him; no adversity can overwhelm Him; He hath a certain reserve against all times and occasions; he that "*deviseth liberal things, by liberal things shall he stand.*"

—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(452.) You remember how, in the old legend, St. Brandan in his northward voyage saw a man sitting on an iceberg, and with horror recognised him to be the traitor Judas; and the traitor told him how, at Christmas time, amid the drench of the burning lake, an angel had touched his arm and bidden him one hour to cool his agony on an iceberg in the Arctic sea; and when he asked the cause of this mercy bade him recognise in him the leper to whom he gave a cloak for shelter from the wind in Joppa, and how for that kind deed this respite was allotted him. Let us reject the ghastly side of the legend and accept its truth, that charity is better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice.

—*F. W. Farrar.*

(453.) About twenty-five years ago, a young man from the State of Kentucky took a horse-back ride to Virginia where his father came from, and on his way he met a man and his family moving West, so poor that they were almost reduced to starvation. He had compassion on the wretched group and gave them a twenty-dollar bill with which to reach their journey's end. In about fifteen years the young man received a letter from the man he had befriended, saying he was now a prosperous merchant in Southern Kentucky, and enclosing a twenty-dollar bill to repay his loan. After another ten years, which included the great rebellion and its termination, he was elected to the lower house of Kentucky Legislature, and being a man of talent and influence, was chosen Speaker, during the contest for which, he had noticed that a stranger and one of the other party, was his strongest supporter. His curiosity was aroused by this, and he asked the man's motive, as he never had to his knowledge seen him before. "Sir," replied the member, "you will recall, when I mention it, a little scene that occurred when you were a boy on your way to Virginia. It was you who saved my wife from starvation. She has told me time and again that never did a morsel of food taste so sweet—so utterly delicious—as that you gave her then. She was but six years old at that time, but when she saw your name, during the late canvass, among the prominent probable candidates for the speakership. she laid down the law as to how I was to vote. This is all. Neither she nor her father and mother, brothers and sisters, nor myself, can ever forget you."

5. Beneficence toward man is true gratitude to God.

(454.) "Charge them that are rich in the world that they do good, that they be rich in good works." The poor man is, as it were, an altar; if we bring our alms and lay upon it, with such sacrifices God is well pleased. —*Watson*, 1696.

(455.) A rich youth in Rome was suffering from a dangerous illness; at length he recovered, and regained his health. Then he went for the first time into the garden, feeling, as it were, born again; and he was full of joy, and praised God with a loud voice. He turned his face to heaven and said: "O Thou all-sufficient Creator, could man recompense Thee, how willingly would I give Thee all my possessions!"

Hermas, who was called the herdman, heard this, and said to the rich youth: "All good gifts come from above; thither thou canst send nothing. Come, follow me."

The youth followed the pious old man, who took him to a dark hut, where was nothing but misery and wretchedness. The father was stretched on a bed of sickness, the mother wept, the children were destitute of clothing, and crying for bread.

The youth was deeply touched. Hermas said: "See here an altar for thy sacrifice. See here the Lord's brethren and representatives."

Then the rich youth assisted them bountifully, and provided for the sick man's wants. And the poor people blessed him, and called him an angel of God.

Hermas smiled, and said: "Thus turn always thy grateful countenance first to heaven and then to earth." —*F. A. Krummacher.*

6. It should be wisely directed.

(456.) There is perhaps no one quality that can produce a greater amount of mischief than may be done by thoughtless good-nature. For instance, if any one out of tenderness of heart and reluctance to punish, or to discard the criminal and worthless, lets loose on society, or advances to important offices, mischievous characters, he will have a doubtful benefit on a few, and do incalculable hurt to thousands. So also, to take one of the commonest and most obvious cases, that of charity to the poor, —a man of great wealth, by freely relieving all idle vagabonds, might go far towards ruining the industry, and the morality, and the prosperity, of a whole nation. "For there can be no doubt that careless, indiscriminate alms-giving does far more harm than

good; since it encourages idleness and improvidence, and also imposture. If you give freely to ragged and filthy street beggars, you are in fact *hiring* people to dress themselves in filthy rags, and go about begging with fictitious tales of distress. If, on the contrary, you carefully inquire for and relieve honest and industrious persons who have fallen into distress through unavoidable misfortune, you are not only doing good to those objects, but also holding out an encouragement generally to honest industry.

"You may, however, meet with persons who say, 'As long as it is my intention to relieve real distress, my charity is equally virtuous, though the tale told me be a false one. The impostor alone is to be blamed who told it me; I acted on what he said; and if that is untrue, the fault is his, and not mine.'

"Now this is a fair plea, if any one is deceived after making careful inquiry:" but if he has not taken the trouble to do this, regarding it as no concern of his, you might ask him how he would act and judge in a case where he is thoroughly in earnest—that is, where his own interest is concerned. Suppose he employed a steward or other agent to buy for him a house, or a horse, or any other article, and this agent paid an exorbitant price for what was really worth little or nothing, giving just the same kind of excuse for allowing his employer to be thus cheated; saying, "I made no careful inquiries, but *took the seller's word;*" the employer would doubtless reply, "The seller indeed is to be condemned for cheating; but so you are, for your carelessness in my interests. His being greatly in fault does not clear *you;* and your merely intending to do what was right, is no excuse for your not taking pains to gain right information."

Now on such a principle we ought to act in our charities; regarding ourselves as stewards of all that Providence has bestowed, and as bound to expend it in the best way possible, and not shelter our own faulty negligence under the misconduct of another.

It is now generally acknowledged that relief afforded to want, as mere want, tends to increase that want; while the relief afforded to the sick, the infirm, and the disabled, has plainly no tendency to multiply its own objects. Now it is remarkable, that the Lord Jesus employed His miraculous power in healing the sick *continually*, but in feeding the hungry only twice; while the power of multiplying food which He then manifested, as well as His directing the disciples to take care and gather up the fragments that remained that nothing might be lost, served to mark that the abstaining from any like procedure on other occasions was a deliberate design. In this, besides other objects, our Lord had probably in view to afford us some instruction, from this example, as to the mode of our charity. Certain it is, that the reasons for this distinction are now, and ever must be, the same as at that time. Now to those engaged in that important and inexhaustible subject of inquiry, the internal evidences of Christianity, it will be interesting to observe here one of the instances in which the superhuman wisdom of Jesus forestalled the discovery of an important principle, often overlooked, not only by the generality of men, but by the most experienced statesmen and the ablest philosophers, even in these later ages of extended human knowledge, and development of mental power. —*Whately.*

(457.) Nothing seems much clearer than the natural direction of charity. Would we all but relieve, according to the measure of our means, those objects immediately within the range of our personal knowledge, how much of the worst evil of poverty might be alleviated! Very poor people, who are known to us to have been decent, honest, and industrious, when industry was in their power, have a claim on us, founded on our knowledge, and on vicinity and neighbourhood, which have in themselves something sacred and endearing to every good heart. One cannot, surely, always pass by, in his walks for health, restoration, or delight, the lone wayside beggar, without occasionally giving him an alms. Old, care-worn, pale, drooping, and emaciated creatures, who pass us by without looking beseechingly at us, or even lifting up their eyes from the ground, cannot often be met with without exciting an interest in us for their silent and unobtrusive sufferings or privations. A hovel here and there round and about our own comfortable dwelling, attracts our eyes by some peculiar appearance of penury, and we look in, now and then, upon its inmates, cheering their cold gloom with some small benefaction. These are duties all men owe to distress: they are easily discharged; and even such tender mercies are twice blessed.

—*Chalmers*, 1780–1847.

7. Should be prompt.

(458.) The benevolent Dr. Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man, once discovered a clergyman at Bath, who, he was informed, was ill, poor, and had a numerous family. In the evening he gave a friend £50, requesting that he would deliver it in the most delicate manner, and as from an unknown person. The friend replied:—"I will wait upon him early in the morning." "You will oblige me by calling directly," requested the kind-hearted prelate; "think, sir, of what importance a good night's rest may be to the poor man."

8. Should not be ashamed or afraid to stoop.

(459.) In another walk he saw a poor man with a poorer horse, that was fallen under his load; they were both in distress, and needed present help, which Mr. Herbert perceiving, put off his canonical coat and helped the poor man to unload, and after to load his horse. The poor man blessed him for it; and he blessed the poor man; and was so like the good Samaritan, that he gave him money to refresh both himself and his horse; and told him that "if he loved himself, he should be merciful to his beast." Thus he left the poor man, and at his coming to the musical friends at Salisbury, they began to wonder that Mr. George Herbert, who used to be so trim and neat, came into that company so soiled and discomposed; but he told them the occasion; and when one of the company told him, "he had disparaged himself by so dirty an employment," his answer was, that "the thought of what he had done would prove music to him at midnight, and that the omission of it would have upraided and made discord in his conscience, whensoever he should pass by that place; for if I be bound to pray for all that are in distress, I am sure that I am bound, so far as it is in my power, to practise what I pray for. And though I do not wish for the like occasion every day, yet, let me tell you, I would not willingly pass one day of my life without comforting a sad soul or showing mercy; and I praise

God for this occasion. And now let us tune our instruments." —*Izaak Walton's Life of Herbert.*

9. Should be unostentatious.

(460.) Those obstreperous benefactors that, like to hens which cannot lay an egg but they must cackle straight, give no alms but with trumpets, lose their thanks with God. Alms should be like oil, which, though it swim aloft when it is fallen, yet makes no noise in the falling; not like water, that still sounds where it lights.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(461.) Charity and fine dressing are very different things; but if men give alms for the same reasons that others dress fine, only to be seen and admired, charity is then but like the vanity of fine clothes.

—*E. Cook.*

10. True beneficence is unconscious of its rarity and worth.

(462.) It was a cold and severe winter. The little Minna, the only daughter of charitable parents, collected the crumbs and small pieces of bread, and kept them carefully. Twice a day she went into the garden, scattering the crumbs; and the birds came and picked them up; but the little girl's hands trembled with cold in the bitter air.

The parents watched her, and were glad at the lovely sight, and said: "Why are you doing that, Minna?"

"All is covered with ice and snow," answered Minna; "the little creatures cannot find anything; they are poor now. Therefore I feed them, as the rich people help and assist the poor."

Then the father said: "But you cannot provide for them all."

Little Minna answered: "Do not all children in the world do as I do, even as all rich men take care of the poor?"

Then the father looked at the mother of the little maiden, and said: "Oh, holy innocence!"

—*F. A. Krummacher.*

11. Is not to be restrained by ingratitude.

(463.) There are many who feel for the poor. They would gladly relieve their wants. They are pained to see these wretched mothers, and yet more wretched children; but having found their charity often misapplied and thrown away on the unworthy and ungrateful, they are afraid to give; and not seldom tempted, on discovering how they have been imposed upon, to say in their haste as David did his, All men are liars! But if charity often fails in its object, so do other things. The sun shines on many a fair blossom that never turns into fruit, and the clouds pour their bounties on fields that yield no harvest. But to leave figures for facts. Education as well as charity often fails: it is but a small portion of children that become ripe scholars. Moral training fails; how many parents, besides David, have had their hearts wounded and torn by wicked children! The labours of husbandry fail; it is but a proportion of the seed that springs; and a still less proportion that, reaching maturity, in golden sheaves rewards the farmer's toil. Physic fails; diseases rage, and patients die in spite of it. Even the pulpit fails; but what preacher thinks of abandoning it, because many of his sermons do no good; nay, like absurd charity, do positive harm—hardening those they fail to soften, and making people as indifferent to the most solemn things as a hoary sexton to the mouldering remnants of mortality the skulls he tosses out of the grave.

Man is answerable for duty; but not for results. And as with faith in a promised blessing, we are always to preach, in season and out of season, to sow beside all waters, you are never to cease your charities. Let not the cold ingratitude of other hearts freeze your own. —*Guthrie.*

12. The shame and guilt of abusing it.

(464.) An Arab possessed a horse so famous far and near for its beauty, gentleness, and matchless speed, that he had many tempting offers to part with her. He refused them all, and, in particular, the repeated solicitations of one who offered an enormous price. One day, as, with head wrapt in mantle and lance at rest, he was pressing homewards through the burning desert, his horse suddenly started; and there, right across the path, lay a poor traveller—alive, for he groaned; but exhausted, and apparently at the point of death. Like the good Samaritan—for, though fierce, these wild Bedouins have savage virtues, are hospitable and friendly—he dismounted, and finding the unfortunate traveller unable to walk or even to stand, set him on his own saddle. No sooner done than, as if the vigour of the steed had been imparted to its rider, the bowed and languid form became instantly erect; the horse suddenly wheeled round, sprang off to the stroke, and a laugh of triumph revealed the trick. The man who had offered him an enormous price for the horse was on her back. Assuming the guise of distress, he had taken advantage of the other's generous feelings, to steal what he could not buy. The injured man did not curse him; nor, fortified by the stoicism which the Mohammedans' belief in fate imparts, merely bowed his head to the misfortune. He soared above it to a height of moral grandeur which few reach. Calling on the other to halt, he said that he had one favour to ask; it was this, that he would never tell how he had won the horse, because, were that known, it might hinder some from receiving help in circumstances of danger not feigned, but real—and so doom the unfortunate to perish. It is but justice to human nature to add—what indeed shows that fine feelings may lie dormant in the worst of men—that the other was so touched by the unselfishness and nobility of this appeal, that he relented; and, riding up to the man he had wronged, gave him back his horse.

—*Guthrie.*

BENEVOLENCE.

1. Is a characteristic of every true Christian.

(465.) I do not believe in Christianity that is not Christ-like; and I no more believe in a profession of piety which is not associated with His pity than in a sun that sheds no light, in a fire that gives out no heat, in a rose that breathes no perfume; they are mere painting; life-like, but dead; clever, but cold. People may talk of such and such a man being godly; but none are godly but the god-like, God is the "Judge of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless in His holy habitation;" and he only is godlike who stands to widows in the room of the dead, and in whom orphans find both a father and a friend. —*Guthrie.*

2. Must show itself in actions.

(466.) We read in our chronicles of king Oswald,

that as he sat at table, when a fair silver dish full of regal delicacies was set before him, and he ready to fall to, hearing from his almoner that there were great store of poor at his gates, piteously crying out for some relief, did not fill them with words, as, "God help them!" "God relieve them!" "God comfort them!" &c., but commanded his steward presently to take the dish off the table and distribute the meat, then beat the dish all in pieces, and cast it among them. This was true charity. Words, be they never so adorned, clothe not the naked; be they never so delicate, feed not the hungry; be they never so zealous, warm not him that is starved with cold; be they never so oily, cure not the wounded; be they never so free, set not them free that are bound, visit not the sick or imprisoned.

—*Holdsworth*, 1630.

3. Posthumous benevolence.

(467.) What we employ in charitable uses during our lives is given away from ourselves: what we bequeath at our death is given from others only, as our nearest relations.

—*Atterbury*, 1662–1732.

BEREAVEMENT.

I. *IS A COMMON EXPERIENCE.*

(468.) Some time after Kisagotami gave birth to a son, but when the child was able to walk he died. The young girl went from house to house with the dead child in her bosom, asking for medicine, and they said she was mad; but a wise man said, "I cannot give you medicine; Buddha can."

So Kisagotami went to Buddha, and said, "Do you know any medicine that will be good for my boy?"

Buddha replied, "I do."

"And what do you require?"

"I want a handful of mustard-seed; but it must be taken from some house where no son, parent, husband, or slave has ever died."

The girl went, carrying the dead child on her hip, asking everywhere for mustard-seed from some house where death had not been. But one house answered, "We have lost a son;" another, "We have lost parents;" another, "We have lost a slave." At last, not being able to find a single house where one had not died, she began to think hers was not the only son who had suffered death; that everywhere children were dying and parents too.

So she was seized with fear, and, putting away affection for her dead child, she left him in the forest, went to Buddha and offered him homage.

He said to her, "Have you procured the handful of mustard-seed?"

"I have not, because the people of the village told me the living are few, but the dead are many."

Buddha replied, "You thought that you only had lost a son; but the law of death is that among all living creatures there is no permanence."

—*A Buddhist Parable.*

II. *REVEALS THE POVERTY OF OUR FAITH.*

(469.) How poor our heaven is! How little it draws us! How little there is that consoles us in the death of those whom we love! We put away our children in death, as one would hold his children out of a castle window at night, and let them drop. We know not where, on what rocks, or into what raging wave, they fall. When our children die, we drop them into the unknown, shuddering with fear. We know that they go out from us, and we stand, and pity and wonder. If we receive news that a hundred thousand dollars had been left them by some one dying, we should be thrown into an ecstasy of rejoicing; but when they have gone home to God, we stand, and mourn, and pine, and wonder at "the mystery of Providence." The mystery of Providence to me, is, that anybody is born. The mystery of Providence to me, is, that when we are born, if God loves us, as He does through Jesus Christ, He lets us stay away from Him so long. Dying is more desirable than living to Christian faith. —*Beecher.*

III. *ITS DESIGN.*

(470.) I am rich in heaven, in my children. Already I have sent thither many. Have I lost them? Not one of them. They are mine more than when I clasped them. They are nobler and more worthy of love than they were then. They have been saved for me better than I could have saved them for myself. I have laid them up; and I have verified the declaration, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." How many, many times have men gone by their tears to the gate of heaven who never could have been drawn there by the mere presentation of truth. All that could be addressed to their conscience, to their fear, or to their reason, did not teach them the way to God's throne; and God took from them their brother, their sister, the companion of their life, or their child, and then they found that path themselves. As the kine went lowing with the ark, so the heart goes lowing toward heaven, seeking its own, and finding them, in hope, in imagination, and resting only when by faith it is brought again consciously near to them in the kingdom of the Eternal Father. —*Beecher.*

(471.) Every deceased friend is a magnet drawing us into another world. —*E. Cook.*

IV. *HOW IT SHOULD BE BORNE.*

1. We should not sorrow as those who have no hope.

(472.) There be two manners of mourning for the dead. The heathen and unbelievers mourn without hope of the resurrection: their opinion is, that seeing their near friends are dead, there is no more of them, but that they have utterly lost them for ever. This heathenish sorrow will not St. Paul have of Christians.

The Christians mourn also, but with a living hope of the joyful resurrection. For like as God the Father left not Christ the Lord in death, but raised Him up again, and placed Him in eternal life; even so us that believe shall not He leave in death, but bring us out into everlasting life. For this cause doth the Apostle speak of the dead, as of those that sleep, which rest from all travail and labour, that they may rise again in better case.

Like as the flowers with all their virtue, smell, and beauty, lie all the winter in the root, sleeping and resting till they may be awaked with the pleasant time of May, when they come forth with all their beauty, smell, and virtue; even so ought not we to think that our friends which be departed are in any cumbrance or sorrow, but their strength and virtue being drawn in, liveth in God and with God. They lie and rest till the last day, when they

shall awake again, fair, beautiful, and glorious, in soul and body. Who will not rejoice at this comfort of Paul, and set aside all unprofitable sorrow, for this exceeding joy's sake?

—*Wermullerus*, 1557.

2. With thankfulness for the friends who have been taken from us.

(473.) A dear little girl had been taught to pray specially for her father. He had been suddenly taken away. Kneeling at her evening devotion, her voice faltered; and as her eyes met her mother's, she sobbed, "O mother! I cannot leave him *all out*. Let me say, thank God that I had a dear father once, so I can keep him in my prayers." Many stricken hearts may learn a sweet lesson from this child. Let us remember to thank God for mercies past, as well as to ask for blessings for the future.

3. With thankfulness for the friends who are spared to us.

(474.) It were a very scornful thing, if when a man hath hurt one foot, he would therefore mar the other also; or if, when one part of his goods is stolen away, he would cast the rest into the sea, and say that he so bewaileth his adversity. No less foolishly do they, that enjoy not such goods as are present, and regard not their friends that be alive; but spoil and mar themselves, because their wives, children, or friends, be departed.

Though one of the husbandman's trees doth wither away, he heweth not down therefore all the other trees; but regardeth the others so much the more that they may win the thing again, which the others lost. Even so learn thou in adversity, with such goods as are left thee to comfort and refresh thyself again. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

V. *CONSOLATIONS FOR THE BEREAVED.*

(475.) We give hostages to fortune when we bring children into the world; and how unstable this is we know, and must therefore hazard the adventure. Are you offended that it has pleased God to snatch your pretty babes from the infinite contingencies of so perverse an age, in which there is so little temptation to live? . . . Say not they might have come later to their destiny: *Magna est felicitas citò esse felicem*,—'Tis no small happiness to be happy quickly. —*Evelyn*, 1620–1706.

(476.) A little boy once went out in the early morn, and was greatly delighted with the little globes formed by the dew on the brambles. He hastened back, and led his father out to see those miniature worlds; but when the father and son arrived, the sun was up, and had drawn up in vapour, the globes that had hung on the brambles, and so displeased the child. The child cried, and said—"The angry sun has taken them all up." The father looked up, and saw the beautiful rainbow on the bosom of the cloud, and said—"There, my child, the sun has taken up the bramble globes, and they help to form that beautiful bow on the cloud." Ah! my friends, God has taken up some of our friends; and have we not murmured? But, where are they? Ah! do they not form the beautiful bow round the throne of God? —*Beaumont.*

(477.) The dead possess all the consciousness of the living, and much more. The dead are just out of our sight, round the corner of the temple of nature. We dwell in the suburbs of the eternal city, they are in the kingly metropolis. We are in abasement, they are in the royal chambers of state. We are under clouds, they are in a light so radiant that if it should fall upon us at midday, "the earth would seem to suffer an eclipse, and hang like a corpse in the midst of shadows."

—*Townsend.*

BIBLE, THE.

I. *THE NECESSITY OF A REVELATION IS OBVIOUS.*

1. From the ignorance of man concerning himself.

(478.) Reason sees that man is ignorant, guilty, mortal, miserable, transported with vain passions, tormented with accusations of conscience, but it could not redeem those evils. Corrupt nature is like an imperfect building that lies in rubbish; the imperfection is visible, but not the way to finish it; for through the ignorance of the first design, every one follows his own fancy, whereas when the Architect comes to finish His own project, it appears regular and beautiful. Thus the various directions of philosophers to recover fallen man out of his ruins, and to raise him to his first state, were vain. Some glimmerings they had, that the happiness of a reasonable nature consisted in its union with God, but in order to this, they propounded such means as were not only ineffectual, but opposite. Such is the pride and folly of carnal wisdom, that to bring God and man together, it advances man, and depresses God.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

2. From the failure of all the philosophers to construct a complete and coherent religion.

(479.) A comparison of the theory of "the faith once delivered to the saints" with the facts of the past has shown that such a faith actually exists, and is in its substance identical with the faith of the apostles and prophets as contained in the canonical Scriptures. Its history is like the unbroken course of some stately river, ever flowing onwards from its first rise in the apostolic age towards the glorious ocean of the prophetic future, ever widening and deepening as it flows, and from every bright wave echoing the everlasting song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." But the history of speculation is totally different. It is a weary tale of ceaseless effort and of ceaseless failure. It is not one river, but many; a hundred streams, now wasted in the barren sands, now stagnating in the malarious marsh, now evaporating by simple inanition, earthborn and earthly.

The progress of speculative thought has been like the conduct of a man bewildered in some dense and trackless forest. Brought to this present spot by some able and faithful guide, he has now in some way or another been deprived of his assistance, and is left to shift for himself. He has no knowledge whatever to begin with, for he was never here before, and having neither chart nor compass, is devoid of all data beyond what he can gain by his own consciousness. He proceeds after a while in search of a path of escape from the silent and solitary forest into the green meadows and smiling scenes of happy

industry in the distance. From the dead level where he stands no glimpse of the distance can be gained. The tops of the tall trees close the boundary of the view on every side; and if he climbs them he but sees the depth and boundless extent of the mysterious circle wrapping him in on all sides. He is left face to face with himself and the problem of escape, with all his man's wants and weaknesses to urge him to a speedy solution of it. He therefore makes the attempt and penetrates some distance into the thick forest, till, through the matted and tangled labyrinth, or over the yawning fissure, or down the steep precipice, or across the over-hanging side of the barrier rock, he can advance no further. He therefore turns upon his steps, and following his steps backwards, finds his way to the point whence he started. Then he tries again with the same effort, and with the same failure. Over and over the same process goes on. But meantime the day advances and night draws nigh. Natural wants arise, and crave in vain for satisfaction. There is neither bread nor water in this lonely forest. He lies down amid the darkness, and tries to forget in sullen sleep his anxieties and despair. Another day brings another day's hopes, another day's efforts, and another day's failure; till like many an unhappy wretch in actual life. exhausted with effort, weak with hunger, and tormented with thirst, broken down by despair, and sick with fond dreams of the home he will never reach, he lays him down and dies.

Such has actually been the course of philosophic thought. A succession of new efforts from new ideas as starting-points have ended in a succession of failures, each effort like a faint wave that curls and breaks before it reaches the shore.

Thus the recognition of a personal and super-intending Deity, traceable doubtfully in Thales, and distinctly taught by Anaxagoras, became again dubious in Archelaus. The affectionate morality and piety of Pythagoras degenerated into the superstitious mysticism of the later Pythagoreans, and his recognition of the immortality of the soul, and of rewards and punishment after death, into a coarse metempsychosis. The clear and lofty Theism of Socrates, his recognition of virtue, and his perception of the true dignity of human nature, passed through Plato into the disputative scepticism of the Academy. The emphatic protest of the Eleatic School against a gross and materialistic polytheism, and its distinct consciousness of the unity and spiritual nature of God, became secularised in Parmenides, and atheistic in the sceptical sophistry of Zeno and the ascetic dualism of Empedocles. The pleasure-loving school of Aristippus ended in the sullen discontent of Hegesias, the death-persuader. The recognition of the inductive basis of all human knowledge belonging to Euclid of Megara, evaporated in the idle sophisms of Eubulides and Diodorus, and the logical fallacies of Plato, with its Stilpo. The idealistic philosophy of Plato, with its strong resemblances to revealed doctrine on the subject of God, and the soul, and sin, and the other life, died out of Polemo and Crates in one direction, in the sceptical uncertainty of Archesilaus in a second, and in the probabilities and lax morality of Carneades in the third. The philosophy of Aristotle, pure if cold, and elevating if selfish, ended in the materialistic atheism of Strabo. The rigid self-control of Antisthenes became an extravagance in the severity of the Cynics and the sullen pride of Diogenes. The natural virtue of Zeno passed into the subtle negations of Crysippus. The principle of Epicurus, that pleasure was to be found in virtue, was turned by a play of words into the principle which has made Epicurean a name of reproach throughout the world. The craving of the Alexandrian School after union with God was developed into the impious mysticism of Plotinus. Even the philosophy of Locke was perverted into the materialism of Hartley, Priestley, and Darwin, the sensationalism of Condillac, the selfishness of Helvetius, the fatalism of D'Holbach, and the naked atheism of the French Encyclopædists. Lastly, the idealism of Descartes prepared the way for the blasphemies of Schelling and Hegel.

Thus, throughout all human speculation, the same law has prevailed. Many great and noble ideas have been thrown out, fragments of revealed truth or sparks of heavenly light received, we know not how, through the mercy of that God who has, more or less, wrought in the loftier spirits of our race as they lived and died. But however they may have been acquired, two things are certain. It is indisputable that in the minds of the founders of philosophic schools they existed only dimly and darkly, and were never framed into a complete and coherent system. Equally certain it is that as soon as men began to reason upon them the fragments of truth themselves were refined away and lost. None of them ever retained permanent vitality. None of them exercised a controlling influence over mankind. The one fact is the explanation of the other. What is not able permanently to live is not likely effectually to act. The whole process has consisted of flashes of light for a moment illumining the darkness, like rays of divine sunlight shining from heaven, and then gradually dying away amid the ever-deepening shadows of human ignorance and misery. —*Garbett.*

II. *IN THE BIBLE WE HAVE A REVELATION FROM GOD.*

1. Nature of the evidence by which its inspiration is proved.

(480.) There is a vast difference between what is called mathematical, and what is called moral evidence; the difference consists not so much in the fact that mathematical proofs deal with subjects that come under the cognizance of the senses, but that mathematical evidence has no room for prejudice, or passion, or self-will, or an evil heart of unbelief, or an unholy appetite of sinful desire of any kind. If I am proving that any two sides of a triangle are greater than the third side, or that the square of the hypothenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the two sides, I am engaged in a sort of transcendental process, in this respect altogether out of the reach of passion. But when I am trying to prove to men the propositions that speak of what they are, and what they should be, and whither they will go if they do not turn round and come back, or if they persist in their present palatable but sinful course, then I have to deal, not only with an intellect that needs to be convinced, but with prejudices and passions innumerable, that thrust themselves forward, and try to prevent the clear, and logical, and triumphant conclusion, to which I should otherwise arrive. Such is the important distinction between the two. If men therefore ask for mathematical evidence

upon this book, and upon religion, they demand what is impossible. It belongs to another province. But if you ask for and accept moral evidence, it will be found in itself triumphant. It is not a precarious or equivocal process. When a man is tried for his life, and when twelve respectable men hear the trial and proof, they come to the conclusion, he is or is not guilty. How rarely do we find a jury in error! almost never. Why? Because moral evidence has power—it does satisfy. And yet those twelve jurymen are not without feelings, sympathies, passions, constantly thrusting themselves up, trying to arrest their honest verdict; but they are able, notwithstanding, to keep all down, and come to an impartial conclusion; and reason overcomes every resistance. Men's lives are taken away by force of moral evidence, and all are satisfied it is right. If a physician come to me when I am ill, he cannot mathematically demonstrate my illness, he cannot mathematically convince me of it; but we do not ask mathematical evidence on such subjects; we are satisfied with moral. Take care, then, lest in the matters of Cæsar you daily accept moral evidence as all that is requisite; but in the matters of God and eternity, where the moral evidence is so magnificent, varied, and vast, you criminally reject it as incomplete, and unable to prove its end and object.
—*Cumming.*

2. The nature of its inspiration.*

(481.) It is never to be supposed that the divine pattern of the Scriptures should direct every word and every phrase by an extraordinary, immediate inspiration, for then it were impossible there should have been a diversity of style, but all the parts must have been in one and the same style. But there was that influx of the Divine Spirit that did most certainly guide the writers as to all the substance of what was to be written and recorded by them; which did attemper itself to the natural genius of those that were made use of as the penmen, so that the communication of the Holy Ghost, perceived by such and such men, of such and such a constitution, temper, and genius, comes to be diversified in that manner, as if one comes to pour a quantity of water into such and such a particular vessel; if the vessel be round, the water falls into a round figure; if the vessel be square, the water is formed into that figure unavoidably. And so the same communication of the Holy Ghost being poured into such a vessel as this or that man was, comes to be accordingly diversified. That very communication to such an one as Isaiah, for instance, receives one sort of figure there, and a communication to such an one as Micah receives another figure there; when yet all these communications are from one and the same fountain, and serve for one and the same common purpose. —*Salter*, 1840.

(482.) You cannot dissect Inspiration into substance and form. As for thoughts being inspired, apart from the words which give them expression, you might as well talk of a tune without notes, or a sum without figures. No such dream can abide the daylight for a moment. No such theory of Inspiration is even intelligible. It is as illogical as it is worthless; and cannot be too sternly put down.
—*Burgon.*

3. Proofs that it is divinely inspired.

(1.) *The marks it bears of a Divine origin.*

(483.) You find by daily experience every ingenious author leaves an image and impress of his own spirit, the mark of his genius upon every work that he does. We can say of an exquisite painting, by some secret art in it, "This is the hand of such a great master." Now can it be imagined, that God should put His hand to any work and leave no signature or impress of it upon that work? It cannot be imagined, for it must be either because He could not, or because He would not. That God could not, cannot be said without blasphemy. Can men show the wisdom and learning they have attained to in every work, and cannot God, who is the Father of lights, and the Fountain of wisdom, insinuate such secret marks and notes of His wisdom and Divine authority into that writing He took care should be penned for the use and comfort of the world, that it might be known to be His? And that He would not, that cannot be believed neither. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(484.) How are we to know whether the Scriptures be the Word of God? It shows itself, and evidences itself to be so; for it is a light that discovers itself, and all things else, without any other testimony. When the sun is up, there needs no witness and proof that it is light. Let the least child bring a candle into a room, and as it discovers other things, so it discovers itself: so the Word of God is that which discovers itself to us, yea, it has a self-evidencing light. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(485.) May a particular man be known from a thousand others by his face, voice, or handwriting? Certainly then it cannot seem strange that the God of heaven should be discerned from His sorry creature, by His voice and writing in the sacred Scriptures. Do we not see that He hath interwoven His glorious name so in the works of creation, that they speak His power and godhead, and call Him Maker in their thoughts, who never read the Bible, or heard of such a book? (so that they could not steal the notion thence, but had it from the dictate of their own consciences, extorting the acknowledgment of a Deity). And much more will an enlightened conscience and sanctified heart be commanded, by the overpowering evidence that shines forth in the Scriptures, to fall down and cry, "It is the voice of God, and not any creature that speaks in them."
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(486.) I cannot look around me without being struck with the analogy observable in the works of God. I find the Bible written in the style of His other books of Creation and Providence. The pen seems in the same hand. I see it, indeed, write at times mysteriously in each of these books; but I know that mystery in the works of God is only another name for my ignorance. The moment, therefore, that I become humble, all becomes right.
—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(2.) *The confidence of believers that it is from God.*

(487.) The grand truths and chief notions found

* It will be seen that these two illustrations are in elucidation of two differing theories of the nature of the Inspiration of the Scriptures. *As* illustrations they are equally good, and it does not seem to me to be necessary to indicate which of these theories I think to be the true one. On some other points concerning which Christian men differ, illustrations of their varying views will be given. R. A. B.

in the Scriptures, are so connatural to the principles of grace, which the same holy Spirit (who is the inditer of them) hath planted in the hearts of all the saints, that their souls even spring and leap at the reading and hearing of them, as the Babe did in *Elizabeth's* womb at the salutation of the Virgin *Mary*. The lamb doth not more certainly know its dam in the midst of a whole flock (at whose bleating it passeth by them all to come to be suckled by her) than the sheep of Christ know His voice in the saving truths of the Scriptures; the sincere milk whereof they desire, and are taught of God to taste and discern from all other.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3.) *Its distinctness from all other books.*

(488.) I will confess that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and so sublime should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred Personage whose name it records should be Himself a mere man? What sweetness, what purity, in His manner! What sublimity in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die without weakness and without ostentation? If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God.

—*J. J. Rousseau.*

(489.) At a literary gathering at the house of the Baron von Holbach, where the most celebrated infidels of the age used to assemble, the gentlemen present were one day commenting on the absurd, foolish, and childish things with which the Holy Scriptures, as they maintained, abound. But the French philosopher and infidel Diderot, who had himself taken no small part in the conversation, suddenly put a period to it by saying, "But it is wonderful, gentlemen, it is wonderful! I know of no man in France who can write and speak with such ability. In spite of all the evil which we have said, and undoubtedly with good reason, of this book, I do not believe that you, or any of you, could compose a narrative so simple, and at the same time so elevated and so affecting as the narrative of the sufferings and death of Christ,—a narrative exerting so wide an influence and awakening such deep and universal feeling, and the power of which after so many hundred years would still be the same." This unlooked-for remark filled every one with astonishment, and was followed by a protracted silence.

(490.) I am heartily glad to witness your veneration for a Book which, to say nothing of its holiness or authority, contains more specimens of genius and taste than any other volume in existence.

—*Landor.*

(491.) To my mind there is no plainer proof of the Divine authority of the Bible, and that they who wrote these Gospels were moved by the Holy Ghost, than the calm, unimpassioned style in which His disciples tell the story of their Master's wrongs, without a flash of feeling; no sign that a tear ever dropped on the page, no sign that the pen ever trembled with indignation in their hands as they wrote it down. I cannot read the story so as they seem to have written it, no more than I could stand by to see a mother insulted, or have a father's memory blackened and traduced. When I read how my blessed Master was called an impostor, and a blasphemer, and a glutton, and a winebibber, I do not know when it is more difficult to be angry and not sin.

—*Guthrie.*

(492.) There is gold in the rocks which fringe the Pass of the Splugen, gold even in the stones which mend the roads, but there is too little of it to be worth extracting. Alas, how like too many books and sermons! Not so the Scriptures, they are much fine gold; their very dust is precious.

—*Spurgeon.*

(4.) *Its adaptation to human need.*

(493.) God made the present earth as the home of man, but had He meant it as a mere lodging a world less beautiful would have served the purpose. A big round island, half of it arable and half of it pasture, with a clump of trees in one corner and a magazine of fuel in another, might have held and fed ten millions of people, and a hundred islands all made in the same pattern, big and round, might have held and fed the population of the globe. But man is something more than the animal which wants lodging and food. He has a spirited nature, full of keen perceptions and deep sympathies. He has an eye for the sublime and the beautiful, and his kind Creator has provided man's abode with affluent materials for these nobler tastes.

God also made the Bible as the guide and oracle of man; but had He meant it as a mere lesson-book of duty, a volume less various and less attractive would have answered every end. A few plain paragraphs announcing God's own character and His disposition towards us sinners here on earth, mentioning the provision which He has made for our future happiness, and indicating the different duties which He would have us perform, a few simple sentences would have sufficed to tell what God is, and what He would have us to do. There was no need of the picturesque narrative and the majestic poem, no need of the proverb, the story, and the psalm. A chapter of theology and another of morals, a short account of the Incarnation and the great Atonement, and a few pages of rules and directions for the Christian life, might have contained the vital essence of Scripture, and have supplied us with a Bible of simplest meaning and smallest size. And in that case the Bible would have been consulted only by those rare and wistful spirits to whom the great Hereafter is a subject of anxiety, who are really anxious to know what God is, and how they themselves may please Him. But in giving that Bible its Divine Author had regard to the mind of man. He knew that man has more curiosity than piety, more taste than sanctity; and that more persons are anxious to hear some new, or read some beauteous, thing, than to read or hear about God and the great salvation. He knew that few would ever ask, What must I do to be saved? till they came in contact with the Bible itself, and therefore He made the Bible not only an instructive book, but an attractive one—not only true, but enticing. He filled it with marvellous incident and engaging history; with sunny pictures from old-world scenery, and affecting anecdotes from the

patriarch times. He replenished it with stately argument and thrilling verse, and sprinkled it over with sententious wisdom and proverbial pungency. He made it a book of lofty thoughts and noble images, a book of heavenly doctrine, but withal of early adaptation. In preparing a guide for immortality Infinite Wisdom gave not a dictionary nor a grammar, but a Bible, a book which in trying to reach the heart of man should captivate his taste, and which in transforming his affections should also expand his intellect. The pearl is of great price; but even the casket is of exquisite beauty. The sword is of ethereal temper, and nothing cuts so keen as its double edge; but there are jewels on the hilt, an exquisite inlaying on the scabbard. The shekels are of the purest ore; but even the scrip which contains them is of a texture more curious than any which the artists of earth can fashion. The apples are gold, but even the basket is silver.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(494.) In the adaptation of the Word of God to intellects of all dimensions, it resembles the natural light, which is equally suited to the eye of the minutest insect and to the extended vision of man.

—*W. B. Clulow.*

(5.) *The exhaustlessness of its interest.*

(495.) The most learned, acute, and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The more deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore; new light continually beams from this source of heavenly knowledge, to direct the conduct and illustrate the work of God and the ways of men; and he will at last leave the world confessing that the more he studied the Scriptures, the fuller conviction he had of his *own ignorance*, and of *their inestimable value.*

—*Sir Walter Scott.*

(496.) It is related of Dr. Kennicott, who spent thirty years in collating the Hebrew Scriptures, and resigned a valuable living because his studies prevented his residing on it, that his wife was accustomed to assist him in his preparations of his Polyglot Bible by reading to him, as they drove out for an airing, the portions to which his attention was called. When preparing for a drive the day after the great work was completed, she asked him what book she should now take. "Oh," exclaimed he, "*let us begin the Bible.*"

(497.) The difference between the Holy Scriptures and other writings is much the same as that between the works of art and nature. The works of art appear to most advantage at first, but will not bear a nice and repeated examination; the more curiously we pry into them, the less we shall admire them. But the works of nature will bear a thousand reviews, and yet still be instructive and wonderful. In like manner the writings of mere men, though never so excellent in their kind, yet strike and surprise us most upon our first perusal of them; and then flatten upon our taste by degrees, as our familiarity with them increases. Whereas the word of Revelation is, like its Author, of an endless and unsearchable perfection, and the more reason still shall we find to admire and adore the wisdom of the great Revealer of it.

—*Salter*, 1840.

(498.) There was an eminent philosopher who had devoted a lifetime to the pursuits of science, and not, as he thought, in vain. She had crowned his brow with laurels, and inscribed his name in the temple of fame. In the evening of his days, at the eleventh hour, God was pleased to call him, open his eyes, convert him; and now, he who was deeply read in science and conversant with its loftiest speculations, as he bent his gray head over the Bible (the law spoken of in the text), declared that, if he had his life to live over again, he would spend it in the study of the Word of God. He felt like a miner, who, after toiling long and to little purpose in search of gold, with one stroke of his pick-axe lays open a vein of the precious metal and becomes rich at once—the owner of a vein that grows the richer the deeper the mine is driven. Such a treasure the Bible offers to those whose eyes God has opened to its wonders of grace and glory. It is inexhaustible. The farther, leaving the shore with its sounding beach and shallow waters, you go out to sea, the deeper it grows; the higher you climb a hill, the wider grows the prospect of rolling land and liquid plain; the deeper, at least in some instances, the shaft is sunk into the bowels of the earth, richer minerals reward your labour. Even so, the further and the longer we pursue our investigations into Divine truth, and study the Bible, the more it grows in interest and in value. The devout Christian discovers new beauties every day. We never tire of its pages; at every new reading we make new discoveries, and its truths are always as fresh as new-blown roses which nobody ever tires of smelling, as each morning brings them out blushing red and bathed in dew. Only let a man's eyes be opened, and such wondrous things will be seen in the Bible that he would part with all his books rather than with that, esteeming it better not only than any, but than all of them, and deeming those his best hours of study which were spent in exploring the mysteries and mercies of redeeming love.

—*Guthrie.*

(499.) The Bible is like an ever-flowing fountain. Take what we will, and as much as we will, we ever leave more than we take to satisfy the wants of others. Neither the writers nor the thinkers of any one age can exhaust its fulness. For nearly eighteen centuries men have thought and written upon that one book, and if for eighteen more centuries men so write, yet will there still remain much that calls for fresh examination and fuller inquiry: new knowledge to be won, old truths to be better and more fully understood. The books of men have their day, and then grow obsolete. God's Word is like Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Time passes over it, but it ages not. Its power is as fresh as if God spake it but yesterday.

—*R. Payne Smith, D.D.*

(6.) *The permanence of its value.*

(500.) Whatever use man makes of this standard of truth, the standard itself remains fixed, tried, and unimpaired. When I take down a great author, such as Lord Bacon, I find that time has discovered many errors, and rendered obsolete many positions, to be found in that most comprehensive of human minds. But I see that time can take nothing from the Bible. I find it a living monitor. Like the sun, it is the same in its light and influence to man this day which it was ages ago. It can meet every

present inquiry; it can console under every present loss; and it can become, in God's hand, a daily exciting cause of growth and comfort.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(501.) There is a substance which you must have noticed cast on the sea-shore—the *medusa*, or sea-nettle, as some sorts of it are called; an object rather beautiful as its dome of amber quivers in the sun. And a goodly size it often is, so large at times that you could scarcely lift it; but it is all a watery pulp; and if you were carrying it home, or trying to preserve it, the whole mass would quickly trickle out of sight and leave you nothing but a few threads of substance. Now most books are like the marine medusa; fresh stranded, newly published (as the expression is), they make a goodly show; but when a few suns have shone on them, the crystal jelly melts, the glittering cupola has vanished, and a few meagre fibres in your memory are all the residue of the once popular authorship. If you ever tried it you must have been struck with the few solid thoughts, the few suggestive ideas, which survive from the perusal of the most brilliant of human books. Few of them can stand three readings, and of the memorabilia which you had marked in your first perusal, on reverting to them you find that many of them are not so striking or weighty or original as at first you fancied. But the Word of God is solid; it will stand a thousand readings, and the man who has gone over it the most frequently and the most carefully is the surest of finding new wonders there. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(7.) ***Its unity.***

(502.) We take the Bible into our hands, and examine diligently its different sections, delivered in different ages of mankind. There is a mighty growth in the discoveries of God's nature and will, as time rolls on from creation to redemption; but as knowledge is increased, and brighter light thrown on the Divine purpose and dealings, there is never the point at which we are brought to a pause by the manifest contradiction of one part to another. It is the wonderful property of the Bible, though the authorship is spread over a long line of centuries, that it never withdraws any truth once advanced, and never adds new without giving fresh force to the old. In reading the Bible, we always look, as it were, on the same landscape; the only difference being, as we take in more and more of its statements, that more and more of the mist is rolled away from the horizon, so that the eye includes a broader sweep of beauty. If we hold converse with Patriarchs occupying the earth whilst yet in its infancy, and then listen to Moses, as he legislates for Israel, to Prophets throwing open the future, and to Apostles as they publish the mysteries of a new dispensation, we find the discourse always bearing, with more or less distinctness, on one and the same subject: the latter speakers, if we may use such illustration, turn towards us a larger portion than the former of the illuminated hemisphere; but, as the mighty globe revolves on its axis, we feel that the oceans and lands, which come successively into view, are but constituent parts of the same glorious world. There is the discovery of the new territories: but, as fast as discovered, the territories combine to make up one planet. There is the announcement of the new truths; but, as fast as announced, they take their places as parts of one immutable system. Indeed, there is vast difference between the Epistles of St. Paul, and the Psalms of David, or the Prophecies of Isaiah. But it is the difference, as we have just said, between the landscape whilst the morning mist yet rests on half its villages and lakes, and that same range of scenery when the noontide irradiates every spire and every rivulet. It is the difference between the moon, as she turns towards us only a thin crescent of her illuminated disk, and when, in the fulness of her beauty, she walks our firmament, and scatters our night. It is no new landscape which opens on our gaze, as the town and forest emerge from the shadow, and fill up the blanks in the noble panorama. It is no new planet which comes travelling in its majesty, as the crescent swells into the circle, and the faint thread of light gives place to the rich globe of silver. And it is no fresh system of religion which is made known to the dwellers in this creation, as the brief notices given to patriarchs expand in the institutions of the law, and under the breathings of prophecy, till at length, in the days of Christ and His apostles, they burst into magnificence, and fill a world with redemption. It is throughout the same system for the rescue of human kind by the interference of a surety. And revelation has been nothing else but the gradual development of this system, the drawing up another fold of the veil from the landscape, the adding another stripe of light to the crescent, so that the early fathers of our race, and ourselves on whom "the ends of the world are come," look on the same arrangement for human deliverance, though to them there was nothing but a clouded expanse, with here and there a prominent landmark, whilst to us, through the horizon losing itself in the far-off eternity, every object of personal interest is exhibited in beauty and distinctness. —*Melvill.*

(503.) The Bible comes to us, not like a treatise consecutively composed by one man, or a symmetrical system of philosophy drawn out according to the requirements of modern thought. It is a cluster of separate growths, going on through ages, and yet, like some vast old oak, or cedar of Lebanon, all its additions, to the last and outermost twig, cohere around the one trunk, stand on the one root, and partake of the peculiar nature of the original. Its earliest scenes are the simplest histories of pastoral life; its latest are the inciters of renowned civilisation. But whether it speak in the picture language of the early Hebrew, or in the language of Plato, its testimony to truth, virtue, goodness, and godliness, is grandly *one*. If the book itself has no literary structure of symmetry, it harmonises the moral sense of the ages, gives to the widely-separated periods of history one mind, one heart, and one interpretation of the universal aspiration.

—*Beecher.*

(504.) Consider what, as a matter of fact, we have in this old book, or collection of books, men call the Bible. We have in its first chapters answers to the universal questions, Whence came the world and man? Then we have memorials of the rise and fall of the proudest empires the earth has seen. We have the story of the development of the mightiest of moral forces, even this Christianity which we profess. We have some predictions such as those of the diffusion of the Gospel and the dispersion of the Jews, whose fulfilments are all around us. And

its last book is in large measure devoted to the satisfying of that other universal human craving by which only is man's longing to know the secrets of the past transcended, even our desire to discern somewhat of the hidden future. Thus this Bible possesses rounded completeness. It begins by telling us how order was brought forth from the chaos, and it ends by revealing to us the new heavens and earth to which, in the glory of their redemption, no trace of the curse of sin by which they are marred shall cleave. Whence has come this singular perfectness? The Bible is not the production of one writer; it is no great epic or history conceived and consummated by one mighty human genius. For the harmony that characterises it, we might then reasonably have looked. But it is the production of many writers, of different nations, of varied tongues. It was commenced by Moses in the deserts of Arabia, and completed by John in the Island of Patmos. Between its commencement and its close entire phases of civilisation appeared and disappeared. To its earlier penmen the very speech of its later writers was unknown, and to the authors of its closing half the dialect of Moses and of David had become unintelligible. And yet this book, produced in such far removed times, such distant places, and by such varied instrumentality, is one, and forms a whole! Now is not this itself a proof of more than human origin? Was there ever a cathedral constructed by means of the building by one man of a wall, and by another of a window, and by another of an arch, and by a fourth of a doorway, and by a fifth of a spire, and so on through its countless parts, without concert, without a common plan, without an architect to supervise? What would you say to the man who should tell you that thus originated the minster of York, or St. Paul's in London, or that Abbey in which repose the ashes of England's noblest dead, or that mightier pile which is Rome's crowning glory? But shall we believe that this grander cathedral of truth, built through vaster space of time, serving nobler ends, glorious with completer perfectness, had no architect, that its many builders were not guided by any common plan, that its harmony is a mere accident and result of chance?

—*R. A. Bertram.*

(8.) *Its scientific incorrectness.*

(505.) The inspiration of the Bible is a large subject. I hold it to be inspired, not dictated. It is the Word of God—the words of man: as the former, perfect; as the latter, imperfect. God the Spirit, as a sanctifier, does not produce absolute perfection of human knowledge, nor has He given a perfect revelation; and for the same reason in both cases—the human element which is mixed up—else there could have been no progressive dispensations. Let us take a case—the history of the creation. Now I hold that a spiritual revelation from God must involve scientific incorrectness: it could not be from God unless it did. Suppose that the cosmogony had been given in terms which would satisfy our present scientific knowledge, or, say, rather the terms of absolute scientific truth: it is plain that, in this case, the men of that day would have rejected its authority; they would have said, "Here is a man who tells us the earth goes round the sun; and the sky, which we see to be a stereoma, fixed not far up, is infinite space, with no firmament at all, and so on. Can we trust one in matters unseen who is manifestly in error in things seen and level to the senses? Can we accept his revelation about God's nature and man's duty, when he is wrong in things like these?" Thus the faith of this and subsequent ages must have been purchased at the expense of the unbelief of all previous ages. I hold it, therefore, as a proof of the inspiration of the Bible, and Divinely wise to have given a spiritual revelation—*i.e.*, a revelation concerning the truths of the soul and its relation to God—in popular and incorrect language. Do not mistake that word, incorrect; incorrect is one thing, false another. It is scientifically incorrect to say that the sun rose this morning; but it is not false, because it conveys all that is required, for the nonce, to be known about the fact, time, &c. And if God were giving a revelation in this present day, He would give it in modern phraseology, and the men He inspired would talk of sunrise, sunset, &c. Men of science smile at the futile attempts to reconcile Moses and geology. I give up the attempt at once, and say, the inspiration of the Bible remains intact for all that—nay, it would not have been inspired except on this condition of incorrectness.

—*F. W. Robertson,* 1816–1853.

(9.) *Its influence on character and conduct.*

(506.) There is not a book on earth so *favourable* to all the *kind*, and to all the *sublime*, affections, or so *unfriendly* to *hatred* and *persecution*, to *tyranny*, *injustice*, and *every* sort of *malevolence*, as the GOSPEL. It breathes nothing throughout but *mercy*, *benevolence*, and *peace*. . . . Such of the doctrines of the gospel as are level to human capacity appear to be agreeable to the purest truth and soundest morality. All the genius and learning of the heathen world, all the penetration of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Aristotle, had never been able to produce such a system of *moral duty*, and so rational an account of Providence and of man, as is to be found in the New Testament.

—*Beattie,* 1735–1803.

(507.) If there is any knowledge fully in our possession, it is certainly that which comes to us by experience. That a certain material will float in the water may be proved by a knowledge of its specific gravity; but we will feel fully more assured of the fact if we have seen it tried, and we will regard our answer to an objector, "I have seen it floating in water frequently," as simply sufficient to silence all objections. Ay, we will regard such a statement as fully more conclusive than, "It must float, for its specific gravity is lighter than water." On this same principle—and it is the principle of common sense—how fully we can prove that the Bible is the Word of God! Yes, every Christian carries the proof with him in his own experience. A poor Italian woman, a fruit-seller, had received the Word of God in her heart, and become persuaded of the truth of it. Seated at her modest stall at the head of a bridge, she made use of every moment in which she was unoccupied with her small traffic, in order to study the sacred volume. "What are you reading there, my good woman?" said a gentleman one day, as he came up to the stall to purchase some fruit. "It is the Word of God," replied the fruit-vendor. "The Word of God! Who told you that?" "He told me so Himself." "Have you ever spoken with Him, then?" The poor woman felt a little embarrassed, more especially

as the gentleman insisted on her giving him some proof of what she believed. Unused to discussion, and feeling greatly at a loss for arguments, she at length exclaimed, looking upward, "Can you prove to me, sir, that there is a sun up in the sky?" "Prove it!" he replied. "Why the best proof is that it warms me, and that I can see its light." "So it is with me," she replied joyously, "the proof of this Book's being the Word of God is, that it warms and lights my soul."

(508.) The mother of a family was married to an infidel, who made a jest at religion in the presence of his own children; yet she succeeded in bringing them all up in the fear of the Lord. I one day asked how she preserved them from the influence of a father whose sentiments were so openly opposed to her own. This was her answer: "Because to the authority of a father I did not oppose the authority of a mother, but that of God. From their earlier years my children have always seen the Bible upon my table. This holy book has constituted the whole of their religious instruction. I was silent, that I might allow it to speak. Did they propose a question; did they commit any fault; did they perform any good action; I opened the Bible, and the Bible answered, reproved, or encouraged them. The constant reading of the Scriptures has alone wrought the prodigy which surprises you."

(509.) Many years ago, there was a little boy, named Alexander. He was the son of Nicholas, Emperor of Russia, in whose empire there were many millions of poor people, called serfs. These were kept in a state much resembling slavery, and were sold with the lands on which they lived. Many of them were poor and wretched; some few were prosperous and wealthy; but all were under the control of the lords on whose territories they dwelt.

One day, Nicholas noticed that little Alexander looked very sad and thoughtful, and asked him of what he was thinking.

"Oh the poor serfs," replied the little boy; "and, when I become emperor, I will emancipate them."

This reply startled the emperor and his courtiers; for they were very much opposed to all such plans for the improvement of the condition of the poor. They asked little Alexander how he came to think of doing this, and what led him to feel so interested for the serfs. He replied, "From reading the Scriptures, and hearing them enforced, which teach that all men are brothers."

The emperor said very little to his boy on the subject, and it was hoped that the influences and opinions which prevailed in the royal court would gradually correct the boyish notions of the young prince; but this expectation was vain. The early impressions of the little boy grew deeper and stronger; and when at last the great Nicholas died, and Alexander was placed upon his father's throne, he called the wise statesmen of the land to his councils, and a plan of emancipation was formed; and the imperial decree went forth, which abolished serfdom throughout all the Russian Empire.

It is in this way that God works wonders by the power of His Word. The great fact, that God has "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," lodged like an incorruptible seed in the heart of the young prince, and growing with his growth, and strengthening with his strength, at last budded and blossomed, and brought forth the fruit of blessing for millions of the human race.

4. The doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible is not invalidated by the state of the sacred text.

(510.) You will perhaps be told that no one can maintain that the words of Scripture are inspired, because no one can tell for certain what the words of Scripture are; or something to that effect. Now I will not stop to expose the falsity of this charge against the text of Scripture (which is implied to be a very corrupt text, whereas, on the contrary, it is the best ascertained text of any ancient writing in the world). Rather let me remind you, once and for ever, how to refute this silly sophism. See you not that the state of the text of the Bible has no more to do with the inspiration of the Bible than the stains on yonder windows have to do with the light of God's sun? Let me illustrate the matter by supposing the question raised, Whether Livy did or did not write the history which goes under his name? You (suppose) are persuaded that he did,—I, that he did not, so far, we should both understand, and perhaps respect one another. But what if I were to go on to condemn your opinion as untenable, because of the corrupt state of Livy's text? Would you not reply that I mistook the question entirely: that you were speaking of the authorship of the work, not about the fate of the copies? —*Burgon.*

(511.) These [interpolated] words, phrases, and passages are later additions to the text, either adopted into it upon an authoritative revision, such as that ascribed to Ezra, or, perhaps, accidentally introduced through the mistakes of copyists, who brought into the text what had been previously added by way of exegesis in the margin. Such additions constantly occur in the case of classical writers; and there is no reason to suppose that a special providence would interfere to prevent their occurrence in the sacred volume. We "have our treasure in earthen vessels." God gives us His Revelation, but leaves it to us to preserve it by the ordinary methods by which books are handed down to posterity. No doubt its transcendant value has caused the bestowal of especial care and attention on the transmission of the Sacred Volume; and the result is that no ancient collection has come down to us nearly so perfect, or with so few corruptions and interpolations; but to declare that there are none, is to make an assertion improbable, *à priori*, and at variance with the actual phenomena. The sober-minded in every age have allowed that the written Word, as it has come down to us, has these slight imperfections, which no more interfere with its value than the spots upon the sun detract from his brightness, or than a few marred and stunted forms destroy the harmony and beauty of nature.
—*Rawlinson.*

5. The doctrine of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures is not essential to the authority of Christianity.

(512.) I would have these men consider, that though we doubt not but to prove that Scripture is God's full and infallible law, yet, if it were so that this could not be proved, this would not overthrow the Christian religion. If the Scriptures were but

the writings of honest men, that were subject to mistakes and contradictions, in the manner and circumstances, yet they might afford us a full certainty of the substance of Christianity, and of the miracles wrought to confirm the doctrine. Tacitus, Suetonius, Livy, Florus, Lucan, &c., were all heathens, and very fallible; and yet their history affords us a certainty of the great substantial passages of the Roman affairs which they treat of, though not of all the smaller passages and circumstances. He that doubteth whether there was such a man as Julius Cæsar, or that he fought with Pompey and overcame him, &c., is scarcely reasonable, if he knew the histories; so though Matthew Paris, Malmesbury, Hoveden, Speed, Cambden, and our own parliaments that enacted our laws, were all fallible men, and mistaken in divers smaller things, yet they afford us a full certainty that there was such a man as William the Conqueror, William Rufus, &c.; that there were such parliaments, such lords, such fights and victories, &c. He that would not venture all that he hath on the truth of these, especially to gain a kingdom by the venture, were no better in this than mad. Now, if Scripture were but such common writings as these, especially joined with the uncontrolled tradition that hath since conveyed it to us, may it not yet give us a full certainty that Christ was in the flesh, and that He preached this doctrine for the substance, and wrought these miracles to confirm it, and enabled His followers to work the like, which will afford us an invincible argument for our Christianity? Therefore Grotius, &c., and so the old fathers, when they disputed with the heathens, did first prove the truth of Christian religion before they came to prove the Divine authority of the Scriptures; not that we are at any such uncertainty, or that any Christian should take up here, as if the Scriptures were not infallible and Divine; but being now speaking to another sort of men according to their capacity, I say, if it were otherwise, yet might we have certainty of our religion. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

6. Yet its inspiration gives authority to its utterances.

(513.) What, then, is the difference between things known to be true by the natural operation of the mind, and things known to be true by supernatural influence? In the quality of the things known there is no difference. Where a thing is known to be true, it is no more a truth because God said it than because a man said it. Truth is truth, whoever says it. But it makes a great difference, in my receiving truth, whether I receive it as accredited by the testimony of man, or as accredited by the testimony of God.

We have a familiar instance of the difference between a thing that is authoritative and one that is not. A private, in the midst of battle, says to the men of his regiment, "Look to that charge upon our flank: we ought to change front." Not a man in the ranks stirs. This private is right; but a private has no authority to speak. But a brigadier-general passing, and hearing the remark, and seeing the state of affairs, gives orders in exact accordance with it; and instantly he is obeyed. The truth is the same in the mouth of the private and in the mouth of the general; but one is authorised, and the other is not. And the truth is a thousand times more influential when spoken by a man who has a right to speak it than when spoken by a man who has no right to speak it.

Now, prophets and apostles had a right to speak truths; and when spoken, those truths had a claim upon the world which they would not have had if they had been spoken by persons that were not authenticated. They would have been as true in the one case as in the other, but they would not have had the same effect. Divinely attested truth is more powerful than truth that stands merely upon its own merits. —*Beecher.*

7. Although the Bible is Divinely inspired, its revelation is necessarily imperfect.

(514.) To suppose that human words and human ideas can be adequate exponents of Divine truths in their full perfectness is simply absurd. As certainly as a vessel can hold no more than its own measure, so certainly no being can understand anything higher than itself. The animals have no power of understanding those qualities in which man transcends the limits of their nature; man has no power of understanding those qualities in which angels excel us; the very angels and archangels have no power of comprehending God's infinities. For the finite, however large, can never comprehend the Infinite.
—*R. Payne Smith.*

8. An objection answered.

(515.) The infidel strikes his penknife through this Book because he says, *If it were God's book, the whole world would have it.* He says that it is not to be supposed that if God had anything to say to the world, he would say it only to the small part of the human race who actually possess the Bible. To this I reply, that the fact that only a part of the race receives anything is no ground for believing that God did not bestow it. Who made oranges and bananas? You say God. I ask, how can that be, when thousands of our race never saw an orange or a banana? If God were going to give such things, why did He not give them to all? The argument that the giving of the Bible to a part of the race would imply a wicked partiality on the part of God, and consequently that He did not give it at all, would prove that He did not give oranges and bananas to the people of the tropics; for that would be partiality. The fact is, that God has a right to do as He pleases; and He is constantly partial in a thousand things. He gives us a pleasant clime, while He gives earthquakes and tornadoes to Mexico. He gives incomputable harvests of wheat to Sicily, but scant berries, and polar bears, and the ungainly walrus to the arctic inhabitants. He gives one man two good eyes, and to another none. He gives you two feet; to another man, no feet at all. To you He gives perpetual health; to another man, coughing consumption, or piercing pleurisy, or stinging gout, or fiery erysipelas. He does not treat us all alike. If all the human race had the same climate, the same harvests, the same health, the same advantages, then you might by analogy argue that if He had a Bible at all, He would give it to the whole race at the same time. If you say to me that the fact that the Bible is now in the possession of only a small part of the human family is proof that He did not send the Bible, then I say that the fact that only a part of the world has peaches and apples proves that God never made peaches and apples; and the fact that a part of the world has a mild sunshiny climate proves conclusively that God

does not make the climate. Indeed, I will carry on your argument until I can prove that God made nothing at all; for there is not one single physical or intellectual blessing that we possess that has not been denied some one else. No! No! Because God, in His sovereign mercy, has given us a book that some others do not possess, let us not be so ungrateful as to reject it—blowing out our own lantern because other people have not a light; rending off the splinters from our broken bone because other people have not been able to get a bandage: dashing our own ship on a rock because other vessels have not a compass; cutting up our own Bible with a penknife because other people have not a revelation. —*Talmage.*

III. *ITS GENUINENESS.*

(516.) Our certainty of the incorruption of the Scriptures, in all material points, may yet consist with some literal or verbal errors in the copies. For it is not an apostolical work to deliver down to posterity the writings or words which the apostles first wrote and spoke; but it is a human and Christian work: and, therefore, though God promised to His apostles His Spirit to lead them into all truth, and hath promised to be with ministers in preaching His Gospel to the end of the world; yet hath He not promised us the same exact infallibility or impeccability in preaching, as to every circumstance, as they had at first in speaking or writing; nor hath He promised so to guide every printer, or the hand of each transcriber of the Scriptures, that none of them shall err. But our religion or Scriptures is nevertheless certain in the doctrine for all this: for the doctrine depends not on these slips or questioned passages.

We have an infallible certainty of the printed statutes of this land, that they are not forged; yet may the printers commit some errors in the printing of them. And will you conclude, if you find a word misplaced, or false printed, that, therefore, it is uncertain whether ever the parliament made such a statute? The lawyers, also, and the judges themselves, may differ about the sense of some passages in those statutes, and some may be of one mind, and some of another; is the statute, therefore, counterfeit, or is it not obligatory to the subject? Cambden's or Lily's Grammar may be misprinted, or the writings of Cicero, Virgil, or Ovid, which were written before the Gospel, and yet we are past all doubt that the writings are not forged.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(517.) It is sometimes said that questions of genuineness are matters of mere idle curiosity, and that authenticity is alone of importance. In an historical work especially, what we want to know is, not by whom it is written, but whether the narrative which it contains is true. This last, no doubt, is our ultimate object; but it not unfrequently happens that, for the purpose of deciding it, we have to consider the other point; since the genuineness is often the best guarantee of the authenticity. How entirely would it change our estimate of Xenophon's "Anabasis," were we to find that it was composed under the name of Xenophon by a Greek of the time of the Antonines? No works are more valuable for history than autobiographies; and when we come upon a document claiming any such character, it is of great importance to see whether, upon examination, the character is sustained or no. Given the genuineness of such a work, and the authenticity follows almost as a matter of course, unless it can be shown that the writer is unveracious, and wished to deceive. Rationalists have not failed to perceive the force of this reasoning with respect to the Pentateuch; and hence their laborious efforts to disprove its genuineness.

—*Rawlinson.*

IV. *ITS AUTHENTICITY.*

(518.) The Papists receive the Scriptures on the authoritative, infallible judgment of their own church, that is, the Pope; and I receive it as God's perfect law, delivered down from hand to hand to this present age, and know it to be the same book which was written by the prophets and apostles, by an infallible testimony of rational men, friends and foes, in all ages. And for them that think that this lays all our faith on uncertainties, I answer, 1st, Let them give us more certain grounds. 2d, We have an undoubted, infallible certainty of the truth of this tradition, as I have often showed. He is mad that doubts of the certainty of William the Conqueror's reigning in England, because he hath but human testimony. We are certain that the statutes of this land were made by the same parliaments and kings that are mentioned to be the authors; and that these statutes which we have now in our books are the same which they made; for there were many copies dispersed. Men's lands and estates were still held by them. There were multitudes of lawyers and judges, whose calling lay in the continual use of them; and no one lawyer could corrupt them, but his antagonist would soon tell him of it, and a thousand would find it out. So that I do not think any man doubteth of the certainty of these Acts being the same as they pretend to be. And in our case about the Scriptures, we have much more certainty, as I have shown. These copies were dispersed all over the world, so that a combination to corrupt them in secret was impossible. Men judged their hopes of salvation to lie in them, and therefore would surely be careful to keep them from corruption, and to see that no other hand should do it. There were thousands of ministers whose office and daily work it was to preach those Scriptures to the world, and therefore they must needs look to the preserving of them; and God was pleased to suffer such abundance of heretics to arise, perhaps of purpose for this end, among others, that no one could corrupt the Scriptures, but all his adversaries would soon have catched him in it: for all parties, of each opinion, still pleaded the same Scriptures against all the rest, even as lawyers plead the law of the land at the bar against their adversaries. So that it is impossible that in any main matter it should be depraved. What it may be in a letter or a word, by the negligence of transcribers, is of no great moment. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(519.) Mr. Paine, after the example of many others, endeavours to discredit the Scriptures by representing the number of hands through which they have passed, and the uncertainty of the historical evidence by which they are supported.

"It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us," he says, "whether such of the writings as now appear under the names of the Old and New Testament are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them; or whether they added, altered,

abridged, or dressed them up." It is a good work which many writers have undertaken, to prove the validity of the Christian history, and to show that we have as good evidence for the truth of the great facts which it relates, as we have for the truth of any ancient events whatever. But if, in addition to this, it can be proved that the Scriptures contain internal characteristics of Divinity, or that they carry in them the evidence of their authenticity, this will at once answer all objections from the supposed uncertainty of historical evidence.

Historians inform us of a certain valuable medicine called Mithridate, an antidote to poison. It is said that this medicine was invented by Mithridates, king of Pontus; that the receipt of it was found in a cabinet, written with his own hand, and was carried to Rome by Pompey; that it was translated into verse by Damocrates, a famous physician; and that it was afterwards translated by Galen, from whom we have it. Now, supposing this medicine to be efficacious for its professed purpose, of what account would it be to object to the authenticity of its history? If a modern caviller should take it into his head to allege that the preparation has passed through so many hands, and that there is so much hearsay and uncertainty attending it, that no dependence can be placed upon it, and that it had better be rejected from our Materia Medica,—he would be asked, Has it not been tried, and found to be effectual; and that in a great variety of instances? Such are Mr. Paine's objections to the Bible, and such is the answer that may be given him.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

(520.) I know that my learned antagonist, according to the policy of his communion, will call upon me to prove the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred Scriptures. He says we are indebted to Romanism for the sacred Scriptures, and that, if there had been no Roman Catholic Church, we should not have had the sacred Scriptures. Now, never be deceived by such gross fallacy. No man in this audience is likely to be deceived by subtilties and scholastic sophisms. There were many other Churches besides the Roman Catholic. There were the Waldenses; there were the Greek Churches; the Armenian, the Syrian Churches. There were many other Churches besides the Roman Catholic Church, the most corrupted of all churches of the world. Suppose now that there is at Hammersmith a water company. Suppose I was anxious to have my bucket filled with water, and made application; but suppose the water company came to me, and said, "Sir, you shall have no water from us; we refuse to give it you; or, if you do take our water, you must wear our livery, use our buckets, and observe that there is no water in the universe save with us." What would be my reply at the moment? "Why, gentlemen," I should naturally say, "there is the Grand Junction Company; there is the London Water Company; there is the Middlesex Water Company; there are five or six other companies, and I shall just take the liberty of dipping my bucket down into their streams, and fill it from them. So that I can turn away at once from you, if you keep to these terms, and yet shall be able to have abundance of water; I have only to go to the next water company, and I shall find an ample supply." Now, just so is it with the Bible and the Roman Catholic Church. My antagonist comes forward, and he says, You shall have no living waters from *our* company, the Roman Catholic hierarchy; we debar you from that privilege; or, if you do take them, you must just give us the credit of being infallible and unerrable, &c., &c. I will concede no such magnificent assumptions; I will just go to some other ecclesiastical water company contemporary with you, and I will fill my heart with living streams from them, and you shall not have the credit of having given me one particle.

—*Cumming.*

(521.) Take away the key-stone, and the arch will fall a heap of ruins. There will be the same stones there, but they will be scattered in confusion, and useless for any practical purpose. You may admire the Bible, you may praise its poetry, and you may say its precepts are truthful, loving, and good; but if you doubt its authenticity, you render it powerless for that for which it was given—namely, to save the souls of men. —*Aubrey Price.*

V. *AUTHORSHIP OF ITS BOOKS.*

(522.) The author's name (probably Samuel) is concealed, neither is it needful it should be known; for even as a man that has a piece of gold that he knows to be weight, and sees it stamped with the king's image, cares not to know the name of that man who minted or coined it: so we, seeing this Book to have the superscription of Cæsar, the stamp of the Holy Spirit, need not to be curious to know who was the penman thereof.

—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(523.) I meet men who do not believe John wrote John's Gospel. Well, what matters it whether he did or not? There is a forest in England, it is said, which William the Conqueror planted; but what do I care whether he planted it or not? If I can ride through it, why should I care who planted it? There are the trees, and there is the shade; and if I can only enjoy the benefits of them that is enough. Some men say that the Psalms of David are not inspired. I will not now dispute whether they are inspired or not; but I know that no other such hymnals ever went sounding on through three thousand years of the world's history, developing power and sweetness as they went. They sang, and taught the world to sing. If they are not inspired they have an admirably good substitute for inspiration. —*Beecher.*

VI. *VALUELESSNESS OF THE "HIGH CRITICISM" BY WHICH THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF VARIOUS BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE ARE SOUGHT TO BE DISPROVED.*

(524.) There is no point in which plain folks are more apt to be ridiculed by those coteries which give themselves fine literary airs than the judgment formed upon the works of great writers. To read the criticisms which constantly appear in periodicals of high literary authority, one might think that admiration is a faculty to be exercised only within certain limits fixed by these critical autocrats, and that any departure either to the right or to the left from the line of their ordinances, is a fault against good taste, and a proof of defective education. Nevertheless, it appears that critics cannot agree among themselves even upon such a question as, whether a certain poem is or is not in the manner of

Milton, and is or is not a poem of merit. The other day, Professor Henry Morley wrote to the "Times" announcing that he had discovered an unpublished poem by the great Puritan bard, and sending the piece to be given to the world. It was found on a blank leaf of a volume of Milton's poems in the British Museum, and bore, as Mr. Morley avowed, the signature of "J. M." The Professor was delighted with his discovery, as professors are apt to be, and the critics began to express their opinions of it. One able, wary, and often severe literary censor laid emphasis upon the "subtle melody" pervading the lines, pointedly indicating that none but a great poet could have written them. Lord Winchilsea, however, himself a poet in a small way, boldly declared the poem to be rubbish, maintaining that Milton, unless actually in dotage, could not have composed it. Hereupon enters on the stage the assistant librarian of the British Museum, who affirms that the lines are not Milton's at all, that the signature is not "J. M.," but "P. M.," and that the handwriting is not Milton's. Professor Morley, with the warmth of a discoverer, holds to his point, and alleges the signature to be that of John Milton. Professor Masson, the biographer of Milton, writes to say that he has known the lines for years, but doubts whether they are Milton's. The controversy is of very slight importance, except as it brings out the perfect inability of critics to agree upon any standard whereby questions of literary merit may be tried. If you coin a sovereign in brass, every goldsmith in London will tell you that it is not gold. But when you go with a poem purporting to be Milton's to famous critics, one pronounces it melodious and beautiful, another declares that the man who wrote it must have lost his faculties, while a third affirms positively that the poet to whom it is imputed never saw it. And yet, though criticism is the vaguest and most vacillating of sciences—if it deserves to be in any sense called a science—no professor of chemistry, anatomy, or optics, dreams of taking so high and grand a tone as the literary critic. Each small critical Jove plays upon his own scrannel pipe, and each imitates thunder. The moral of this debate is important. If English-speaking critics, the countrymen of Milton, sitting in judgment two hundred years after his death, cannot decide whether a certain poem is his or not, what likelihood is there that English or German critics, judging Greek writings composed eighteen centuries ago, are able to determine whether an apostle might or might not have used an expression which we now find in a Gospel or Epistle?

—*Christian World*, July 24th, 1868.

VII. *TRANSLATIONS.*

1. The Bible admits of translation.

(525.) Of all books the Bible loses least of its force and dignity and beauty from being translated into other languages, wherever the translation is not erroneous. One version may indeed excel another; in that its diction may be more expressive, or simple, or more majestic: but in every version the Bible contains the sublimest thoughts uttered in plain and fitting words. It was written for the whole world, not for any single nation or age; and though its thoughts are above common thoughts, they are so as coming from the primal Fountain of Truth, not as having been elaborated and piled up by the workings of abstraction and reflection.

—*Guesses at Truth.*

2. Their value and use.

(526.) Translation it is that opens the window, to let in the light; that breaks the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that puts aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removes the cover of the well, that we may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered. Indeed, without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacob's well (which was deep) without a bucket or something to draw with; or as that person mentioned by Isaiah (xxix. 11) to whom when a sealed book was delivered with this motion, "Read this, I pray thee," he was fain to make this answer, "I cannot, for it is sealed."

The very meanest translation of the Bible in English contains the Word of God, nay, is the Word of God. As the king's speech, which he uttered in parliament, being translated into French, Dutch, Italian, and Latin, is still the king's speech, though it be not interpreted by every translator with the like grace, nor peradventure so fitly for phrase, nor so expressly for sense, everywhere.

—*Translators of the English Version.*

(527). Bless God for the translation of the Scriptures. The Word is our sword; by being translated, the sword is drawn out of its scabbard. What use, alas, could a poor Christian that understands but one language, which his mother taught him, make of this sword when presented to him as it is sheathed in Greek and Hebrew? Truly, he might even fall a weeping with John at the sight of the sealed book, because he could not read in it (Rev. v. 4). Oh, bless God that hath sent, not angels, but men, furnished by the blessing of God on their indefatigable labours and studies, with ability to roll away the stone from the mouth of this Fountain!

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

3. Are valuable in spite of their inaccuracies and variations.

(528.) There are many texts cited in the New Testament from the Septuagint, where it differeth from the Hebrew; wherein it is utterly uncertain to us whether Christ and His apostles intended to justify absolutely the translation which they used, or only to make use of it as that which then was known and used for the sake of the sense which it contained. If they absolutely justify it, they seem to condemn the Hebrew, so far as it differeth. If not, why do they use it, and never blame it? It seemeth that Christ would hereby tell us, that the sense is the gold, and the words but as the purse; and we need not be over-curious about them, so we have the sense. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. Excellence of our English version.

(529.) No translation our own country ever yet produced hath come up to that of the Old and New Testament; and I am persuaded that the translators of the Bible were masters of an English style much fitter for that work than any we see in our present writings; the which is owing to the simplicity that runs through the whole. —*Swift.*

(530.) The Bible is unquestionably the richest repository of thought and imagery, and the best

model of pure style, that our language can boast. It would be difficult to discover in its pages a single instance of affected or bombastic phraseology; a circumstance probably arising from the subdued and chastened tone of feeling with which the translation was executed, and a remarkable specimen therefore of the influence exerted on diction by the moral qualities of the writer. Yet its very simplicity and unostentatious character are attributes which render it distasteful, in a critical point of view, to sophistical and pretending minds. —*W. B. Clulow.*

(531.) Who will say that the uncommon beauty and marvellous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the strongholds of heresy in this country? It lives on the ear like music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness. Nay, it is worshipped with a positive idolatry, in extenuation of whose gross fanaticism its intrinsic beauty pleads availingly with the man of letters and the scholar. The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its phrases. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representative of his best moments; and all that there has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good, speaks to him forever out of his English Bible. It is his sacred thing, which doubt has never dimmed and controversy never soiled. It has been to him all along as the silent, but oh, how intelligible, voice of his guardian angel; and in the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible.
—*F. W. Faber (Roman Catholic): Quoted in* "Dublin Review," *June*, 1853.

(532.) The peculiar genius, if such a word may be permitted, which breathes through it, the mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the preternatural grandeur, unequalled, unapproached, in the attempted improvements of modern scholars, —all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man, and that man William Tyndale.
—*J. A. Froude:* "History of England."

VIII. *THE BIBLE AND OTHER AUTHORITIES.*

1. The Church.

(533.) The Scripture is the sun; the Church is the clock, whose hands point us to and whose sound tells us the hours of the day. The sun we know to be sure, and regularly constant in his motion: the clock, as it may fall out, may go too fast or too slow. We are wont to look at, and listen to the clock, we know the time of the day; but, where we find the variation sensible, to believe the sun against the clock, not the clock against the sun. As, then, we would condemn him of much folly that should profess to trust the clock rather than the sun; so we cannot but justly tax the miscredulity of those who will rather trust to the Church than to the Scripture. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(534.) He that cannot see this sun by its own light, may in vain think to go to find it with candle and lantern of human testimony and argument; not that these are wanting, or useless. The testimony of the *Church* is highly to be reverenced, because to it are these oracles of God delivered, to be kept as a sacred *depositum* and charge; yea, it is called *the pillar and ground of truth* (1 Tim. iii. 15), and the *candlestick* (Rev. i. 12), from whence the light of the Scriptures shines forth into the world; but who will say, that the proclamation of a prince hath its authentickness from the pillar it hangs on in the market cross? or that the candle hath its light from the candlestick it stands on? The office of the Church is *ministerial*, to publish and make known the Word of God; but not *magisterial* and absolute, to make it *Scripture*, or unmake it, as she is pleased to allow or deny her stamp. This were to send God to man for His hand and seal; and to do by the Scriptures, as *Tertullian* saith in his *Apology* the heathens did with their gods, who were to pass the senate, and gain their good-will before they might be esteemed deities by the people.
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

2. Conscience.

(535.) Scripture, being the Word of God, has sometimes directly, sometimes almost unconsciously, but still really, been recognised by the Church in all ages throughout all Christendom as the guide of life. This office Scripture holds, not as the rival, but as the instructor and assistant of the conscience and the reason. God's other lights are not extinguished, but made to burn all the brighter, and give a truer guidance to man, when quickened by the Word. The written Word is like the stream of pure oxygen causing the dim natural light on which it is poured to burn up with a brightness and clearness which seems almost supernatural. The office, then, of the Word of God, is to make the conscience an enlightened Christian conscience—the reason an enlightened Christian reason. —*Tait.*

(536.) "The distinct uses of Holy Scripture, in all that relates to morals and of natural conscience, may be illustrated by the comparison of a sun-dial and a clock. The clock has the advantage of being always at hand, to be consulted at any hour of the day or night; but then the clock is liable to go wrong, and vary from the true time. And it has no power in itself of correcting its own errors, so that these may go on increasing to any extent, unless it be from time to time regulated by the dial, which is alone the unerring guide. Thus our consciences are liable to deceive us even to the greatest extent, or to give wrong judgment, if they are not continually corrected by a reference to the Word of God, which alone, like His sun in the natural world, affords an infallible guide."
—*Quoted by Goulburn.*

3. Reason.

(537.) The telescope, we know, brings within the sphere of our own vision much that would be undiscoverable by the naked eye; but we must not the less employ our eyes in making use of it, and we must watch and calculate the motions and reason on the appearances of the heavenly bodies, which are visible only through the telescope, with the same care we employ in respect to those seen by the naked eye. And an analogous procedure is requisite if we would derive the intended benefit from the pages of inspiration, which were designed, not to save us the trouble of inquiring and reflecting,

but to enable us on some points to inquire and reflect to better purpose; not to supersede the use of our reason, but to supply its deficiencies.
—*Whately.*

4. **Modern science.**

(538.) It may be said that as *space* is the sphere in which Divine power is displayed, *time* is the sphere for displaying Divine wisdom. And as power demands vast depths of space, immense fields where suns and stars may be spread out in their mighty masses and movements, so wisdom demands lengthened eras of time to unfold its plans in all their gradual developments and wonderful combinations. Over all these developments the mind of Christ presides. He is the God of history, and His wisdom is especially seen in the way in which the truths of His Word open out with a light suited to the requirements of every period. We do not speak of prophecies which meet their fulfilment, but of principles which spring forth to guide men, as the star came kindling out of the sky to point the way to those whose hearts were feeling after the world's Redeemer.

No crisis has ever yet appeared when Christ's Word was not ready to take the van of human movement. The truths in their particular application may have lain unmarked, or revealed themselves only to a few sentinels watching for the dawn, till some great turn in the life of humanity comes, and then the principles of freedom and right, and universal charity shine out so clear and undoubted, that men wonder at their past blindness. They were there centred in the life and death of the Son of God, and His wisdom is seen both in having deposited them ages ago, and in bringing them out to view at the fitting season. When so it is, we need not fear any want of harmony between the word of Christ and the progress of science. It is a subject that troubles not a few, but, if they would only wait in calmness, the wisdom of Christ will appear in this also, and God's revelation will be seen to step across the burning shares in its path, without the seeming consciousness of an ordeal. It was never Christ's intention to reveal scientific truth in His Word; but He has left ample verge and scope for it. The indentations of the two revolving wheels will be found to fit, whenever they really come into contact; and the only thing broken will be the premature human harmonisings which are thrust in between them. —*Ker.*

(539.) One wonders how the men who now assail our faith can hope for success where Hobber and Bolingbroke, Voltaire and Rousseau, David Hume and Gibbon, giants in genius and in intellect, totally failed. Christians, possessing their souls in patience and peace, may calmly contemplate the puny assaults of modern infidelity. There is little in these to fill our camp with alarm, or to make its Elis tremble for the ark of God. Assailing the faith from new ground, infidelity undertakes to prove the Bible false from its alleged discrepancy with the phenomena of nature and the discoveries of science. But a few years, we doubt not, will show that though she has changed her ground, she has not changed her doom. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, and the Lord shall have them in derision. Science may, as science has already done, guide us to a sounder understanding of some things in the Word of God. While she corrects any mistake into which the interpreters of Scripture have fallen, there is nothing to dread. Why do the heathen rage? The only result of using the facts of science to undermine the foundations of religion, will resemble that wrought by some angry torrent when, sweeping away soil, and sand, and rubbish, it lays bare, and thereby makes more plain, the solid rock on which the house stands, unmoved and unmovable. —*Guthrie.*

IX. *ITS FUNCTION AND PURPOSE.*

(540.) It is never forgotten that we are moral agents; that we have powers to be disciplined and cultivated, and that our grand business here is not to gratify our curiosity, but to secure our salvation. Would not all the essential purposes of a revelation be answered, if it would enable us to secure the salvation of our souls? Should it be a serious objection to it if, while it did this, it did not also cast light on a thousand other points, however interesting and important they might be? And should we reject it, and spurn it, because there are many things which it leaves in the dark; many questions which are unanswered? Revelation to us is not like the broad and clear sun that sheds down its rays on the spread-out landscape, covered with smiling fields, and flocks, and hamlets; disclosing each tree, and hill, and house, and the winding course of each rivulet; it is, to use an illustration suggested by another, like the lighthouse that gleams on a dark and stormy coast, to reveal the haven to the ocean-tossed mariner. "It shines afar over the stormy ocean, only penetrating a darkness which it was never intended to expel." The mariner can see that light clearly. It guides him. It cheers him when the tempest beats around him, and when the waves roll high. It shows him where the port is. It assures him that if he reaches that spot, he is safe. It is all that he wants from that shore now, amid the darkness of the night, to guide him. True, it is not a sun; it does not dissipate all the darkness; "it is a mere star, showing nothing but itself, perhaps not even its own reflection on the waters." But it is enough. There it stands, despite the storm and the darkness, to tell the mariner just what he wishes to know, and no more. It has saved many a richly-freighted bark, and all that he needs is that it will save his own. It tells him there is a haven there, and that is all he wants; though it leaves him all uninformed about everything else. Beyond the distance where it throws its beams, all is midnight. On a thousand questions, on which curiosity might be excited, it casts no light whatever. "The cities, the towns, the green fields, the thousand happy homes, which spread along the shores, to which it invites him, it does not reveal." On a calmer sea, curiosity would be glad to know all about that land on which that light stands, and to anticipate the time when, safe from danger, the feet might range over those fields "beyond the swelling flood." And so, too, all is dark in reference to that stormy expanse over which the mariner has sailed, and all around him, as well as on the land to which he goes; but shall he therefore reject the aid of that light because it discloses no more? shall he refuse its assistance in guiding his vessel into port, because it does not disclose to him all that is in that land, or shed a flood of day on the heavens above him, and on all that stormy ocean on which he is embarked?

So is it in respect to the Gospel. Man too is on a stormy ocean—the ocean of life, and night is very dark. There are tempests that beat around us; under-currents that would drift us into unknown seas; rocks that make our voyage perilous. The Gospel is a light "standing on the dark shore of eternity, just simply guiding us there." It reveals to us almost nothing of the land to which we go, but only the way to reach it. It does nothing to answer the thousand questions which we would ask about the world, but it tells how we may see it with our own eyes. It does not tell us all about the past—the vast ocean of eternity that rolled on countless ages before we had a beginning; about the government of God; about our own mysterious being; but it would guide us to God's "holy hill and tabernacle," where in His "light we may see the light," and when what is now obscure may become as clear as noonday. If these are correct views, then it follows that the Bible, as a revelation from God, was not designed to give us all the information which we might desire, nor to solve all the questions about which the human mind is perplexed, but to impart enough to be a safe guide to the haven of eternal rest. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

(541.) Formerly the Bible was regarded as an encyclopædia—as a guide to all knowledge. Devout men have sought for authority in texts for every phase of conduct. The impression has prevailed that there was no element in life for which there was not some authoritative direction in the Word of God. It is true that indirectly the Bible touches every human interest, but it is not an encyclopædia, nor a universal text-book of knowledge. By enlightening the understanding, purifying the conscience, and changing the heart, truth prepares men for every function and department of life. But the Bible only attempts to touch the master-spring of character, and so to set men right with God, with themselves, and with their fellow-men. Having done that, it leaves them to work out the details of the various departments of life themselves.

Its office may be compared to a key which winds up a machine that has run down. It undertakes to bring man where he shall be qualified for all the duties of life. It does not undertake to teach everything that men do in the light; it merely furnishes the light to do what their circumstances and necessities require to be done. The Word of God is bread. Bread does not undertake to reap the harvest, or plough the field, or blast the rock, or delve in the mine, or fish in the sea, but it makes a man strong, so that he can do it.

"That is narrowing the Bible, and bringing it within a very small compass." I beg your pardon; it is not narrowing it at all. Is not the key that winds the clock the most important thing that you can bring to the clock? Is not the clock helpless without it? It is a little thing, it goes into a small hole, and in turning it makes but little noise; but, after all, it controls the whole economy of the clock. The clock is wound up by it. Now the Bible is the key that winds up, and sets in motion, and regulates all human life and conduct. —*Beecher.*

(542.) I hold that the Word of God as a guide in the formation of dispositions, in the regulation of conduct and character, in the founding of hope for this life and for the life which is to come, is a reliable guide, is a sufficient instructor, about which all honest men do in the main agree. But if you undertake to erect a cosmogony, and to say that the Bible lays down a perfect system, a complete scheme of philosophy; if you go beyond that, and claim that it prescribes a definite plan for a church, a church order, and a church government; and if you include in its economy moral philosophy in the form of theology, I say that the Word of God is not sufficient for these things; and men disagree about the Bible because they are undertaking to do with it what it was never intended to effect. Everything to its own function. A lancet for the vein—not for digging the soil; a telescope for the eye—not for sound; a cap for the head—not for the hands or feet. A table of logarithms in the sphere of morals would be a poor substitute for the Ten Commandments, but not worse than the Ten Commandments in navigation. Is an anchor not good because it will not travel like a carriage? Is a treatise on medicine not useful because it affords no instruction in geography or history? —*Beecher.*

X. *A PERFECT AND PLAIN RULE OF LIFE.*

(543.) If the Scriptures be an infallible rule, and "profitable for doctrine and instruction in righteousness;" *i.e.*, to teach us to believe and do; it follows of necessity that they are sufficiently plain in all things necessary to faith and a good life, otherwise they could not be useful "for doctrine and instruction in righteousness;" for a rule that is not plain to us in these things, in which it is necessary for us to be directed by it, is of no use to us; that is, in truth, it is no rule. For a rule must have these two properties; it must be perfect, and it must be plain. The Scriptures are a perfect rule, because the writers of them, being Divinely inspired, were infallible. And they must likewise be plain; otherwise though they be never so perfect, they can be of no more use to direct our faith and practice, than a sun-dial in a dark room is to tell us the hour of the day; for though it be never so exactly made, unless the sun shine clearly upon it, we had as good be without it. A rule that is not plain to us, whatever it may be in itself, is of no use at all to us, till it be made plain and we understand it. . . .

It is not necessary that a rule should be so plain that we should perfectly understand it at first sight; it is sufficient, if it be so plain that those of better capacity may, with due diligence, come to a true knowledge of it, and those of a more ordinary capacity by the help of a teacher. Euclid's "Elements" is a book sufficiently plain to teach a man geometry; but yet not so plain that any man at first reading should understand it perfectly; but that, by diligent reading, and steady attention of mind, a man of extraordinary sagacity may come to understand the principles and demonstrations of it; and those of a more ordinary capacity, with the help of a teacher, may come to the knowledge of it. So, when we say that the Scriptures are plain in all things necessary to faith and a good life, we do not mean that every man, at first hearing or reading of these things in it, shall perfectly understand them; but, by diligent reading and consideration, if he be of good apprehension and capacity, he may come to a sufficient knowledge of them; and if he be of a meaner capacity, and be willing to learn, he may, by the help of a teacher, be brought to understand them without any great pains; and such teachers

God hath appointed in His Church for this very purpose, and a succession of them to continue to the end of the world.

In a word, when we say the Scriptures are plain to all capacities in all things necessary, we mean, that any man of ordinary capacity, by his own diligence and care, in conjunction with the helps and advantages which God hath appointed, and in the due use of them, may attain to the knowledge of everything necessary to his salvation; and that there is no book in the world better fitted to teach a man any art or science, than the Bible is to instruct men in the way to heaven; and it is every man's fault if he be ignorant of anything necessary for him to believe, or do, in order to his eternal happiness. —*Tillotson*, 1620–1694.

XI. *ITS INTERPRETATION.*

(544.) In the waters of life, the Divine Scriptures, there are shallows, and there are deeps; shallows where the lamb may wade; and deeps where the elephant may swim. If we be not wise to distinguish, we may easily miscarry; he that can wade over the ford, cannot swim through the deep; and, if he mistake the passage, he drowns. What infinite mischief hath arisen to the Church of God from the presumption of ignorant and unlettered men, that have taken upon them to interpret the most obscure Scriptures, and pertinaciously defend their own sense! How contrary is this to all practice, in whatsoever vocation! In the tailor's trade, every man can stitch a seam, but every man cannot cut out a garment; in the sailor's art every one may be able to pull at a cable, but every one cannot guide the helm; in the physician's profession, every gossip can give some ordinary receipts upon common experience, but to find the nature of the disease, and to prescribe proper remedies from the just grounds of art, is proper to the professor of that science, and we think it absurd and dangerous to allow every ignorant mountebank to practise; in matters of law, every plain countryman knows what belongs to distraining, impounding, replevying, but, to give sound counsel to a client in a point of difficulty, to draw conveyances, to plead effectually, and to give sound judgment in the hardest cases, is for none but barristers and benchers; and shall we think it safe, that in divinity which is the mistress of all science, and in matters which may concern the eternal safety of the soul, every man should take upon him to shape his own coat, to steer his own way, to give his own dose, to put and adjudge his own case? The old word was, That artists are worthy to be trusted in their own trade. Wherefore hath God given to men skill in arts and tongues? Wherefore do the aptest wits spend their time and studies from their infancy upon these sacred employments, if men altogether inexpert in all the grounds, both of art and language, can be able to pass as sound a judgment in the depths of theological truths, as they? How happy were it, if we could all learn, according to that word of the apostle, to keep ourselves within our own line!

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(545.) Compare Scripture with Scripture. False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(546.) The Scripture is to be its own interpreter, or rather the Spirit speaking in it; nothing can cut the diamond but the diamond; nothing can interpret Scripture but Scripture. —*Watson*, 1696.

(547.) An over-subtle scrutiny of the words of a sentence sometimes impairs our perception of its force. Nor are the inspired sentences of Holy Scripture exceptions to this rule. As by dissecting a dead body in an anatomy school you could gain no notion of the contour, general bearing, and power of the living body; as by bringing a microscope to bear upon the vein of an insect's wing you could form no just conception of that insect, as it disports itself in the summer sun; so by entering with too great minuteness into the language of Holy Scripture, it is possible to miss (or at least to apprehend but feebly) its great purport. —*Goulburn.*

(548.) As many locks, whose wards differ, are opened with equal care by one master-key, so there is a certain comprehensive view of Scriptural truth which opens hard places, solves objections, and happily reconciles, illustrates, and harmonises many texts, which to those who have not this master-key, frequently styled "the analogy of faith," appear little less than contradictory to each other. When we obtain this key, we shall be sure to obtain the right sense. —*Leifchild.*

(549.) There are many parts of Scripture that are, as it were, locks, and that are never opened except by some special key. We may read them, and read them again, just as a man may turn a padlock in his hand over and over, but it is not until some precise mood comes, it is not until definite experience is given to us, it is not until we pierce the Scripture with some particular line of thought, that it opens to us, and a passage that before has seemed simple and of no remarkable significance, is disclosed to us with such richness and with such wondrous beauty, that we are filled with surprise. It required just that peculiar train of experience. No other would have fitted the lock. A hundred keys may be brought to a door, but only one of all is good for anything. The others are keys, but they will not open that lock or that door. You may go with a hundred moods to different parts of Scripture, and there shall be but one that is fit to at all interpret any particular part. —*Beecher.*

(550.) There are thousands of men who enter the Word of God, the library of Divine knowledge, and find nothing. They bring nothing, and therefore they cannot find anything. This interprets the mystic saying, "Unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away." A man may be able to read, and there may be wondrous stores, and yet to him there may be nothing, if he is looking for something besides that which is provided. If he is looking for amusing tales, or for literature that shall stimulate a low taste, and give it gratification, when he comes out, he will know almost nothing of the treasures within. So men read the Bible, and think it a dry book. It is not a book opened to them. That is, they are not opened up to it. With strange wonder children behold the grandmother and grandfather who sit lost and rejoicing in a kind of rapture over God's Word; and stealthily they look to see what it is, and where it is; and when the grandfather or grandmother is gone, they open the book to the right page, and read the contents, and marvel that there is nothing there. The

father reads it, and tears run down his cheek: the child reads it, and no tear runs down its cheek. There are psalms over which they that have walked through trouble hang in perpetual rejoicing; others go to those same psalms, and to whom they are as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. There be men that find in God's Word all stores for the heart; and there be other men that, looking into that Word, find nothing at all. Men find what they bring—that, the interpretation of which they have within themselves. —*Beecher.*

XII. *TO BE READ BY ALL.*

1. Because it is addressed to all.

(551.) Suppose a letter were addressed to a son in a far-distant land by his anxious father resident in this country, what would that son understand by such a letter? He would, at once, understand by it that it was a communication of his father's sentiments, and feelings, and anxieties, to him; and that it was his immediate duty, as well as privilege, to peruse the letter, that by it he might learn and understand all the feelings and desires his parent cherished concerning him. *This Book* is a letter on a larger scale, sent down from the archives of heaven by God, our Gracious Father, beaming with the majesty of truth and paternal love. It is addressed, not to priests, nor to popes, nor to bishops, as such, but it is addressed to "*all* the faithful who are in Christ, to Greek also, and barbarian, Jews, and Gentiles, saints and sinners," and every one, without distinction of rank, of riches, possession, or of character. Every eye is called upon to read it, and every ear to hear, and every heart to feel, and all flesh to search, that all may find everlasting life. Let not priests plunder you, my Roman Catholic brethren, of the boon of the Eternal. —*Cumming.*

2 Because its saving truths are comprehensible by all.

(552.) Only by long and tedious study can we see in all their wonderful fulness the harmony and order of God's works in the vegetable kingdom. None but the highly educated man of science can appreciate, as it is possible for the human mind to appreciate, the marvellous oneness in variety displayed by the creative wisdom of God in the world of botany. But it is by no means necessary to be skilled in science, in order to make use of the plants which grow at our feet and to see their beauty. It is not in the least needful for a man to know the terminology and classifications of botany, in order to learn that plants are nourishing as food and beautiful to the eye. The peasant who is totally ignorant of all science does not the less benefit from the use, whether for medicine or food, of those vegetable productions which God has caused the earth to yield for his good. Though a man know not the Latin name of a single plant, yet a flower garden may be to him a scene of the most exquisite enjoyment; a woody dell, scent-laden with violet and hyacinth, may convey to his mind the most exalted notion of the wisdom and love of his Maker.

Exactly the same principle holds good in respect to revealed religion. Only the man of culture, who has gone through a laborious course of study, who has pursued his investigations to their source, can fully trace out and understand the detailed harmony of the various parts of the Word of God. In order to grasp a complete system of theology, much learning and still more labour in investigation are necessary. But, blessed be God, not the least learning, not the slightest superiority of intellect, is needful to discover and appropriate the leading truths of the Gospel. The way of salvation is so simple and easy that none need miss it. The road to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance for sin, is so plain that the most unlearned and ignorant may find it. —*Hooper.*

3. And notwithstanding that some wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.

(553.) It is too true, some wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction; and so do some, for want of care in eating, choke themselves with their bread; must all therefore starve for fear of being choked? Some hurt themselves and friends with their weapons, must therefore the whole army be disarmed, and only a few chief officers be allowed to wear a sword by their sides? Truly, if this be argument enough to seal up the Bible from being read, we must not only deny it to the meaner and more unlearned sort, but also to the great rabbis and doctors of the chair; for the grossest heresies have bred in the finest wits. Prodigious errors have been as much beholden to the sophistry of *Arrius*, as the ignorance of *Ælius*: so that the upshot of all will be this: the unlearned must not read the Scriptures, because they may pervert them through ignorance; nor the learned, because they may wrest them by their subtilty. Thus we see when proud men will be wiser than God; their foolish minds darken, till they lose the reason and understanding of men. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1667.

(554.) The Romish Church alleges, as an excuse for withholding the Bible from the people, that it is liable to be dangerously perverted by the ignorant and by heretics. The example of Jesus demolishes this excuse. What course did He take when Satan had cunningly perverted the holy text? Did He abstain from further quotation of Scripture? What would be thought of a military commander who, because the enemy had stolen from him two or three pieces of ordnance, and was now firing them at him, should desist on that account from all further use of his artillery? The fact that the enemy was in possession of those pieces, would only excite him to redouble his exertions with the guns which remained to him. In imitation of Jesus, Satan had presumed to take into his hands that mighty sword of the faithful, the Word of the Lord; but our Saviour did not on that account cast His sword away. This would have given the adversary an advantage indeed. Satan abused and perverted Scripture: but Jesus did not therefore cease to appeal to Scripture; He set us the example of meeting and curing the abuse of Scripture by the right use of it:—"It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

—*L. H. Wiseman.*

XIII. *HOW IT IS TO BE READ.*

1. Frequently.

(555.) Surely, if men had the spirit of the apostles, or of those blessed angels which desire to pry into the gospel of Christ, they would not misspend so much precious time in petty and fruitless studies, nor waste away that lamp of reason in their bosom

in empty and unnourishing blazes; but would set more hours apart to look into the patent of their salvation (which is the book of God), and to acquaint themselves with Christ beforehand, that when they come into His presence, they might have the entertainment of friends, and not of strangers. Men that intend to travel into foreign kingdoms with any advantage to their parts, or improvement of their experience, do, beforehand, season and prepare themselves with the language, with some topographical observations of the country, with some general notions of the manners, forms, civilities, governments of the natives there. In the Gospel of Christ we have, as it were, a map, a topographical delineation of those glorious mansions which in heaven are prepared for the Church; we have some rudiments of the heavenly language; in one word, we have abundantly enough, not only to prepare us for it, but to inflame all the desires of our soul unto it, even as exiles and captives desire to return to their native country. Now, then, if we no way regard to study it, or acquaint ourselves with it: if when we might have a sight of Christ in heaven, and every day have a blessed view of His face in the glass of His Gospel, we turn away our eyes and regard it not, we do as good as proclaim to all the world, that either our hopes of heaven are very slender, or our care thereof little or none at all.

(556.) Though the Scriptures were dictated by the Holy Spirit, and hold the lamp to knowledge and happiness, how many cast the precious charter behind their backs, or even trample it under their feet! "Though," as one expresses it, "God Himself has vouchsafed to commence author, how few will so much as give His work the reading!" The renowned Scipio Africanus hardly ever had Xenophon's writings out of his hand. Alexander the Great made Homer's poems his constant companion. St. Chrysostom was so fond of Aristophanes' comedies, that he even laid them under his pillow when he slept. Our matchless Alfred constantly carried "Boëthius de Consol. Phil." in a fold of his robe. Tamerlane (if I rightly remember) always carried about with him the "History of Cyrus." Bishop Jewel could recite all "Horace," and Bishop Sanderson all "Tully's Offices." The Italians are said to be such admirers of "Tasso," that the very peasants sing him by heart as they pursue their country labours. The famous Leibnitz could repeat, even in extreme old age, the greatest part of "Virgil;" and one of the popes is said to have learned English, purely for the sake of reading the "Spectator" in its original language. How warmly does Horace recommend the study of the Greek writers to the Roman youth! *Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.* How, then, ought Christians to study the Book of God? Beza, at upwards of eighty years of age, could repeat the whole of St. Paul's Epistles in the original Greek, and all the Psalms in Hebrew; and even more lately, the learned Witsius, at a very advanced period of life, could recite almost any passage of Scripture in its proper Hebrew or Greek, together with the contexts and criticisms of the best commentators. How will such persons rise in judgment against the negligent professors, the many superficial divines, and the flimsy infidels of the present day! Time has been, when the Word of the Lord was precious in this land, so precious that in the reign of Henry VIII. an honest farmer once gave a cart-load of hay for one leaf of St. James's Epistle in English. Now, indeed, through the goodness of God, the manna of His Word lies in abundance round our tents. But what is the consequence? Most of us are for reading any book, except that which can make us wise to salvation. We disrelish even the bread of life: I almost said we spurn it away with our feet. Hence our spiritual declensions. May we not address the generality of Christians, so called, in the words of Mr. Boston? "The dust on one hand, or the finery on the other, about your Bibles, is a witness now, and will at the last day be a witness, of the enmity of your hearts against Christ as a prophet."

2. Not merely as a duty, but as a necessity.

(557.) To read the Word is no ordinary duty, but the mother of all duty, enlightening the eyes and converting the soul, and creating that very conscience to which we would subject it. We take our meat, not by duty—the body must go down to dust without it—therefore we persevere, because we love to exist. So also the Word of God is the bread of life, the good of all spiritual action, without which the soul will go down—if not to instant annihilation—to the wretched abyss of spiritual and eternal death. —*Irving.*

3. Not for controversial purposes, but for personal profit.

(558.) There are many persons, of combative tendencies, who read for ammunition, and dig out of the Bible iron for balls. They read, and they find nitre and charcoal and sulphur for powder. They read, and they find cannon. They read, and they make port-holes and embrasures. And if a man does not believe as they do they look upon him as an enemy, and let fly the Bible at him to demolish him. So men turn the Word of God into a vast arsenal, filled with all manner of weapons, offensive and defensive. —*Beecher.*

(559.) The Bible is God's chart for you to steer by, to keep you from the bottom of the sea, and to show you where the harbour is, and how to reach it without running on rocks or bars.

If you have been reading it to gratify curiosity; or to see if you could not catch a universalist; or to find a knife with which to cut up a unitarian; or for the purpose of setting up or taking down a bishop; or to establish or overthrow any sect—if you have been reading it so, then stop. It is God's medicine-book. You are sick. You are mortally struck through with disease. There is no human remedy for your trouble. But here is God's medicine-book. If you read it for life, for growth in righteousness, then blessed is your reading; but if you read it for disputation and dialectical ingenuities, it is no more to you than Bacon's "Novum Organum" would be. —*Beecher.*

(560.) I say to every young man, "If you read from mere curiosity, or simply to construct a system, you do not know anything about the Bible. Nobody knows anything about it until it is to him what a chart is on a voyage, or what a medicine-box is in actual sickness." When a doctor is called to the bedside of his own sick child, he looks at his medical book with a very different spirit from that with which he studied it when he sat in the academy of science, and listened to lectures, and heard about

the relations of certain parts of the human body, and the effects of such and such medical agents, and the significance of such and such symptoms. These were all abstract matters then; but now that sickness has come into his own house, a practical question presents itself to him—namely, "How shall I meet this tide of fever? What shall I do?" He is in the wilderness, and there is no counsellor nor friend near. He has nothing to consult but his book. And how differently he goes to that book from what he did when he was simply studying medicine. It is his child; and if there is any succour he must find it. Now he reads for a purpose; and how sharply he reads, lest he may commit a mistake! And when he has cured her, with what confidence he goes to his neighbour's children when they are sick of the same disease! And after he has succeeded in curing them also by following the same directions, he says, "Talk against that book of medicine? I tell you it has carried me through many difficult places." It is the medicating power of the Bible that gives it its value. I do not ignore its beautiful historical statements; these things are admirable; but it is in the wisdom and power of God to the salvation of a man's innermost self, that its worth consists. It is its secret power on conscience and faith and hope. Men *know* about the Bible; they have *felt* it; and that is clear evidence, and evidence that cannot be taken away from them. *-Beecher.*

4. As a letter from our heavenly Father.

(561.) Read the Scripture, not only as a history, but as a love-letter sent to you from God, which may affect your hearts. —*Watson*, 1696.

5. With a consciousness and constant remembrance of our great need of it.

(562.) If any of you have hitherto been reading the Word of God as a book of curiosity, I beseech you to remember that it is not made known to you for the purpose of curiosity. It is made known to you to be your guide from sin, from sorrow, from earthly trouble, toward immortality, and toward glory. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Ah! the way a man reads the Bible—how much that depends upon his necessity! I have unrolled the chart of the coast many and many a time, particularly in these latter days, since there has been so much interest attached to it. I have gone along down my finger, and followed the shoals and depths in and out of this harbour and that, and imagined a lighthouse here and a lighthouse there, that were marked on the chart, and have looked at the inland country lining the shore, and it has been a matter of interest to me to be sure. But suppose I had been in that equinoctial gale that blew with such violence, and had had the command of a ship off the coast of Cape Hatteras, and the lighthouse had not been in sight, and my spars had been split, and my rigging had been disarranged, and my sails had been blown away, and I had had all I could do to keep the ship out of a trough of the sea, and I had been trying to make some harbour, how would I have enrolled the chart, and with two men to help me to hold it, on account of the rolling and staggering of the vessel, looked at all the signs and endeavoured to find out where I was.

Now when I sit in my house, where there is no gale, and with no ship, and read my chart out of curiosity, I read it as you sometimes read your Bible. You say, "Here is the headland of depravity, and there is a lighthouse—'Born again;' and here is the channel of duty." And yet every one of you has charge of a ship—the human soul. Evil passions are fierce winds that are driving it. This Bible is God's chart for you to steer by, to keep you from the bottom of the sea, and to show you where the harbour is, and how to reach it without running on rocks or bars.

It is the book of life; it is the book of everlasting life; so take heed how you read it. In reading it, see that you have the truth, and not the mere semblance of it. You cannot live without it. You die for ever unless you have it to teach you what are your relations to God and eternity. May God guide you away from all cunning appearances of truth set to deceive men, and make you love the real truth! Above all other things, may God make you honest in interpreting it, and applying it to your daily life and disposition! —*Beecher.*

6. With reverent docility.

(563.) Open the Bible with holy reverence as the Book of God, indited by the Holy Ghost. Remember that the doctrine of the New Testament was revealed by the Son of God, who was purposely sent from heaven to be the light of the world, and to make known to men the will of God, and the matters of their salvation. Bethink you well, if God should but send a book or letter to you by an angel, how reverently you would receive it! How carefully you would peruse it; and regard it above all the books in the world! And how much rather should you do so, by that book which is indited by the Holy Ghost, and recordeth the doctrine of Christ Himself, whose authority is greater than the angels! Read it not therefore as a common Book, with a common and irreverent heart; but in the dread and love of God the author.

Remember that it is the will and testament of your Lord, and the covenant of most full and gracious promises; which all your comforts, and all your hopes of pardon and everlasting life are built upon. Read it, therefore, with love and great delight. Value it a thousandfold more than you would do the letters of your dearest friend, or the deeds by which you hold your lands; or anything else of low concernment. If the law were sweeter to David than honey, and better than thousands of gold and silver, and was his delight and meditation all the day; oh, what should be the sweet and precious Gospel to us!

Remember that it is a doctrine of unseen things, and of the greatest mysteries; and therefore come not to it with arrogance as a judge, but with humility as a learner or disciple: and if anything seem difficult or improbable to you, suspect your own unfurnished understanding, and not the sacred Word of God. If a learner in any art or science, will suspect his teacher and his books, whenever he is stalled, or meeteth with that which seemeth unlikely to him, his pride would keep possession for his ignorance, and his folly were like to be unenviable. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(564.) One way of reading the Bible with advan-

tage is to pay it great homage; so that when we come to any part which we cannot connect with other passages, we must conclude that this arises from our ignorance, but that the seeming contrarieties are in themselves quite reconcilable.
—*Cecil*, 1740–1810.

(565.) When we read the Bible we must always remember that, like the holy waters seen by Ezekiel (chap. xlvii.), it is in some places up "to the ankles," in others, up "to the knees, in others," up "to the loins;" and in some, "a river" too deep to be fathomed, and that "cannot be passed over." There is light enough to guide the humble and teachable to heaven, and obscurity enough to confound the unbeliever. —*Cecil*, 1740–1810.

(566.) The Bible scorns to be treated scientifically. After all your accurate statements it will leave you aground. The Bible does not come round and ask our opinion of its contents. It proposes to us a constitution of grace, which we are to receive though we do not wholly comprehend it. Numberless questions may be started on the various parts of this constitution. Much of it I cannot understand, even of what respects myself; but I am called to act on it. And this is agreeable to analogy. My child will ask me questions on the fitness or unfitness of what I enjoin, but I silence him:—"You are not yet able to comprehend this; your business is to believe me, and obey me." —*Cecil*, 1740–1810.

(567.) The system of reasoning from our own conjectures as to the necessity of the Most High doing so and so, tends to lead a man to proceed from the rejection of his own form of Christianity to a rejection of revelation altogether. But does it stop here? Does not the same system lead naturally to Atheism also? Experience shows that that consequence, which reason might have anticipated, does often actually take place. —*Whately.*

7. Comprehensively and continuously.

(568.) Walk all up and down this Bible domain. Try every path. Plunge in at the prophecies and come out at the epistles. Go with the patriarchs, until you meet the evangelists. Rummage and ransack, as children who are not satisfied when they come to a new house, until they know what is in every room, and into what every door opens. Open every jewel-casket. Examine the skylights. For ever be asking questions. Put to a higher use than was intended the Oriental proverb, "Hold all the skirts of thy mantle extended when heaven is raining gold."

Passing from Cologne to Bonn on the Rhine, the scenery is comparatively tame. But from Bonn to Mayence it is enchanting. You sit on deck, and feel as if this last flash of beauty must exhaust the scene; but in a moment there is a turn of the river, which covers up the former view with more luxuriant vineyards, and more defiant castles, and bolder bluffs, vine-wreathed, and grapes so ripe that if the hills be touched they would bleed their rich life away into the bowels of Bingen and Hockheimer. Here and there there are streams of water melting into the river, like smaller joys swallowed in the bosom of a great gladness. And when night begins to throw its black mantle over the shoulder of the hills, and you are approaching disembarkation at Mayence, the lights along the shore fairly bewitch the scene with their beauty, giving one a thrill that he feels but once, yet that lasts him for ever. So this river of God's Word is not a straight stream, but a winding splendour—at every turn new wonders to attract, still riper vintage pressing to the brink, and crowded with castles of strength—Stolzenfels and Johannisberger as nothing compared with the strong tower into which the righteous run and are saved—and our disembarkation at last, in the evening, amid the lights that gleam from the shore of heaven. The trouble is that the vast majority of Bible voyagers stop at Cologne, where the chief glories begin.

The sea of God's Word is not like Gennesaret, twelve miles by six, but boundless; and in any one direction you can sail on for ever. Why then confine yourself to a short psalm, or to a few verses of an epistle? The largest fish are not near the shore. Hoist all sail to the winds of heaven. Take hold of both oars and pull away. Be like some of the whalers that go off from New Bedford or Portsmouth to be gone for two or three years. Yea, calculate on a lifetime voyage. You do not want to land until you land in heaven. Sail away, O ye mariners, for eternity. *Launch out into the deep.*
—*Talmage.*

(569.) A man of little leisure like the shepherd of Salisbury Plain may be glad to snatch for his morning meal a promise or a proverb, the verse of a psalm or a sentence from a gospel. But even the busiest man will find occasional opportunities for more extensive reading; and on some quiet evening or in the seclusion of the Sabbath, you could not do better than sit down to the Bible as you would to a theological treatise or a volume of Christian biography, with your mind made up to a deliberate and straightforward perusal. With this view you may select the history of Joseph, or Samson, or David, or Solomon; the Journeys of the Israelites; the Missionary Excursions of St. Paul; or you may resolve to master a century of Hebrew history, connecting with recorded events the contemporary prophecies, or you may determine to read right through a Gospel Narrative, or the whole writings of some apostle. And just as you find the charms of continuity and completeness enhance all the other attractions of an ordinary book—so, in perfect harmony with devout and reverential feelings, will the course of the narrative, the development of the leading idea, the progress of the argument, enlist your interest and quicken your perceptive powers. Indeed, there are many of the inspired writings with which it is hardly fair to deal otherwise. To take the analogous case,—when you have only a minute to spare, you may run your eye over a hymn of Cowper or a "Thought" of Pascal, and at once glean something memorable, but you would hardly think it justice to a Sermon of Horsley, or a Biography of Walton, or a Drama of Racine, to read it at the rate of two pages a day; yet this is the treatment usually given to the kindred compositions contained in the Sacred Volume.
—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

8. With prayerful meditation.

(570.) To some the Bible is uninteresting and unprofitable, because they read too fast. Amongst the insects which subsist on the sweet sap of flowers, there are two very different classes. One is remarkable for its imposing plumage, which shows in the sunbeams like the dust of gems; and as you watch its jaunty gyrations over the fields, and its minuet dance from flower to flower, you cannot help admir-

ing its graceful activity, for it is plainly getting over a great deal of ground. But, in the same field there is another worker, whose brown vest and business-like straightforward flight may not have arrested your eye. His fluttering neighbour darts down here and there, and sips elegantly wherever he can find a drop of ready nectar; but this dingy plodder makes a point of alighting everywhere, and wherever he alights he either finds honey or makes it. If the flower-cup be deep, he goes down to the bottom; if its dragon-mouth be shut, he thrusts its lips asunder; and if the nectar be peculiar or recondite, he explores all about till he discovers it, and then having ascertained the knack of it, joyful as one who has found great spoil, he sings his way down into its luscious recesses. His rival, of the painted velvet wing, has no patience for such dull and long-winded details. But what is the end? Why, the one died last October along with the flowers; the other is warm in his hive to-night, amidst the fragrant stores which he gathered beneath the bright beams of summer.

Reader, to which do you belong?—the butterflies or bees? Do you search the Scriptures, or do you only skim them? Do you dwell on a passage till you bring out some meaning, or till you can carry away some memorable truth or immediate lesson? or do you flit along on heedless wing, only on the look-out for novelty, and too frivolous to explore or ponder the Scriptures? Does the Word of God dwell in you so richly, that in the vigils of a restless night, or in the bookless solitude of a sick room, or in the winter of old age or exclusion from ordinances, its treasured truths would perpetuate summer round you, and give you meat to eat which the world knows not of? —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(571.) I think as there are always among violets some that are very much sweeter to us than others, so among texts there are some that are more precious to us than others. When I go to the Bible, it is not once in a hundred times that I ever read a whole chapter for my own devotions. I turn to Isaiah, for instance, and run my eye down, and, like one that goes out into the field to rest, I do not take the first spot that presents itself, but wait till I find a nook where the mosses are right, and the flowers are right, and the shrubs are right, and then sit down and feast my eyes on the beauties around me, and take great comfort. I wander along till I come to a passage which, though I cannot tell why, I read over, and over, and over again. One or two verses or sentences, perhaps, will linger in my head all day, like some sweet passage in a letter, or like some felicitous word spoken by a friend, coming and going, coming and going, all the time. I find often that one single text, taking possession of the mind in the morning, and ringing through it during the whole day, does me more good than the reading of a whole chapter. Sometimes, when I am hungry for Scripture reading, I go over one, or two, or three chapters; but it is because I want to, and I do it without thinking of doing it. But generally I am not inclined to take in so much. Frequently some one thing that Christ said fixes itself in my mind, and remains there from morning till night.

You may over-read. Persons want to be vigorous and strong, and they say, "To eat is the way to become so;" and they gorge their stomachs with food, and overlay their powers, and make themselves weak and stupid by excessive eating. And you may eat too much Bible as well as too much bread. —*Beecher.*

9. With appropriating faith.

(572.) Job uses the language of appropriation. He says, "*My* Redeemer." And all that we know, or hear, or speak of Him, will avail us but little, unless we are really and personally interested in Him as our Redeemer. A cold speculative knowledge of the Gospel, such as a lawyer has of a will or a deed, which he reads with no further design than to understand the tenor and import of the writing, will neither save nor comfort the soul. The believer reads it, as the will is read by the heir, who finds his own name in it, and is warranted by it to call the estate and all the particulars specified his own. He appropriates the privileges to himself, and says, the promises are mine; the pardon, the peace, the heaven, of which I read, are all mine. This is the will and testament of the Redeemer, of my Redeemer. The great Testator remembered me in His will, which is confirmed, and rendered valid by His death (Heb. ix. 16), and therefore I humbly claim, and assuredly expect, the benefit of all that He has bequeathed.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

XIV. *IN WHAT SPIRIT IT IS TO BE CONSULTED.*

(573.) When thou consultest with the Word, take heed thou comest not with a judgment pre-engaged to any party and opinion. He is not like to hold the scales even whose judgment is bribed beforehand. A distempered eye sees the object of that colour with which itself is affected; and a mind prepossessed, will be ready to impose its own sense upon the Word, and so loseth the truth by an overweening conceit of his own opinion. Too many, alas, read the Scriptures not so much to be informed by them, as confirmed in what already they have taken up. They choose opinions, as Samson his wife, because they please them, and then come to gain the Scriptures' consent.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(574.) The attitude of the human mind toward revelation should be precisely the same as toward nature. The naturalist does not attempt to mould the mountains to his patterns; and the theologian must not strive to pre-configure the Scriptures to his private opinions. The mountain is an *object* positive, fixed, and entirely independent of the eye that looks upon it; and that mass of truth which is contained in the Christian Scriptures is also an object, positive, fixed, and entirely independent of the individual mind that contemplates it. The crystalline humour of the eye is confessedly passive in relation to the mountain mass that looms up before it in majesty and in glory. It receives an impression and experiences a sensation, not mechanically or chemically indeed, as wax melts before fire, or as an alkali effervesces under an acid, yet inevitably and in accordance with the real and independent nature of the mountain. And the moral mind of man, in relation to the moral truth of God which is set over against it in revelation, should in like manner be recipient, and take an impression that issues inevitably from the nature and qualities of fixed and eternal truth. Neither in the instance of the eye nor of the mind is the function

that of authorship or origination; it is that of living recipiency and acquiescence. In the presence of both nature and revelation, man, as Lord Bacon phrases it, is a minister and interpreter, and not a creator and lord. —*Shedd.*

XV. *HOW IT IS TO BE TREATED BY US.*

1. It must be loved for its purity.

(575.) "Thy Word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loveth it." Hypocrites will now and then relish the comfort of the Gospel, be affected with the Word, because it speaks such good things to poor sinners: but God's children love the Word for its purity. 'Tis not comfort only must draw our love, but holiness. This argues the life and power of grace, when we would not have the law of God less strict than it is, but love it for this very reason, because it is strict and holy. You would not think a beggar loves you, because he likes your alms, but is loth to stay with you for your service, and live under the orderly government of your family. Most men's love to the Word is such, they delight in the comfort of it as an alms, but hate the duty of it as a task; they had rather let the duties of it alone; if it could be without danger. Oh, but when your heart consents to the purity of the law, and you would choose that life which it points out to you, rather than any life in the world, or the most absolute freedom that the heart of man can imagine, so that you love your Master the more because He has appointed such work; this is true affection to God and His Word. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

2. It must be diligently studied.

(576.) Prize the Scriptures, and be more diligent in hearing, reading, meditating on the blessed truths contained therein. The earth is the fruitful mother of all herbs and plants, yet it must be tilled, ploughed, harrowed, and dressed, else it brings forth little fruit. The Scriptures contain all the grounds of comfort and happiness; but we have little benefit, unless daily versed in reading, hearing, and meditation.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(577.) "*Search the Scriptures.*" Indeed were there not such an express word for this duty, yet the very penning of them, with the end for which they are writ considered, would impose the duty upon us. When a law is enacted by a prince or state, for their subjects to obey, the very promulgation of it is enough to oblige the people to take notice of it. Neither will it serve a subject's turn that breaks this law, to say he was ignorant of any such law being in force: the publication of it bound him to inquire after it. What other end have lawgivers in divulging their Acts, but that their people might know their duty? —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(578.) But you will say, "If we had so much time to spare as others, we would not be so unacquainted with the Scriptures: but alas, we have so much business to do, and our hands so full with our worldly callings, that we hope God will excuse us, though we have not so much knowledge of His word as others."

Is this thy plea that thou indeed meanest to use when thou comest to the bar, and art called to give thy answer to Christ thy Judge upon this matter? This is so far from mending the matter, that thou dost but cover one sin with another. Who gave thee leave thus to overlade thyself with the incumbrance of the world? Is not God the Lord of thy time? Is it not given by Him, to be laid out for Him? He allows thee indeed a fair portion thereof for the lower employments of this life; but did He ever intend to turn Himself out of all? This is as if the mariners, who are allowed by the merchant some trivial adventure for themselves, should fill the ship, and leave no stowage for his goods that pays the freight. Will it suffice him to say, There is no room left for his commodities? Or as if a servant, when his master asks why he neglected such a business committed to his care for dispatch, should answer, He was drunk, and therefore could not do it. "Why did you not read my Word, and meditate thereon?" will Christ say at that day. Darest thou then be so impudent as to say, "Lord, I was overcharged with the cares, and drunk with the love of the world, and therefore I could not?" Well, if this be the thief that robs thee of thy time, get out of his hands as soon as thou canst, lest it also rob thee of thy soul. The devil can desire no greater advantage against thee; he hath thee sure enough in his trap. He may better boast over thee, than Pharaoh could over Israel, "*He is entangled, he is entangled in the Wilderness of the World, and shall not escape my hands.*"

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(579.) Did men believe the Scripture to be the Word of God, and to contain matters of the highest importance to our everlasting happiness, would they neglect it and lay it aside, and study it no more than a man would do an almanack out of date, or than a man, who believes the attaining a philosopher's stone to be impossible, would study those books that treat of it? If men did believe that it contains plain and easy directions for the attaining of eternal happiness, and escaping eternal misery, they would converse much with it, make it their companion and their counsellor, "meditate in it day and night," read it with all diligence, and put in practice the directions of it.

So that whatever men pretend, it is plain, that those who neglect God and religion, and contradict the precepts of His Word by their lives, they do not firmly believe there is a God, nor that this book is the Word of God. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(580.) Not unfrequently the most precious things are the most difficult to attain. Iron, and coal, and gold, do not lie on the surface of the ground; they have to be sought for carefully, and with great trouble. The earth does not yield her choicest life-giving products—her corn, her wine, her oil—without much painstaking skill on the part of the husbandman. So with the Bible. Some of its highest truths by no means lie on the surface. They are there most certainly, and they are to be found; but they need patient investigation, and humble, prayerful thought, in order that they may be discovered.

—*Hooper.*

3. Must be used by us, as well as diffused.

(581.) Much praiseworthy zeal is expended in societies which have undertaken the business of enlightening the Gentile world; but is it not to be feared that while we are engaged, some in making, some in hearing, speeches on the subject of sending the Bible to the heathen; and while we are contributing our money and our influence to the promo-

tion of so blessed an object, we may be suffering the page of God's life-giving Word to remain unread in our own homes? To participate in giving the blessing to others while we refuse to appropriate it also to ourselves, is as though the adventurous traveller, plunging into a deep, dark cavern, should place in another's hand the torch on which his own safety and his own life depended, and should take his separate way heedless of the unseen danger which he might encounter, the subterranean river on the one hand, or the precipitous abyss on the other. The madness of such a one would be sense and reason compared with the insane folly of those who, while they minister the Word of God to the heathen, suffer not its rays to fall upon their own dark path. —*Salter*, 1840.

XVI. *ITS MYSTERIES, OBSCURITIES, AND DIFFICULTIES.*

1. Are not to be denied.

(582.) Those huge boulders which lie along the valley of Storo in the Tyrol, are of a granite unknown in the neighbourhood; they must have come from a great distance. Now it might be hard to explain the method by which they arrived in the valley, but it would be absurd to deny that they are there. Most unaccountable is the fact, but a very strong and stubborn fact it is, for there they lie, huge as houses, and yet perfectly alien to the country. There are truths in Scripture which puzzle us, we cannot understand their relation to other portions of revelation, they are mysteries, apparently alien to the spirit of other passages. What then? Suppose we cannot account for them, that does not alter the fact that there they are, and it would be extreme folly to deny their existence because they puzzle us. Rather let us find room for adoring faith where reason is lost in wonder.
—*Spurgeon.*

2. Do not extend to anything essential for us to know.

(583.) God has revealed great mysteries sufficient for saving faith, though not to satisfy rash curiosity. There is a knowledge of curiosity and discourse, and a knowledge of doing and performance. The art of navigation requires a knowledge how to govern a ship, and what seas are safe, what are dangerous by rocks and sands, and tempests, that often surprise those who sail to them: but the knowledge of the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea is not necessary. The mariner must be instructed in the nature and use of the compass, but a knowledge of the mysterious nature of the loadstone is not required of him. So, to believe savingly in Christ, we must know that He is the living and true God, and true man, that died for our redemption; but 'tis not necessary that we should know the manner of the union of His two natures. The discovery of the manner of Divine mysteries is not suitable to the nature of faith, for 'tis *the evidence of things not seen*; the obscurity of the object is consistent with the certainty of the assent to it: and 'tis contrary to the end of revelation; which is to humble us in the modest ignorance of Divine mysteries which we cannot comprehend, and to enlighten us in those things which are necessary to be known. The light of faith is as much below the light of glory, as 'tis above the light of nature.

3. To what they are due.

(1.) *To our ignorance.*

(584.) It is merely through our ignorance that the Scriptures seem contradictory. I thought myself once that some places were hardly reconcilable, which now I see do very plainly agree; plainly, I say, to them that understand the true meaning of the words. There are no human writings, but lie open to such conceptions of the ignorant. It is rather a wonder that the Scriptures seem not to you more self-contradicting, if you consider:—

1st. That they are written in another language, and must needs lose much in the translation, there being few words to be found in any language which have not divers significations.

2d. That it being the language also of another country, to men that know not the customs, the situation of places, the proverbial speeches and phrases of that country, it is impossible but many words should seem dark or contradictory.

3d. Also, that the Scriptures are of so exceeding antiquity, as no books else in the world are like them. Now, who knows not that in all countries in the world, customs and proverbial speeches and phrases alter; which must needs make words seem dark, even to men of the same country and language that live so long after. We have many English proverbs, which, if in after ages they should cease to be proverbs, and men finding them in our writings shall construe them as plain speeches, they would seem to be either false or ridiculous nonsense. The like may be said of alteration of phrases. He that reads but Chaucer, much more elder writers, will see that English is scarcely the same thing now as it was then.

Though the sacred languages have had no such great alterations, yet by this it may appear, that it is no wonder if to the ignorant they seem contrary or difficult. Do not mathematics and all sciences seem full of contradictions and impossibilities to the ignorant, which are all resolved and cleared to those that understand them? It is a very foolish audacious thing, that novices in divinity should expect to have all difficulties resolved presently, or else they will censure the Scriptures, and speak evil of the things they know not, instead of censuring themselves; when yet these men know, that in the easiest science, yea, or basest manufacture, they must have time to learn the reasons of them. It is usual with raw scholars in all kinds of studies, to say as Nicodemus did at first of regeneration, "How can these things be?" Methinks such frail and shallow creatures, as all men are, should rather be so sensible of their own incapacity and ignorance, as to be readier to take the blame to themselves than to quarrel with the truth.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(585.) What abundance of seeming contradictions in Scripture do rise up in the eyes of an ignorant infidel; as strange apparitions do to a distracted man, or as many colours before the inflamed or distempered eye. These self-conceited, ignorant souls do imagine all to be impossible which exceedeth their knowledge; and because they cannot see the sweet consent of Scripture, and how those places do suit and fortify each other, which to them seem to contradict each other, therefore they think no one else can see it; no, not God Himself. They are like an ignorant fellow in a watchmaker's

shop, that thinks nobody can set all the loose pieces together, and make a watch of them, because he cannot: when he hath tried many ways, and cannot hit it, he casts all by, and concludeth that it is impossible. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2.) *To our prejudices.*

(586.) The Bible never promises truth to the undevout and unbelieving. This being the case, we need not be surprised that he who opens it in a cavilling hypercritical spirit finds no beauty and sees no glory in it. We have read somewhere of an astronomer, who fancied one day he had made an extraordinary discovery. Looking at the sun through a telescope, he distinctly noticed a huge black body of some kind which seemed to overspread a large portion of its surface. Nor was that all. The mysterious object moved, and with something like awful rapidity. What could it be? Had some sudden and dreadful calamity befallen the orb of day? Was it being destroyed? The good man was alarmed and puzzled for a while. At last it struck him that it might be as well to examine his instrument. This he did, and the investigation soon proved fatal to the wonderful discovery. He found an insect on the glass! In like manner the difficulties which sceptics find in the Bible are very often in themselves. Let them examine the medium through which they look at the "Sun of Righteousness." The blots are on it, not in Him. —*T. K. Stevenson.*

(3.) *To our presumption.*

(587.) I feel no disposition to stumble at the mysteries of Revelation till I forget myself. He who ventures beyond his depth must be drowned. There are some truths in my own affairs which, however I state them to my children, must appear to them strange and incredible; could they be presented to the intellect of a fly, they must appear much more so. There is, however, some proportion between the intellect of a man and that of a fly, but no proportion at all between that which is finite and that which is infinite. In viewing, therefore, the scheme of redemption, I seem like one viewing a vast and complicated machine of exquisite contrivance: what I comprehend of it is wonderful, what I do not, is, perhaps, more so still.
—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(4.) *To our indolence.*

(588.) There is also much diligence necessary, as well as time and patience, before men can come to so much understanding in the heavenly mysteries, as to be able to resolve the difficulties that occur. If you stay never so long in Christ's school, and yet be truants and loiterers, and will not take pains, no wonder if you remain ignorant. And yet these men will expect that they should know all things, and be satisfied in the answer of every objection, or else they will suspect the truth of Christ. Will sitting still in Christ's school help you to learning? Do you look that He should teach you, when you will not take pains to learn what He teacheth? You know in law, in physic, in the knowledge of any of the sciences, or languages, no man can come to understand them, much less to defend them against all opposers, and to resolve all objections, without so long diligence and painstaking in his studies as the greatness of the work requires; and shall every young lazy student in theology, or every dull, unlearned professor, think to see through all Scripture difficulties so easily, or else will he suspect the truth which he should learn? —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. Why they are permitted.

(589.) Many people say, "Why does not the Bible settle a great many points which are perplexing to men?" They have an idea that a book which is inspired of God is to be a guide for the settlement of any moral questions that may arise in the lives of men, so that they shall not have the trouble of making inquiries on any subject which concerns their higher interests. You might as well say, "Why did not God make a garden behind every man's house, where all desirable plants should come up of their own accord, where weeds should be banished, and where everything should be in perfect order, without giving the owner any trouble?" It might as well be asked, "Why is not fruit provided with wings like birds, so that it might fly in through the window and set itself down on people's laps?" It would be just as reasonable to say, "What was the use of making things so that we should have to work in order to get them?" Many have the idea that, while things in this world were being made, they might just as well have been made plain to us as have been made obscure. But that is not God's creative idea. God meant that man should be for ever building himself, by thought, by feeling, by evolution; adapting himself to circumstances; sharpening this faculty and strengthening that faculty; lifting up and pulling down. It was the Divine intention that by an active process of education we should be developed from a lower to a higher state of being. In a world which is made on purpose to kill lazy folks, and to build up industrious people, in a world which has been made like a vast grinding-stone on which to polish and sharpen men by attritions, do you suppose God, in giving us the Bible, has given us a book that settles everything? Instead of being such a book, it is one which stirs men up, and requires them to form judgments of their own. —*Beecher.*

5. How to deal with them.

(590.) Common reason tells us that we must first have a general proof that Scripture is God's Word, and argue thence to the verity of the parts, and not begin with a particular proof of each part. It seems that you would argue thus: This and that text of Scripture are true, therefore they are God's Word. But reason telleth you that you should argue thus: This is God's Word, therefore it is true. If you set a boy at school to learn his grammar, will you allow him to be so foolish as to stay till he can reconcile every seeming contradiction in it, before he believe it to be a grammar, or submit to learn, and use its rules? Or, will you not expect that he first know it to be a grammar, and then make it his business to learn to understand it, and therein to learn to reconcile all seeming contradictions? And should he not in modesty and reason think that his master can reconcile that which may seem irreconcilable to him, and such unlearned novices as he is?

For my part I am fully resolved, that if my reason could reach to none of the matters revealed in Scripture, so as to see them in the evidence of the thing, yet if I once see the evidence of Divine revelation, I may well be assured that it is wholly

true, how far so ever it may transcend my reason; for I have reason to believe all that God revealeth and asserteth; and I have reason to acknowledge the imbecility of my reason, and its incompetency to censure the wisdom of God.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(591.) Consider, how easily God can evince the verity of those passages which you so confidently reject, and open your eyes to see that as plain as the highway, which now seems to you so contradictory or improbable; and then what will you have to say for your unbelief and arrogancy, but to confess your folly and sit down in shame? You know when any difficult case is propounded to you in any other matter, which you can see no probable way to resolve, yet, when another hath resolved it to your hands in a few words, it is presently quite plain to you, and you wonder that you could not see it before. You are as one who wearieth himself with studying to unfold a riddle, and when he hath given it over as impossible, another openeth it to him in a word; or, as I have seen boys at play with a pair of tarrying irons, when one hath spent many hours in trying to undo them, and casts them away as if it could not be done, another presently and easily opens them before his face; so when you have puzzled your brains in searching out the reasons of God's ways, and seeking to reconcile the seeming contradictions of His Word and say, "How can these things be?" in a moment can God show you how they can be, and make all plain to you, and make you even wonder that you saw it not sooner, and ashamed that you opened your mouth in unbelief. How plain is that to a man of knowledge, which to the ignorant seems impossible! If the certain event did not convince them, you should never persuade the ignorant vulgar, that learned men know so much of the motions of the planets, and can so long before tell the eclipse of sun or moon to a minute; but when they see it come to pass, they are convinced: thus can God convince thee of the verity of His Word, either by a merciful illumination, or by a terrible execution; for there is not a soul in hell but doth believe the truth of the threatenings of God, and the devils themselves believe, that would draw thee to unbelief.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

6. Are not to deter us from its study.

(592.) Many times when men do but hear, read, or think of some objection against the truth of God's revelations, which they cannot tell how to answer themselves, they presently begin to stagger at the whole truth, and question it on every such slight occasion. If any new difficulty arise in their way, they are in the case of Nicodemus; saying, "How can these things be?"

If men were as foolish and incredulous in the matters of the world, their folly would easily appear to all men. When a man hath studied physic seven years, or twenty years, he shall meet with many new difficulties and doubtful cases, and many old difficulties will never be overcome; and yet he will not, therefore, throw away all, and forsake his study or profession. Will a student in law give over all his study, upon every occurring difficulty or seeming contradiction in the laws? If any students in the universities should follow this example, and doubt of all that they have learned upon every objection which they are unable to answer, they would be ill proficients; or if every apprentice that is learning his trade, will forsake it every time that he is stalled and at a loss, he would be a long time before he set up shop; on this course, all men should lose all their time, lives, and labour, by doing all in vain, and undoing again, by going forward and backward, and so know nothing, nor resolve of anything.

It is most certain that all men are very imperfect in knowledge, and especially in the highest mysteries; and there is none so high as those in theology about God, and man's soul, and our redemption, and our everlasting state; and, doubtless, where men are so defective in knowledge, there must still be difficulties in their way, and many knots which they cannot untie.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

7. Are not to hinder us from exercising faith in Christ.

(593.) Many hesitate to yield themselves to Christ, because they cannot understand all that the Bible contains.

It admits not of question that there are in the Scriptures some "things hard to be understood"—deep and inscrutable problems which no human intellect can solve. This results necessarily from the weakness of our faculties, and the infinite nature of the subjects of which Revelation treats. It is to be expected that our feeble reason, which meets a thousand enigmas even in the affairs of this life, should find itself baffled and confounded whenever it attempts to grasp the mighty secrets of eternity. But "what is that to thee?" These mysteries belong only to the field of speculative truth—to those recondite matters of the celestial world which are wholly dissevered from thy present wants and duties. All that is practical, all that relates to the condition of man as a sinner, to the method of his recovery by the atoning death and justifying righteousness of Christ, and to the obligations which press upon him in these circumstances, is entirely plain and simple. How irrational is it for men to reject blessings of which they have a conscious need, and to disregard commands which they know and can comprehend, because there may be other points connected with them which their limited powers cannot fully explore! You would ridicule the folly of him who should refuse necessary food until he could trace out all the hidden processes of digestion and nutrition. Not less absurd are you in refusing to become religious because you cannot unravel all the mysteries of religion. Whatever obscurity may appear to your dim vision to hang over the higher realms of truth, the fact of salvation by faith in Christ is clear and intelligible to the weakest capacity. What madness, then, is it to turn away from the gracious offers of the Gospel, from the plain duties that are vital to your happiness, because the scheme of redemption which propounds those offers, and prescribes those duties, may involve other topics too vast for your comprehension! —*G. B. Ide.*

(594.) An emigrant is journeying across the great American desert to the land of gold and the clime of the sun. He is perishing with thirst. The scanty supply of water which he took with him has long been exhausted, and for many weary miles no spring or brook, and not even a stagnant pool left from the winter snows, has met the eye. At length, just as he is about to abandon all further effort, and

lie down in despair to die, his ear, rendered acute by suffering, catches the low, faint murmur of a distant stream. Hope and the love of life revive at the sound, and with all his remaining strength he hurries towards it. But just as he is on the point of quenching his thirst, he stops and says to himself: "Whence does this water come? Is it from rain falling on the mountain top, percolating down through the fissures in the rocks, and bubbling out in the stream which I see? Or does its birthplace lie in some secret fountain deep in the heart of the earth? I do not know, and I will not drink of it till I do know." And so he turns away to encounter again the horrors of the dry and burning desert.

Do you tell me that fatuity so monstrous is impossible? In relation to the supply of bodily wants it may be, but not in relation to the needs of the soul. Your own conduct is the strict moral parallel of the case I have supposed. You are in peril of dying from spiritual thirst. The necessities of your immortal nature cannot be met by anything within yourself, or in the world around you. But God has opened a Fountain. Christ has said: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink." The waters of Salvation, welling forth from the Mercy-seat above, have descended into copious floods to refresh and bless the earth. And will you refuse to drink of the River of Life which flows full and free before you, proffering health and gladness to your famished soul, because you cannot discover everything pertaining to its source far, far away in the recesses of the Eternal Mind? —*G. B. Ide.*

(595.) In one of those financial convulsions which so often sweep over the land, you have lost your all. Dig you cannot, for there is none to hire you. To beg is useless, for there is none to give to you. Famine, gaunt and inexorable, stares you in the face. In this hour of your utmost need, an old friend meets you, and looking pitifully into your dim eye, lays his hand on your shoulder, and says: "Come home with me to dinner." You go with him to a splendid mansion. You enter a large and richly furnished dining hall. You see before you a long table loaded with food in every variety, from the plainest to the most luxurious. At the lower end, where you stand, the dishes are all simple, nutritious, solid, precisely such as your famishing state demands. And every dish is open, showing its contents at a glance. But, farther on, towards the head of the board, there are dishes of a more complicated character, reserved for a later stage of the feast; and these are covered, some with covers of tin, some with covers of silver, and some with covers of gold. Your host bids you welcome, and presses you most affectionately to sit down at once and satisfy your hunger. But instead of thankfully accepting his offer, you look along the table, and ask: "What is under the covers yonder?" Your friend replies that those dishes are not suited to your present necessities, that they belong to the dessert; and that when you get to them he will take the covers off. And again he urges you to partake of his bounty. But you draw yourself up haughtily, wrap your ragged garments about you, and exclaiming, "I'll not sit down to a table of mysteries," walk out into the cold, dark street, amid the howling storm, alone with your pride and your starvation. —*G. B. Ide.*

(596.) Let me impress this point by yet another illustration). A man falls into a deep well in the cellar of a lofty building, and without help must inevitably be drowned. From the ceiling above a rope is let down to him through the hatchway, and friendly voices call to him to seize hold of it, while strong arms are ready to draw him out. But instead of doing this, he complains that he cannot see the upper end of the rope, and does not know how it is secured. Those who are trying to rescue him tell him not to trouble himself about the upper end; they will take care of that; they have it fast to a beam in the roof; his business is to make sure of the lower end. Then he stops to ask, with what kind of a knot the rope is fastened, and what sort of timber the beam is made of to which it is attached. Thus, while neglecting the rope, he continues to cry, "How is it tied? How is it tied?" till the waters close over him, and his vain questions are smothered in death! Do you say that such a man would be a fool? Take heed that thou be not a greater fool. Thou hast fallen into a deep and loathsome well—"the horrible pit and miry clay" of impenitence and sin; and thou art in danger every moment of sinking down for ever into the "bottomless pit" of hell beneath. God has flung out from heaven the golden cord, the threefold cord, of the Covenant of Mercy. He has made one end of it fast to the pillars of His throne, while the other reaches to thee; and He bids thee lay hold of it, and He will draw thee up out of the slough of thy pollutions to the purity and bliss of His own presence. Dost thou answer, that the upper part of the cord is above thy sight, and that thou canst not perceive all the processes by which it has been secured?" "What is that to thee?" Enough for thee to know that the rope is fast, that the rope is strong, able to bear thy weight, and that of millions like thee. O sinner! grasp the rope—lay hold of it by faith—cling to it by prayer and thou shalt mount up, as on angel's wings, to the Paradise of God; and there, safe from the yawning abyss, thou mayest ponder through eternity the strength of the rope, and the infinite wisdom displayed in the mysteries of its adjustment. —*G. B. Ide.*

8. To whom they are unveiled.

(597.) As a merchant that is skilful in his profession will not show his costly merchandise unto those whom he well knoweth will not buy them, who come into his warehouse either as curious persons or as crafty spies, not with any purpose to buy, but to do some evil, but calleth unto him only those whom he knoweth to be willing to buy; even so it is the Lord's manner not to open the deep secrets of His Word unto them whom He seeth plainly to seek after them curiously, or with a corrupted purpose, to the end they may trample them under their feet, but doth instruct them only whom He is sure will profit themselves and others thereby.

—*Cawdray*, 1598-1664.

(598.) Books in the arts and sciences may be said to be full of mysteries to those who have not a suitable capacity and taste for them; or who do not apply themselves to study them with diligence, and patiently submit to learn gradually one thing after another. If you put a treatise on mathematics, or a system of music, into the hands of the ploughman, you will not be surprised to find that he cannot understand a single page. Shall the works of a Sir Isaac Newton, or of a Handel, be thus inexplicable

to one person, while another peruses them with admiration and delight? Shall these require a certain turn of mind, and a close attention? and can it be reasonably supposed, that the Bible is the only book that requires no peculiar disposition, or degree of application, to be understood, though it is designed to make us acquainted with the deep things of God? (1 Cor. ii. 10). In one respect, indeed, there is an encouraging difference. Divine truths lie thus far equally open to all, that though none can learn them unless they are taught of God, yet all who are sensible of their own weakness may expect His teaching, if they humbly seek it by prayer. Many people are, perhaps, incapable of being mathematicians. They have not a genius for the science. But there is none who teacheth like God. He can give not only light, but sight; not only lessons, but the capacity necessary for their reception. And while His mysteries are hidden from the wise and prudent, who are too proud to wait upon Him for instruction, He reveals them unto babes. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(599.) If an insolent coxcomb had been of opinion that Sir Isaac Newton was a mere ignoramus in philosophy, and had gone into his company that he might catechise, and afterwards, as occasion should offer, expose him; it is not unlikely that this great writer, perceiving his arrogance, would have suffered him to depart without answering his questions, even though he might know at the time that his unfavourable opinion of him would thereby be the more confirmed. Let us but come to the Scriptures in a proper spirit, and we shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God; but if we approach them in a cavilling humour, we may expect not only to remain in ignorance, but to be hardened more and more in unbelief. —*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

(600.) The preaching of the Apostle Paul was rejected by numbers in the cultivated town of Corinth. It was not wise enough, nor eloquent enough; nor was it sustained by miracles. The man of taste found it barbarous; the Jew missed the signs and wonders which he looked for in a new dispensation; and the rhetorician missed the convincing arguments of the schools. To all which the Apostle was content to reply, that his judges were incompetent to try the question. The princes of this world might judge in a matter of politics; the leaders in the world of literature were qualified to pronounce on a point of taste; the counsellors of this world to weigh an amount of evidence. But in matters spiritual, they were as unfit to judge as a man without ear is to decide respecting harmony; or a man judging alone by sensation, to supersede the higher truth of science by an appeal to his own estimate of appearances. The world, to sense, seems stationary. To the eye of reason it moves with lightning speed, and the cultivation of reason alone can qualify for an opinion on the matter. The judgment of the senses is worth nothing in such matters. For every kind of truth a special capacity or preparation is indispensable.

For a revelation of spiritual facts, two things are needed:—First, a Divine truth; next, a spirit which can receive it.

Therefore the Apostle's whole defence resolved itself into this:—The natural man receiveth not the things which are of the Spirit of God. The world by wisdom knew not God. And his vindication of his teaching was—These revealed truths cannot be seen by the eye, heard by the ear, or guessed by the heart; they are visible, audible, imaginable, only to the spirit. By the spiritually prepared they are recognised as beautiful, though they be folly to all the world beside.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

9. Disappear under a comprehensive criticism.

(601.) We are confident that the careful and minute study of the evangelists, in the light of grammar, of philology, and of history, results in the unassailable conviction of their trustworthiness. The process is one of those profound and unconscious ones which bring us to the goal before we are aware. The conviction that the four Gospels are organically connected, and constitute one living and perfect harmony, cannot be violently and quickly forced upon the mind. At first sight, the objections and difficulties fill the foreground; particularly when protruded and pressed upon the notice by the dexterity of the biassed and hostile critic. But as when we look upon a grand painting, in which there are a great variety and complexity and apparent contrariety of elements, it requires some little time for the eye to settle gradually and unconsciously into the point from which the whole shapes itself into harmony and beauty, so it requires wise delay, and the slow penetration of scholarship and meditation, to reach that centre from which all the parts of the evangelical biography arrange themselves harmoniously, and all contradiction disappears for ever. And when this centre is once reached, and the intrinsic, natural, *artless* harmony is once perceived, there is repose, and there is boldness, and there is authority. He who speaks of Christ out of this intuition, speaks with freedom, with enthusiasm, with love, and with power. Objections which at first sight seemed acute, now look puerile. The piecemeal criticism which, like the fly, scans only the edge of a plinth in the great edifice upon which it crawls, disappears under a criticism that is all-comprehending and all-surveying. —*Shedd.*

XVII. *ITS PROHIBITIONS AND THREATENINGS.*

(602.) A single prohibition is so planted by God in the Scriptures, that, like a piece of ordnance, it may be said to enfilade and sweep a whole territory of sin; nothing can come within its range without challenging its thunder, and courting death. A single rule is said to contain laws for an indefinite number of actions; for all the possible cases of the class described which can ever occur. Like the few imaginary circles by which geography circumscribes the earth, he has by a few sentences described, and distributed into sections the whole globe of duty; so that wherever we may be on it, we find ourselves encompassed by some comprehensive maxims; and in whatever direction we may move, we have only to reflect, in order to perceive that we are receding from, or approaching to, some line of morality. —*Harris.*

(603.) Though heaven be so rich a jewel that it needs no foil to set off its lustre to those who are clear sighted to behold it; yet in a merciful compassion to man the Gospel reveals what will be the recompense of wilful, continued disobedience—an

eternal hell, wherein the justice and power of God are terribly glorified. And what is more powerful to excite the sensual and secure who despise the blessed hope, than the fear of an immortal death?
—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(604.) They fall like thunderbolts, but where? I have read how a ship that rode the waters, armed with a broadside of cannon enough to sink any common craft, when in chase of another vessel, pointed her guns so as to send the shot crashing through the other's rigging, or leaping on the deep before her bows. Her purpose, not to sink the flying sail, but wing her; and compelling her to bring to, make her captive. She might have sunk the enemy; but in so thundering she sought to save her, and make a prize of her. And just so does a long-suffering God with those that madly flee from Him. Therefore the Bible threatens and thunders; not otherwise. But why flee? Vain the flight where God pursues; and worse than vain! He is willing to forgive; and what folly, what madness, to fly till, Divine patience at length exhausted, He ceases to follow! What then? The bolt, at first sent in love and mercy wide of the range, is shot right to the mark. Judgment, long delayed, overtakes us; and we learn, but learn too late, that whether He threatens or promises, as a God of truth, His word shall stand for ever. "Oh, that men were wise, that they would consider this in the day of their visitation!" —*Guthrie.*

(605.) The Bible all through presses men with threatenings of punishment, and holds out to them promises of happiness to lead them to a new life. But this is to be remembered, that it begins its work with men who are sunk in sin, and that the essence of sin is selfishness. It must arrest and raise them by motives adapted to their condition, provided that these motives are not wrong, and enlightened self-interest, that is, self-interest which is consistent with the good of others, is not wrong. The Bible is too broad and human not to bring all fair motives into exercise. It is too philosophical to lose itself in the over-refinements of some modern philosophies which touch fallen human nature as a needle might a coat of mail. It has its still small voice, but it has its thunder before it. The sleeper must be roused to listen; and before the Gospel, and even with it, we must have Sinai's word, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." All through in the Old Testament, and also in the New, we have the principle, "If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself." "Behold, I have set before thee death and life." We have every one of us felt the power of such appeals, and perhaps there is no stage in the Christian life when a man is entirely away from them. The Apostle Paul was fearful, "Lest by any means he himself should be a castaway."

But to affirm that this is the final, or even the prevailing, motive of the new life, is to mistake or misrepresent the Bible. If I rouse a man from the stupor of an opiate by force, and prevent him for a while from recurring to it by fear, it is that I may have an opportunity of going on to use reason, and the persuasion of love. By these ultimate weapons, and by the spirit which, with God's help, is at last breathed into man, my plan is to be judged. The Bible is constantly advancing from the domain of threatening and outward promise to that of free and unselfish love. Its strength of appeal from the very beginning lies in the mercy of God pardoning unconditionally,—a mercy which, when the clouds are severed, is seen to be the face of the Son of God, and the Man of Sorrows devoting Himself for those who had no claim on Him, but that of guilt and misery. He comes from a throne to a cross for them, and we see written on it, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us." This love comes from a Divine Fountain through a human heart, that human hearts may feel the responsive throb, "We love Him who first loved us." —*Ker.*

(606.) The Bible is a warm letter of affection from a parent to a child; and yet there are many who see chiefly the severer passages. As there may be fifty or sixty nights of gentle dew in one summer, that will not cause as much remark as one hailstorm of half an hour; so there are those who are more struck by these passages of the Bible that announce the indignation of God than by those that announce His affection. There may come to an household twenty or fifty letters of affection during the year, and they will not make as much excitement in that home as one sheriff's writ. And so there are people who are more attentive to those passages which announce the wrath of God than to those which announce His mercy and His favour. God is a Lion, John says in the Book of Revelation. God is a Breaker, Micah announces in his prophecy. God is a Rock. God is a King. But hear also that God is Love. A father and his child are walking out in the fields on a summer's day, and there comes up a thunder-storm, and there is a flash of lightning that startles the child, and the father says, "My dear, that is God's *eye*." There comes a peal of thunder, and the father says, "My dear, that is God's *voice*." But the clouds go over the sky, and the storm is gone, and light floods the heavens and floods the landscape, and the father forgets to say, "That is God's *smile*." —*Talmage.*

XVIII. *IS NEITHER INTERESTING TO NOR COMPREHENSIBLE BY ALL MEN.*

(607.) [*On a pair of spectacles.*] I look upon these, not as objects, but as helps: not as meaning that my sight should rest in them, but pass through them, and by their aid discern some other things which I desire to see.

Many such glasses my soul hath, and useth. I look through the glass of the creatures at the power and wisdom of their Maker: I look through the glass of the Scriptures at the great mystery of redemption, and the glory of a heavenly inheritance; I look through God's favours at His infinite mercy; through His judgment at His incomprehensible justice. But as these spectacles of mine presuppose a faculty in the eye, and cannot give me sight when I want it, but only clear that sight which I have; no more can these glasses of the creatures, of Scripture, of favours, and judgment, enable me to apprehend those blessed objects, except I have an eye of faith whereto they may be presented. These helps to an unbelieving man are but as spectacles to the blind. As the natural eyes, so the spiritual, have their degrees of dimness. But I have ill improved my age, if, as my natural eyes decay, my spiritual eye be not cleared and con-

firmed; but at my best, I shall never but need spectacles, till I come to see as I am seen.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(608.) In another apartment of this great building of God is a room of titles and evidences of property. It is filled with legal documents. A lawyer going in, is filled with delight. "The very things I wanted," he says to himself. "Now I shall have light on mooted points." With what exultation does he take down and peruse the old, musty, dusty documents! Now he can trace the dim way of evidence. Now he can find missing links. Now he shall get the history of things whose origin eludes investigation. Hearing the lawyer's enthusiastic account of what the room contains, a neighbour thinks he will go in and have a good time. He goes, and takes down the black-letter documents, and yawns and gapes over what to him are dry and unintelligible hieroglyphics, and in disgust retires, saying, "There is nothing there for me." No, for him there is not. He does not want what is there; or, he has not in him that which makes it instruction to him. And so there are in God's Word chambers of evidence. One man finds there a title of immortality. He finds there proof that he is God's. He finds there the deed of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. But another man goes to the same place and finds nothing. There is neither proof, nor title, nor deed there to him. He is not prepared to improve the advantages that the room affords.

In some sky-looking room in this same mansion, you shall find astronomical instruments. An Airey, or a Mitchel, would make for this room at once, and would be filled with gladness. For here are those wonderful reading instruments by which the lore of the sky may be interpreted. Another man shall go there, and he will see only strange machines; and as they will not grind his axe, nor cut his meat, nor mow his grass, nor extract stumps, nor haul stones, nor answer the purpose of fighting, he will say, "What are all these machines good for?" You cannot make him understand that they are of any importance. If you tell him, "These are to gaze upon the sky with," his reply will be, "I can gaze on the sky without them." If you tell him that they reveal wondrous things to which the natural eye cannot pierce, and he attempts to use them, he cannot use them to any purpose. He does not understand them. Now, there are many truths of the highest grandeur that are in the Word of God just what these instruments are in this imaginary dwelling. To some they are the wisdom of God and of salvation. They disclose the eternal power and godhead of God. They reveal the mystery of the love of Christ Jesus. They open to the minds of those who know how to employ them the teachings of God's Holy Spirit. There are mysterious realms of which men learn by the use of God's spiritual astronomy. To others these truths are foolishness, because they do not discern them spiritually. It is the man that determines the value of these things. They are worthless to one whose understanding is not opened so that he can comprehend them; and to one who can comprehend them, they are invaluable.

Take another room filled with maps and charts. A common man looking at these things only sees pale lines, and dots, and figures. It is the repository of the military maps of the charts of the coast survey. All the hydrographic charts are there. But the man says, "They are neither printing nor pictures, and they are good for nothing." There are thousands of men that go into God's Word, and into that department which contains the map of the way to virtue and vice, to eternal life and eternal death, to whom it is nothing. But send there one who is waked up in earnest to make the voyage, and the moment he sees its relation to the thing which he is going to do, he says, "I would give all the world for that." One does not care for it, and therefore it is nothing to him: the other does, and therefore it is all-important to him. —*Beecher.*

(609.) Unsanctified men cannot read the Bible to profit. If you bring me a basket full of minerals from California, and I take them and look at them, I shall know that this specimen has gold in it because I see there little points of yellow gold, but I shall not know what the white and the dark points are that I see. But let a metallurgist look at it, and he will see that it contains not only gold, but silver, and lead, and iron, and he will single them out. To me it is a mere stone, with only here and there a hint of gold; but to him it is a combination of various metals. Now take the Word of God; that is filled with precious stones and metals, and let one instructed in spiritual insight go through it, and he will discover all these treasures; while if you let a man uninstructed in spiritual insight go through it, he will discover those things that are outside and apparent, but things that make God and man friends, and that have to do with the immortality of the soul in heaven, will escape his notice. No man can know these things unless the Spirit of God has taught him to discern them. The Bible alone will not bring any soul to heaven. Shut up a child in a great ship; shove him out on the ocean; tell him to bring himself to some distant port. Can the little child, because he is in a staunch ship, steer her? Will he know the latitudes and longitudes? Can he take her to her destination? But if you put a pilot at the wheel to steer her, the little child will make a safe voyage, and go safely to the port that he seeks. Now, God's Word is an ark that is able to bear the whole world to the haven above; but there must be something to steer if it is to do this, and that is God's Spirit. Before men can avail themselves of the advantages of the Bible, the power of the Holy Ghost must teach them what is the meaning of the things that it contains; it must acquaint them with all the calculations, and reckonings, and methods of calculation spiritual.

—*Beecher.*

XIX. *IS PRECIOUS TO THE BELIEVER.*

(610.) The Scripture is not only an armour, but also a whole armoury of weapons, both offensive and defensive, whereby we may save ourselves, and put the enemy to flight. It is not an herb, but a tree, or rather a whole paradise of trees of life, which bring forth fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat, and the leaves for medicine. It is not a pot of manna, or a cruse of oil, which were for memory only, or for a meal's meat or two, but as it were a shower of heavenly bread sufficient for a whole host, be it never so great, and as it were a whole cellar full of oil vessels, whereby all our necessities may be provided for, and our debts discharged. In a word, it is a panary of wholesome

food, against fenowed traditions; a physician's shop (St. Basil calls it) of preservatives against poisoned heresies; a pandect of profitable laws, against rebellious spirits; a treasury of costly jewels, against beggarly rudiments; finally, a fountain of most pure water springing up to everlasting life. And what marvel? The original thereof being from heaven, not from earth; the author being God, not man; the inditer, the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the apostles or prophets; the penmen, such as were sanctified from the womb and endued with a principal portion of God's Spirit; the matter verity, piety, purity, uprightness; the form, God's Word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of truth, the word of salvation, &c.; the effects, light of understanding, stableness of persuasion, repentance from dead works, newness of life, holiness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost; lastly, the end and reward of the study thereof, fellowship with the saints, participation of the heavenly nature, fruition of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that shall never fade away. Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night.

—Translators of the English Version.

(611.) Let a man live in awe of the Word, and make it his business to maintain communion with God; for this will show him the necessity of His Word for to comfort and strengthen him upon all occasions. A lively Christian that in good earnest minds his work, must have the Word by him for his strength and support, as he that labours must have his meals, otherwise he will faint. Painted fire needs no fuel, and when we content ourselves with a loose and careless profession, then we will not so delight ourselves in God's Book, and run to it for support of our souls. But when we make it our business, then naturally we will be carried out in love to the Word. *—Manton*, 1620–1677.

(612.) The believing poor feel the use and worth of the Scriptures as an illiterate mariner feels the use and worth of his compass. The mariner, perhaps, has neither curiosity nor capacity enough to inquire why his needle takes a polar direction, or what the learned have to say on its observed variations in different parts of the globe; he knows nothing of the laws of magnetism, why iron and not lead should be the recipient of it, when or by whom it was discovered, or to what variety of purposes it may be applied; but this man knows, illiterate as he is, that it is by this needle only that he finds his way through a trackless ocean; he knows that by this alone he has escaped many dangers, and obtained many deliverances; he knows he can proceed safely only as he is directed by it, or take rest only as he attends to it; and that it will bring him home to his family and friends at last. Thus the poor take the benefit of Revelation, though they are not able accurately to maintain theories, nor answer questions respecting it, as a scholar might.

—Cecil, 1748–1810.

(613.) Like other books the charm of the Bible will very much depend on the frame of mind in which it is studied. To an earnest reader it will always be interesting; to a docile reader it will always be new and surprising. If you intend to visit the lands where gold is gathered you will peruse with avidity the publications which describe them, and which tell you what equipments to provide. Or if you are fond of some science, you will spend half the night devouring a treatise which expounds its principles, and you will feel richly rewarded in your fresh information or your new intellectual mastery.

—Hamilton, 1814–1867.

(614.) The lifeboat may have a tasteful bend and beautiful decoration, but these are not the qualities for which I prize it; it was my salvation from the howling sea! So the interest which a regenerate soul takes in the Bible, is founded on a personal application to the heart of the saving truth which it contains. If there is no taste for this truth, there can be no relish for the Scriptures.

—J. W. Alexander.

(615.) We could not afford to dispense with a verse of Holy Writ. The removal of a single text, like the erasure of a line of a great epic, would mar the completeness and connection of the whole. As well pluck a gem from the high-priest's breastplate as erase a line of revelation. *—Spurgeon.*

(616.) How full of blessed associations this dear Book is! I walked through the old streets of London, where every other house has a history such that one might well pause before it, and ponder for hours. I walked along the fields where many a grand scene had been enacted. At Winchester I visited the old cathedral. I went through it. I would live in it a month, if I could. The wide interior was filled with unimagined beauty and glory. That cathedral was built in successive ages; so that every part of the architecture, by the harmony of the varied materials of which it was composed, fitly represented how all forms of religious thought may be harmonised in one great community of the true Christian Church. I saw the tombs of the old kings. Greater than they were the three great architects who had constructed this mighty cathedral. It was a museum of antiquity. It was full of life. I trembled with sensibility. And the impression will never die out of my mind.

But what is that cathedral compared with this silent cathedral, the Bible, in whose aisles have sounded the footsteps, not only of kings and emperors, but, from generation to generation, the footsteps of the little child, and the mother and father of the houshold; and the footsteps of multitudes upon multitudes of worthies of the Church, all the way back, a hundred years, five hundred years, ten hundred years, fifteen hundred years; and the footsteps of uncounted heroes who have gone up to heaven consoled and enlightened by the pages of the Word of God? *—Beecher.*

XX. *ITS HELP ALWAYS NEEDFUL AND AVAILABLE.*

(617.) This is not a Book to be read by the lowest form in Christ's school only, but beseeming the highest scholar that seems most fit for a remove to Heaven's academy. It is not only of use to make a Christian by conversion, but to make him perfect also (2 Tim. iii. 15). It is like the architect's rule and line, as necessary to lay the top-stone of the building at the end of his life, as the foundation at his conversion. They therefore are like to prove foolish builders, that throw away their line before the house be finished.

—Gurnall, 1617–1679.

(618.) Do you ever think, as you pass along the chapters of the Bible, that they are now like the king's highways; that more saints than tongue could count have walked along these pages towards heaven; that each verse has been a bosom like a mother's to some child in Christ; that each verse has had in it blessings for multitude of souls; that these passages of hope and joy have made melody for thrice ten million struggling souls; that these Scriptures are a sublime renewal of the miracle of the loaf which increases by using, and which feeds without diminution? These unwasting chapters have supplied armies, and multitudes of faint and hungry saints, but there is not a particle gone. There is as much yet for the famishing soul as when first they were set forth. To the end the loaf shall be broken, and shall yield a liberal abundance for every human want; and to the end the undiminished whole shall remain a witness and a miracle of the Divine spiritual bounty. —*Beecher.*

XXI. *FULL OF CHRIST.*

(619.) Brethren, Scripture is full of Christ. From Genesis to Revelation everything breathes of Him, not every letter of every sentence, but the spirit of every chapter. It is full of Christ, but not in the way that some suppose; for there is nothing more miserable, as specimens of perverted ingenuity, than the attempts of certain commentators and preachers, to find remote, and recondite, and intended allusions to Christ everywhere. For example, they chance to find in the construction of the temple the fusion of two metals, and this they conceive is meant to show the union of Divinity with Humanity in Christ. If they read the coverings to the tabernacle, they find implied the doctrine of imputed righteousness. If it chance that one of the curtains of the tabernacle be red, they see in that a prophecy of the blood of Christ. If they are told that the kingdom of heaven is a pearl of great price, they will see in it the allusion —that, as a pearl is the production of animal suffering, so the kingdom of heaven is produced by the sufferings of the Redeemer. I mention this perverted mode of comment, because it is not merely harmless, idle, and useless; it is positively dangerous. This is to make the Holy Spirit speak riddles and conundrums, and the interpretation of Scripture but clever riddle-guessing. Putting aside all this childishness, we say that the Bible is full of Christ. Every unfulfilled aspiration of humanity in the past; all partial representation of perfect character; all sacrifices, nay, even those of idolatry, point to the fulfilment of what we want, the answer to every longing—the type of perfect humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

—*F. W. Robertson,* 1816–1853.

XXII. *PROFUNDITY OF ITS MEANING.*

(620.) For my part, I do not like to see religious truths too logically defined; to define them, you must squeeze the life out of them; to analyse them, you must kill them. That is why I do not think it advisable to bind Christian instruction too much to catechisms; that is why I do not like to read too many works upon systematic theology. System is finite, whilst religion is infinite; and once I am in the sphere of systems, I am out of the sphere of worship. Let Christianity alone, shrouded in its own infinitude. For this reason I love the Bible so much; it leaves the impress, the stamp of the Infinite on all subjects; it does not attempt to define truth, to formulate doctrine; its words stretch forth till they are lost in realms far away. You walk the road and see a pool of water two inches deep; you clearly see the bottom. You look the second time and see a second depth, not two inches deep, but deep as the blue heaven above you; besides showing its own depth, it reveals to you the depth of the sky. In that little pool you can see the white, fleecy cloud, as far from you down in the water as it is high above you in the sky. The first depth is only two inches; but the second depth is commensurate with the altitude of the firmament. And, as we read the Bible, we are conscious of a double depth; the first shows you the immediate meaning of the writer; the depth of the verse is just the measure of his understanding. But look again, and you will discover a second depth, a second thought, a second meaning; it is deep as the soul of God, infinite as His reason, past finding out as His understanding. The Bible awakes the sense of the Infinite in the heart, and thus prepares for worship. —*J. C. Jones.*

(621.) Texts such as have been thus selected from the inexhaustible mine of truth remind us of those singular formations which often occur in rocks, called *Drusic Cavities.* You pick up a rough, ordinary looking stone, of a somewhat round shape; there is nothing specially attractive or interesting about it. You split it open with a hammer, and what a marvellous sight is displayed! The common-place boulder is a hollow sphere, lined with the most beautiful crystals, amethysts purple with a dawn that never was on land or sea. And so it is with many a familiar Bible text, when we examine it prayerfully and diligently. Its interior aspect, when broken up by study and experience, is widely different from the appearance which it presents outside to the careless superficial reader.

—*Macmillan.*

XXIII. *OUR NEED OF THE SPIRIT'S HELP IN ITS STUDY.*

(622.) The Bible is like a wide and beautiful landscape seen afar off, dim and confused; but a good telescope will bring it near, and spread out all its rocks, and trees, and flowers, and verdant fields, and winding rivers at one's very feet. That telescope is the Spirit's teaching.

—*Chalmers,* 1780–1847.

(623.) We can't tell it all. A little boy was born blind. At last an operation was performed—the light was let in slowly. When one day his mother led him out of doors, and uncovered his eyes, and for the first time he saw the sky and the earth, "O mother!" he cried, "why didn't you tell me it was so beautiful?" She burst into tears, and said, "I tried to tell you, dear, but you could not understand me." So it is when we try to tell what is in the Bible. Unless the spiritual sight is opened we cannot understand. In the light of this fact how blessed, how to be desired, is the work of the Holy Spirit! Ask, and receive.

XXIV. *IN WHAT KNOWLEDGE OF IT CONSISTS.*

(624.) Knowledge of the Scriptures seems to consist in two things, so essentially united, however, that I scarcely like to separate them even in thought: the one I will call the knowledge of the contents of the Scriptures in themselves; the other the knowledge of their application to us, and our own times and circumstances. —*Arnold*, 1795-1842.

XXV. ***HOW FAITH IN IT IS PROVED.***

(625.) Influenced by the unanswerable arguments for the Divine authority of the Bible, men often profess to believe it, but they do not yield themselves up to its influence—they do not appropriate its truths to themselves. When a man believes that the house above his head is wrapped in flames, he acts with promptness and energy; how can he then really believe the declarations of the Bible that he is exposed to the wrath and curse of God due to him for sin, when he makes no effort to escape, though the Scriptures that so plainly declare him guilty and condemned, point out with equal plainness the way of salvation freely offered in the Gospel?

(626.) The celebrated John Locke has a remark to this effect: the understanding, like the eye, while it discovers all other things, does not see itself, and it requires art and pains to see it at a distance, and make it become its own object. By looking, however, into a mirror, the curious and useful eye is represented to itself; and by attentively gazing at the Word of God, the mind may become acquainted with its own character, and behold its true portrait. And as the true use of a mirror is to represent those parts which cannot otherwise be seen, and to enable a person to correct and adjust whatever may require correction or adjustment; just so the Word of God is intended to expose us to ourselves, and to enable us to make those improvements which are necessary. With too many, alas! the discoveries which this Word makes are unattended to, and all its impressions forgotten. With others, however, the views it affords, and the directions it bestows, are carefully preserved and diligently followed.

—*Salter*, 1840.

XXVI. ***SYMBOLICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THE BIBLE.***

1. It is the sword of the Spirit.

(627.) "*The sword of the Spirit.*" The sword was ever esteemed a most necessary part of the soldier's furniture, and therefore hath obtained a more general use in all ages and among all nations than any other weapon. Most nations have some particular weapons proper to themselves; but few or none come into the field without a sword. A pilot without his chart, a scholar without his book, and a soldier without his sword, are alike ridiculous. But above all these, absurd is it for one to think of being a Christian, without knowledge of the Word of God, and some skill to use this weapon. The usual name in Scripture for war, is the *sword*, "*I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth*," *i.e.*, I will send war. And this because the sword is the weapon of most universal use in war, and also that whereby the greatest execution is done in the battle. Now such a weapon is the *Word of God* in the Christian's hand. By the edge of this his enemies fall, and his great exploits are done:—"*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.*" —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(628.) Other arms we may load ourselves with, by tumbling over many authors, but he that hath this sword, and hath been but taught of the Spirit the use of this weapon, is provided well enough to meet the stoutest champion for error the devil hath on his side in an encounter. With this, poor women have been able to disarm great doctors of their studied arguments, ruffling all their art and logic with one plain place of Scripture: as she who brained Abimelech, that great commander, by tumbling a piece of a millstone on his head.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

2. It is a light to the feet.

(629.) To apply ourselves to the writings of the wisest heathens in order to our happiness, and to neglect the Scriptures, is to be guilty of worse folly than the barbarous Indians at Mexico, who though their woods abounded with wax, the labour of the bees, yet only made use of brands that afforded a little light with a great deal of smoke. Upon the most impartial inquiry, and exact search, reason will conclude, either there is no blessed end for which man was designed by his Maker, or the Gospel only has revealed it, and the effectual means to obtain it.

—*Bates*, 1625-1699.

(630.) A father and a son were on a journey. It was late in the afternoon, but still clear day when they came to a cottage by the roadside and the father went in and borrowed a lighted lantern. The young man was exceedingly amused, and perhaps he was a little vexed. If any one should meet them carrying a lamp in the sunshine it would look so absurd; and what in the world was the use of it? But the older traveller took the young man's gibes good-humouredly, and only answered, "The night cometh." And it did come. They passed no more cottages, but they got into a thick forest where the daylight faded so rapidly, that the lantern already shone a welcome companion. Not only was the sun gone down, but the last streak of twilight had vanished. It was dreadfully dark; but the good little lantern spread a cloth of gold before the steps of the travellers, and did not let one shadow or phantom come near them. At last the road divided. "Straight on!" cried the youth. "Not so fast," said the elder; for though the path to the right was less trodden, perhaps it was the one they should take; when fortunately they espied a finger-post, and holding the lamp as high as they could, they read the direction, and found that they would have gone utterly wrong had they not taken the narrow and neglected footway. Rejoicing at their escape they pushed on merrily; and by and by with his frisky spirits the youngster went ahead, and was far in advance of the lantern when the old man heard a plash and a shout, and running up was just in time to help ashore his impetuous boy who had soused into a stagnant pool, and who crawled up the bank pale and shivering, with the leeches and duckweed clinging to his garments. "You see the road was not through this pool but round it. You should walk in the light;" and so they again

set out together. As the stillness deepened they sometimes heard a rustle in the bushy undergrowth, and distant howlings or a sharp snarl near-hand warned them that the beasts of the forest were abroad; and once or twice they could see a pair of fiery opals glaring at them, but as soon as they turned the full flame of the lantern in that direction the goblin retreated. We need not tell the whole adventures of the night; but at last they came to a place where a heavy moan arrested them, and searching in the copse they found a man stretched on the ground and badly hurt. He had either received a blow on the head or he had inhaled some stupefying ether, for at first he talked very incoherently. It turned out that as he had been coming along, a gentleman in black had prevailed on him to cast his lantern into the ditch, and that soon after some footpad had knocked him down, and dragged him off the road and robbed him of all his money. As soon as he was somewhat restored, they set him on his beast and journeyed together. The day was breaking, and the forest was thinning off on the margin of a magnificent domain. They looked forth on vine-clad hills and a shining river; and though the palace itself could be descried but dimly,—it was so far up in the dazzling sunrise,—they could easily make out many mansions. "I am home," cried the old man; and the full morning was reflected from his face as he added, "Mine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." And as he embraced his comrades he handed over the lantern to his son, and said, "Keep this as a light unto your feet and a lamp unto your path." The youth prized the keepsake. He found constant occasion for it. He brightened up the four windows, by which it sent its light backward and forward, and on either side; and with the point of a diamond he traced these mottoes on them:—

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."

"When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee; for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light."

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts."

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

—*Hamilton.*

3. It is a garden.

(631.) The Bible resembles an extensive and highly cultivated garden, where there is a vast variety and profusion of fruits and flowers, some of which are more essential or more splendid than others; but there is not a blade suffered to grow in it which has not its use and beauty in the system. Salvation for sinners is the grand truth presented everywhere, and in all points of light; but "the pure in heart" sees a thousand traits of the Divine character, of himself, and of the world—some striking and bold, others cast as it were into the shade, and designed to be searched for and examined—some direct, others by way of intimation or inference. —*Cecil*, 1748-1810.

XXVII. *THE ROOT OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.*

(632.) A son of one of the priests of Mysore, who had been aroused by reading a tract to deep anxiety for the salvation of his soul, travelled nearly two hundred miles to visit a missionary, in order to learn the way of God more perfectly. On one occasion he was much interested in reading Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." He said several times to the missionary who had taught him and given him the book, that it was better than the Bible. The missionary pointed him to the scene before him, and said:

"Do you see that beautiful mango-tree there?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Don't you see the beautiful fruit which drops its nectar on the ground?"

"Yes."

"Don't you eat the fruit and enjoy its sweetness?"

"Yes."

"And where would that tree be if there was no root to it?"

"Oh," said the man, "now I see what you mean; the Bible is the root, and all the other good books in the world are produced from it."

The lesson was a timely one, and probably was never forgotten. Nor should we ever forget, while enjoying the sweetness of some work which the Christian press sends forth, that the Bible is the root from which it springs. Plant that blessed root in any soil, and by and by the luscious fruit of Christian literature will spring forth. Fail to plant the Bible, and we shall look in vain for all the sweet and refreshing fruits.

XXVIII. *MUST BE ACCEPTED OR REJECTED AS A WHOLE.*

(633.) Is all Scripture of Divine inspiration? It condemns the Antinomians, that lay aside the Old Testament as useless and out of date. God hath stamped a Divine majesty upon both Testaments; and till they can show me where God hath given a repeal to the Old, it stands in force. The two Testaments are the two wells of salvation; the Antinomians would stop up one of these wells, they would dry up one of the breasts of Scripture. There is much gospel in the Old Testament; the comforts of the gospel in the New Testament have their rise from the Old. The great promise of the Messiah is in the Old Testament, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." Nay, I say more, the moral law, in some parts of it, speaks gospel, "I am the Lord thy God;" here is the pure wine of the gospel. The Saint's great charter, where God promised to "sprinkle clean water upon them, and put His Spirit within them," is to be found primarily in the Old Testament (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26). So that they who take away the Old Testament, do as Samson, pull down the pillars: they would take away the pillars of a Christian's comfort.

—*Watson*, 1690.

(634.) The Old and New Testaments contain but one scheme of religion. Neither part of this scheme can be understood without the other; and, therefore, great errors have arisen from separating them. They are like the rolls on which they were anciently written, before books of the present form were

invented. It is but one subject and one system from beginning to end; but the view which we obtain of it grows clearer and clearer as we unwind the roll that contains it. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(635.) We have often visited the ruins of a famous castle Heidelberg, with which no doubt many of our readers are well acquainted. Long ago it was captured, and that it might never be a stronghold to the patriots of Germany again, the enemy burnt it and blew up the walls. But in the weedy fosse there is a huge fragment of a tower which, when exploded, alighted there; and in the goodly joining of its stones and the hardening of its ancient mortar such a rocky mass had it become, that when lifted from its base, instead of descending in a shower of rubbish it came down superbly a tower still. And like that massy keep, the books we have been considering are so knit together in their exquisite accuracy, the histories are so riveted to one another, and the epistles so morticed into the histories, and the very substance of epistles and histories alike is so penetrated by that cement of all-pervasive reality, that the whole now forms an indissoluble concrete. Such a book has God made the Bible, that whatever theories wax popular or whatever systems explode, "the Scripture cannot be broken."

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

XXIX. *ITS PRACTICAL VALUE NOT AFFECTED BY CONTROVERSIES CONCERNING IT.*

(636.) But you say, "the natural sciences are all certain; theology is all conflict and confusion." Let us understand one another. If you say that the phenomena of nature are patent and explicit, we reply, And so are the sayings of Scripture. If candour and ingenuousness can interpret the one, they may equally expound the other. But if you say that, unlike the Word of God, His works have never been misunderstood, you surely forgot that the "History of the Inductive Sciences" is just a history of erroneous interpretations replaced by interpretations less erroneous, and destined to be succeeded by interpretations still more exhaustive and true. If you smile at the Hutchisonian or Cocceian systems of exegesis; if you quote the hostile theories which still linger in the field of polemics, we ask, Is this peculiar to theology? Have you forgotten how the abhorrers of a vacuum abhorred Torricelli and Pascal? Have you forgotten how the old physiologists were vexed at Harvey for discovering the circulation of the blood? Do you not remember how the Stahlian chemists, like a burnt-out family, long lingered around the ashes of phlogiston, and denounced the wilful fire-rising of Lavoisier and oxygen? In early youth have you never seen a disciple of Werner, and pitied the affectionate tenacity with which he clung to the last plank of the fair Neptunian theory? Or would every world-maker forgive Lord Rosse's telescope if it swept from the firmament all trace of the nebular hypothesis? Or, because there is still an emissionary as well as an undulatory theory of light, must we deny that optics is a science, and must we hold that the laws of refraction and reflexion are mere matters of opinion? Nature is no liar, although her "minister and interpreter" has often mistaken her meaning; and, notwithstanding the errors which have received a temporary sanction from the learned, there is, after all, nothing but truth in the material universe, and, so far as man has sagacity or sincerity to collect that truth, he has got a true science, a true astronomy, a true chemistry, a true physiology, as the case may be. And even so, whatsoever vagaries particular persons may indulge, or whatsoever false systems may receive a transient support, there is, after all, nothing but truth in the Bible, and so far as we have sincerity and sagacity to collect the Bible-truth, we have got a true religion. Nay, the most important facts and statements in that Word speak for themselves, and require no theory. And just as a mariner might safely avail himself of Jupiter's satellites, though Copernicus had never existed; just as the gunner must allow for the earth's attractions, whatever becomes of Newtonian philosophy; just as the apothecary would continue to mix his salts and acids in definite proportions, even although some mishap befell the atomic theory; just as we ourselves do not close our eyes and dispense with light, until the partisans of rays shall have made it up with the advocates of ether—so the Scriptures abound in statements and facts on which we may safely proceed, whatever becomes of human theories. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature:" so far as it is founded on such sayings as these, religion is not only the simplest, but, being immediately from God, it is the most secure of all the sciences.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

XXX. *HOW ITS TRUTH IS TO BE TESTED.*

(637.) A society of learned men caused a ship to be built, and resolved to make a voyage to discover the wonderful nature and properties of the magnetic needle. When the ship was ready to sail, they went on board, taking with them a great number of books and all kinds of instruments; then they set a magnetic needle in the midst, and examined and observed it. Thus they sailed to and fro, looking at the needle, and each had his own opinion concerning the hidden power which moved the needle.

Some called this secret power a stream, others a breath, others again, a spirit; some asserted that it moved from the south to the north, others said from the north to the south. So a violent contest arose among the learned men, and they sailed to and fro on the ocean, quarrelling with each other. Suddenly they felt a rude shock, and a violent crash was heard. The ship had struck on a rock and split, and the waves were rushing impetuously in. Then the learned men were all seized with great terror and confusion; they left the needle, jumped overboard, and saved themselves on the rocks. The ship was buried in the waves.

Now, as they sat on the barren rocks, wet through with salt water, they cried out to one another that there was no dependence to be placed in the magnetic needle! —*Krummacher.*

XXXI. *FOLLY AND GUILT OF THOSE WHO REJECT IT.*

(638.) God revealed truth to the world through the lives of men who formulated in their own minds

great moral problems. and identified themselves therewith. And the results they were inspired to record and to teach. But if the Scripture were disowned, or if it were thrown away, it would not change the truth a whit—though your competency to find it out might be changed.

If a man in the night, by the light of a lamp, is trying to make out his chart, and there is storm in the heaven, and storm upon the sea, and some one knocks that lamp out of his hand, what is done? The storm is above, and the storm is below; and the chart lies dark, so that he cannot find it out—that is all. If it were daylight he could see the chart well enough; but there being no light, and the lamp on which he depended for light being knocked out of his hand, he cannot avail himself of that which is before him.

And the same is true concerning much of the Bible. It is an interpreter. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. And those truths which have their exposition in the Bible, and which are a revelation of the structure of the world, and of the Divine nature and government, do not depend for their truth upon the Bible itself. They are only interpreted and made plain by it. If the world disbelieved Scripture, they would simply deprive themselves of moral eyesight. —*Beecher.*

(639.) Suppose you were to have an insurrection against doctors? Suppose, one by one, you should throw them out of the community? Suppose you should do the work so thoroughly that there should not be a shred left of these despotic men going round and telling people that they must take this, that, or the other hateful drug? Suppose you should not only send these men away, but burn their books and their medicine? When the doctors were gone, and the apothecary shops with all their contents were destroyed, and there was nothing left but neuralgia, and rheumatisms, and dropsies, and fevers, would you be any better off than you are now?

Here is God's medicine-book, full of wondrous remedies, full of blessed compounds, for the cure of the diseases of the human soul, and you would get rid of it; you would throw it away; you would destroy it. But do you thus take away depravity? Do you cure unbelief? Do you remove the animal that is in you—the tiger, the bear, the monkey, the serpent, whose nature and spots appear here and there? Do you turn out all this cage full of unclean beasts that are in the heart, when you cast the Bible from you? Oh no; you only turn out their keepers. These, that have had the power of restraining and controlling the fierce animals that ramp and rage within you, you put out of the way; but the animals themselves remain to torment you still! You have given up the Bible; but the evils which it was sent to cure—the crying need, the down-sagging trouble, the yearning aspiration, the lifting up of the soul when touched by the divine light and influence—where is your solution and your help for these? —*Beecher.*

(640.) A child was in the habit of going to an upper room or loft where there was a store of apples; but as she went from time to time to steal these apples, she met with something that greatly troubled her, for there happened to have been placed in that store-room an old oil-painting. It was a large face, the eyes of which, go to what part of the room the little girl might, seemed to follow her; and they appeared to be saying to her, as she stooped down to take up the apples: "Ah! I see you. It is very naughty. I'll tell upon you. You are sure to be found out." Well, this so annoyed the little girl, from time to time, that she was determined to put a stop to this speechifying of these two great staring eyes; so she got a small knife, or a pair of scissors, and struck them out. Ah, but there were still the two large holes in place of the eyes, and she never could look at them without thinking of the eyes, and what they used to say to her. She had put out the eyes, but she had not, nor could she, get rid of her conscience. Moreover, the very means she had adopted for sinning without rebuke only served to discover her guilt; for when what had befallen the painting came to be found out, it led to such inquiries as at last to reveal the whole facts.

(641.) Sir. S. Baker states that some years since, when the Egyptian troops invaded Nubia, a company of soldiers were crossing the desert on their march southward. The heat was oppressive—almost beyond endurance; and the supply of water being very scanty, the men were put upon short allowance, and after some days it failed altogether.

While thus painfully toiling on, they saw, or thought they saw, in the horizon, a beautiful lake, with flourishing palm-trees on its banks. Their Arab guide, however, told them that there was neither lake nor tree in reality; that what they beheld was a mirage—a deception—a mere picture in the air. They would not credit him; they preferred to believe the testimony of their own sight, and insisted that the guide should deviate from his route, and follow their directions. The man refused to yield; he would not waste time which was precious, nor be commanded by those who ought to obey. They tried to compel him to accompany them towards their fancied paradise, and he resisted. In the violence which ensued, the guide was stricken down, and was left on the sand, a corpse.

Then the whole company, eager for their anticipated refreshment and repose, rushed towards the scene of promise. Parched with thirst and scorched by the burning sun, they soon became bewildered, half-blind, faint, and feeble; but their increasing sufferings only served to urge them on. Farther and farther they struck into the wide waste; farther and farther they separated themselves from their dead guide, with whose life had perished the secret of their safety; for he alone had known the way to the wells and shady retreats which are to be found even in a desert.

The unhappy men still stumbled on; and still the visionary lake fled before them. At last, as the sun declined, the deceptive mirage gradually faded from their sight, leaving only a dreary waste of sand. Then, maddened and despairing, the guilty men, reproaching each other and themselves, threw themselves on the ground in an agony of remorse and despair; and few survived to tell the tale of sin and folly.

Like to this is the guilt, and the folly, and the fate of those who reject the guidance of God's holy Word, and, walking in the ways of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes (Eccles. xi. 9), seek happiness in worldliness and sin.

XXXII. *SHALL ENDURE FOR EVER.*

(642.) The history, the morality, the theology, the consistency, the authenticity, and genuineness of the Bible, the truth of its prophecies and the very possibility of its miracles, have been all attacked—each in its turn, and with the same result. We have seen the soldier return from the fields of war with scars as well as medals on his breast; but our religion has come out of a thousand fights unscarred, from a thousand fires unscathed. She bears no more evidence of the assaults she has sustained than the air of the swords that have cloven it, or the sea of the keels which have ploughed its foaming waves; than some bold rocky headland of the billows that, dashing against it in proud but impotent fury, have shivered themselves on its sides. With few exceptions the writings of infidels have sunk into entire oblivion. Their names, and those of their authors are alike forgotten. Not so the name of Jesus, of Him Voltaire boasted he would crush; not so the Word of God—the blessed book which is the world's most precious treasure, and often man's only solace, as well in palaces as in cabins. While the works of once famous sceptics are left to rot on bookshelves, where the moth devours their memory, and the spider wraps them in her web, every year sees the Bible translated into some new tongue, acquire a greater influence, and receive a wider circulation. Fulfilling its own glorious predictions, it is bringing nearer the appointed time when, rising over all opposition like a flowing and resistless tide, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters the channel of the deep. —*Guthrie.*

(643.) If our faith is not a ruin, though a majestic one, or if the Church of Christ does not stand in the world like the decaying and deserted temple of a worn-out superstition, it is not because the Word of God has not been doubted, denied, attacked, and vilified. It has often been reviled; but it has never been refuted. Its foundations have been examined by the most searching eyes. In Hume, and Gibbon, and Voltaire, and La Place, to pass such coarse and vulgar assailants as Tom Paine and Carlile, with their few living followers, the Bible has had to sustain the assaults of the greatest talent, the sharpest wit, and the acutest intellects. To make it appear a cunningly-devised fable, philosophers have sought arguments amid the mysteries of science, and travellers amid the hoar remains of antiquity; for that purpose geologists have ransacked the bowels of the earth, and astronomers the stars of heaven; and yet, after sustaining the most cunningly-devised and ably-executed assaults of eighteen hundred years, there it stands; and shall stand, defiant of time, of men, of devils—a glorious illustration of the words of its Founder, "On this rock have I built my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!"

Since those eighteen hundred years began to run, what revolutions Time has wrought! what changes he has seen! The oldest monarchies have been overthrown; the dawn of truth has chased away the darkness of a long night; the maxims of statesmen and the theories of science have shifted like the wind; success has crowned the boldest innovator on all old-established systems. Jove is gone, but not Jehovah, the Hebrew's God. On Grecian headlands and Roman hills the temples of Jupiter stand in mouldering ruin: but temples sacred to Jesus are rising on every shore. Since John wrote in his cell at Patmos, and Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, the world has been turned upside down; all old things have passed away; all things on earth have changed but one. Rivalling in fixedness, and more than rivalling in brightness, the stars that saw our world born and shall see it die, that rejoiced in its birth and shall be mourners at its burial, the Word of our God stands for ever. Time that weakens all things else, has but strengthened the impregnable position of the believer's faith, and hope, and confidence. And as, year by year, the tree adds another ring to its circumference, every age has added the testimony of its events to this great truth, "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the Word of the Lord shall endure for ever." —*Guthrie.*

(644.) When men of ability, hostile, perhaps, to our views and feelings, examine with the most critical research, examine with a painstaking intelligence all the foundations on which our Book rests, I believe they will just tend to this result—that they will first help the friends of Christianity and the friends of the Bible to establish its authority; they will then bring the most clear proofs of the authenticity and genuineness of its books, all the more established because of the critical storms through which they must pass. If you wish to have the rotten twigs and the old leaves shaken off from a tree, that the rest may appear the greener and the fairer, you welcome the breeze that moves among the branches. Just such will be the effect of these storms through which we may have to pass. Well, if the Book's authority is established, established notwithstanding criticism, established by criticism, what happens then? Why, the same research examines all the original text, and brings us to the purest text. We examine a little further, and they bring out all the faults in our translation. With what result? Why, purer, more idiomatic, and more exact translations. They have brought us to this, and what further comes? Why, then they fall foul of our interpretations. Our interpretations are not sacred because the Book is sacred; and what will happen? Why, just what a strong shower of rain brings to our streets. No man, when the rain is descending in torrents, ever dreams that the houses will fall; it will wash away the filth off the streets, but leave our houses where they were. This examination clears away, and I do not doubt it will clear away interpretations that we have loved and have clung to, but it is only to give us more sound interpretations. And so, when all these things have been secured—the authority of the Book, the authenticity of all the books comprised in it, the genuineness of those books, the purity of the text, exactness of translation, and, finally, interpretations in exact accordance with the literal words that God has spoken—why, His Word has gained a triumph. Who, that receives God's Word, does not wish it to pass through all this? It is the best thing that can happen, and it brings out the sword of the Spirit sharper, brighter, keener, and more adapted to do its work than ever it was before. —*Baptist Noel.*

(645.) There are men that are all the time afraid that something will happen to the Bible. I should be, if I had no more faith than they have in it. There is a mountain not far from my dwelling in the

country, and I never got up in the night to see if it had not been stolen by somebody. Near by rolls the old Hudson, and I never said to myself on going to bed, "How do I know that before morning somebody will not run down with a quart pot and carry off that river!" Now, to me, the Bible stands as firm as mountains stand, and it is in as little danger of being overthrown as mighty rivers are of being carried off in a quart pot. I am never afraid that the Bible will be laid aside. I am never afraid of its being superseded. I feel a certainty that it belongs to God, that it is indispensable to man, and that, however much it may be neglected or run against, it will take care of itself, and maintain its rightful place. —*Beecher.*

XXXIII. ***AND YET ITS MISSION IS TRANSITORY.***

(646.) I think there may be one Bible in heaven fastened to the throne—just as now, in a museum, we have a lamp exhumed from Herculaneum or Nineveh, and we look at it with great interest, and say, "How poor a light it must have given compared with our modern lamps." So I think that this Bible, which was a lamp to our feet in this world, may lie near the throne of God, exciting our interest to all eternity by the contrast between its comparatively feeble light and the illumination of heaven. The Bible now is the scaffolding to the rising temple; but when the building is done, there will be no use for the scaffolding. —*Talmage.*

BODY, THE

1. Has its rights.

(647.) The body has its rights; and it will have them. They cannot be trampled upon or slighted without peril. The body ought to be the soul's best friend, and cordial, dutiful helpmate. Many of the studious, however, have neglected to make it so; whence a large part of the miseries of authorship. Some good men have treated it as an enemy; and then it has become a fiend, and plagued them.
—*Guesses at Truth.*

2. The folly of making its adornment our supreme concern.

(648.) Like as, if we dwell in a borrowed house, looking weekly when we must depart, we will never trouble ourselves with any cost or fitting of it, as we would do if we were sure to remain in it all the days of our lives; even so, for so much as the body is but a house lent unto the soul, from whence it looketh daily to depart, there is no reason, then, why we should be so careful to clothe this body with gaudy and costly apparel, which shortly must rot and perish, and so to neglect the soul, which is immortal. —*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

3. The amount of care due to it.

(649.) To the Christian in duty the body is as the beast to the traveller; he cannot go his journey without it, and much ado to go with it. If the flesh be kept high and lusty, then 'tis wanton, and will not obey; if low, then it's weak, and soon tires.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(650.) The body must be kept in that condition (as far as we can) which is fittest for the service of the soul; as you keep your horse, neither so pampered as to be unruly, nor yet so low as to disable him for travel. But all that health and strength which makes it not unruly, maketh it the more serviceable. It is not the life of the body, but the health and cheerfulness which maketh it fit for duty. And so much pleasing of the flesh as tendeth but to its health and cheerfulness is a duty, where it can be done without greater hurt the other way. A heavy body is but a dull servant to the mind; yea, a great impediment to the soul in duty, and a great temptation to many sins; as sickly and melancholy persons, and many phlegmatic people, know by sad experience. It is as great a duty to help the body to its due alacrity and fitness for service, as it is to tame it and bring it under by fasting and sackcloth when it is proud and lustful. And they that think fasting on certain days, in a formal manner, is acceptable to God, when the state of the body is not helped, but rather injured by it, as if it were a thing required for itself, do mistakenly offer a sacrifice to God which He requireth not; and take Him to be an enemy to man, that desireth his pain and grief, when it tendeth not to his good. A mower that hath a good scythe will do more in a day, than another that hath a bad one can do in two. Every workman knoweth the benefit of having his tools in order, and every traveller knoweth the difference between a cheerful and a tired horse; and they that have tried health and sickness know what a help it is in every work of God to have a healthful body, and cheerful spirits, and an alacrity and promptitude to obey the mind. When the sights of prospects, and beautiful buildings, and fields, and countries, or the use of walks or gardens, do tend to raise the soul to holy contemplation, to admire the Creator, and to think of the glory of the life to come (as Bernard used his pleasant walks), this delight is lawful, if not a duty, where it may be had. So when music doth cheer the mind, and fit it for thanks and praise to God, and when the rest of the body, and the use of your best apparel, and moderate feasting, on the Lord's day, and other days of thanksgiving, do promote the spiritual service of the day, they are good and profitable; but to those that are more hindered by fulness, even abstinence on such days is best. So that the use of the body must be judged of as it is a means or expression of the good or evil of the mind.

Many things do remotely fit us for our main end, which, nearly and directly, seem to have no tendency to it; as those that are only to furnish us with natural strength, and vigour, and alacrity, or to prevent impediments. As a traveller's hood and cloak and other carriage seem rather to be hindrances to his speed, but yet are necessary for preventing the cold and wet, which else might hinder him more.

Ordinarily it is safest to be more fearful of excess of fleshly pleasure than of defect; for ordinarily we are all very prone to an excess, and also the excess is more dangerous. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

BODY AND SOUL, THE

1. Partners in life.

(651.) As a fair and gentle wife, star-like and dove-like, is given to the guardianship of some rude, coarse, uncultured nature, who treads among her sweet feelings as the hoof and the snout deal with flowers in the garden, so it is in that strange husband

and wife, the body and the soul: the soul full of sweetness, gentleness, purity, and delicacy, and the coarse animal body full of cruel passions. And they fare but ill in the wedded life on earth: the body looks down, and searches the ground for its delights: the soul looks up, and, like an astronomer, culls treasure from among the stars, and beyond. The body eats and drinks: the soul thinks and feels. The body lives in the world, for the world, and with the world: the soul reaches far away to some higher life whose need it feels—but all is vague, but the wish, but the need. Strange visions rise, but neither to-day does the soul know its origin, nor to-morrow. The picture of beauty and of purity that rose bright in the morning has faded out before night. To-morrow mocks the expectation of to-day. The soul is like a bird caged from the nest, that yet remembers something of its fellows in the forest of green leaves, and in summer days hears snatches of song from far-off fields, and yearns for that liberty which it has never proved, for that companionship which it so early missed.

2. Their mutual sympathy.

(652.) The soul and body in the present conjunction mutually sympathise. As two things that are unisons, if one be touched and moves, the other untouched yet moves and trembles. The cause is from the vibration the sound makes in the air, and impresses on solid bodies, moving them according to the harmonious proportion between them. Thus the soul and the body are two strings tempered to such a correspondence, that if one be moved, the other resents by an impression from it.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

3. The influence of the body on the soul.

(653.) The operations of the soul do much follow the disposition and temper of the body. There is a near connection and a sympathy between these two. There can scarcely be grief and pleasure in one, but the other partakes. Pleasure! it melts the soul through the body, as lightning does the sword through the scabbard. Can the body be pampered, and the soul not grow wanton? Can the carnal objects of sense be received, without leaving a tincture upon the mind? When the body is filled and feasted, the soul is not in so fit a posture to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Herod after his feast is fit to behead, but not to hear John Baptist. —*South*, 1633–1716.

4. How the body is to be made helpful to the soul.

(654.) Polydorus, a heathen youth, had abandoned the crooked path of idolatry, and received with a faithful heart the words of truth. As he condemned the lusts of paganism, and repented of his former life, he retired into a solitary place, and renounced every pleasure of nature and life; for he said, "The flesh striveth against the spirit; therefore I will deaden the strength of the senses, and shut up all the paths of temptation."

Then Justus, his master, who had converted him, went to the youth, and took him to a tree planted by a brook, bearing flowers and fruit, and said to him, "Polydorus, observe this tree. The Lord has given it to us for an example, that we may be rich in good fruit."

The youth looked at the tree, and said, "The tree is happy; without temptations and the war against the flesh, it fulfils its destiny in silence, bearing flowers and fruit in its season."

Then the old man smiled, and said, "Would not the tree be more perfect without the low root creeping along the dark soil, and drinking the slimy nourishment from the brook?"

"But," answered the youth, "it supports the stem of the tree, and provides it with sap to bring forth flowers and fruit."

Then the old man lifted up his voice, and said, "Go thou, and do likewise. Despise not the senses nor their influence, for they are the low root of life; but let them always be low. Form what this root conveys to thee into spiritual flowers and fruit. Like the branches and twigs of the tree, all thy thoughts and doings will then be directed towards heaven, and the light of truth will silently lead thee to perfection."

Thus said the old man Justus; and Polydorus left the wilderness, lived in intercourse with nature and mankind, and taught many by his word and example. —*F. A. Krummacher.*

BOOKS.

1. The most wonderful of human works.

(655.) Of all things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful, and worthy are the things we call books.

—*Carlyle.*

2. Are living powers.

(656.) Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them, to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve, as in a vial, the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive as those fabulous dragon's teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to bring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a book. Who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature—God's image, but he who destroys a good book, destroys reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth: but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. —*John Milton.*

3. The permanence of their influence.

(657.) Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation, as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn. All other arts of perpetuating our ideas continue but a short time. Statues can last but a few thousands of years, edifices fewer, and colours still fewer than edifices. Michael Angelo, Fontana, and Raphael will hereafter be what Phidias, Vitruvius, and Apelles are at present, —the names of great statuaries, architects, and painters whose works are lost. The several arts are expressed in mouldering materials. Nature sinks under them, and is not able to support the ideas which are impressed upon it.

The circumstance which gives authors an advantage above all these great masters is this, that they can multiply their originals; or rather can make copies of their works, to what number they please, which shall be as valuable as the original themselves.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

4. Sure storehouses of truth.

(658.) Books are faithful repositories, which may be awhile neglected or forgotten, but when they are opened again will again impart their instruction. Memory once interrupted is not to be recalled; written learning is a fixed luminary, which after the cloud that had hidden it has passed away, is again bright in its proper station. Tradition is but a meteor, which if it once falls cannot be rekindled.

—*Dr. S. Johnson.*

5. Not an unmixed good.

(659.) Books are not seldom talismans and spells,
By which the magic art of shrewder wits
Holds an unthinking multitude enthrall'd.
Some to the fascination of a name
Surrender judgment, hoodwink'd. Some the style
Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds
Of error leads them, by a time entranced.
While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear
The insupportable fatigue of thought,
And swallowing, therefore, without pause or choice,
The total grist unsifted, husks and all.

—*Cowper.*

6. Love of.

(660.) If the crowns of all the kingdoms of Europe were laid down at my feet in exchange for my books and my love of reading, I would spurn them all. —*Fénélon.*

(661.) A taste for books is the pleasure and glory of my life. I would not exchange it for the riches of the Indies. —*Gibbon.*

(662.) Were I to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me during life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss, and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. Give a man this taste and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making him a happy man; unless, indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history,—with the wisest, the wittiest, the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters who have adorned humanity. You make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages. The world has been created for him!

—*Sir J. F. W. Herschel.*

7. Companionship of.

(663.) Books are the food of youth, the delight of old age; the ornament of prosperity, the refuge and comfort of adversity; a delight at home, and no hindrance abroad; companions by night, in travelling, in the country. —*Cicero.*

(664.) I have friends whose society is extremely agreeable to me: they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honours for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them; for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and and exhilarate my spirits, while others give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires and depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I safely rely in all emergencies. In return for all these services they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my humble habitation, where they may repose in peace: for these friends are more delighted by the tranquillity of retirement than with the tumults of society. —*Petrarch.*

(665.) It is chiefly through books that we enjoy intercourse with superior minds, and these invaluable means of communication are in the reach of all. In the best books great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours. God be thanked for books! they are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are the true levellers. They give to all, who will faithfully use them, the society, the spiritual presence, of the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I am, no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling. If the sacred writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof, if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of paradise, and Shakspeare to open to me the worlds of imagination and the workings of the human heart, and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom, I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man, though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live.

—*Channing*, 1780–1842.

(666.) Just such is the feeling which a man of liberal education naturally entertains towards the great minds of former ages. The debt which he owes to them is incalculable. They have guided him to truth. They have filled his mind with noble and graceful images. They have stood by him in all vicissitudes, comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude. These friendships are exposed to no danger from the occurrences by which other attachments are weakened or dissolved. Time glides on; fortune is inconstant; tempers are soured; bonds which seemed indissoluble are daily sundered by interest, by emulation, or by caprice. But no such cause can affect the silent converse which we hold with the highest of human intellects. That placid intercourse is disturbed by no jealousies or resentments. These are the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. With the dead there is no rivalry. In the dead there is no change. Plato is never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet.

—*Macaulay*, 1800–1859.

8. Choice of.

(667.) We ought to regard books as we do sweetmeats, not wholly to aim at the pleasantest, but chiefly to respect the wholesomest; not forbidding either, but approving the latter most.

—*Plutarch.*

(668.) When thou hast resolved what to study, advise what are the best books on that subject, and procure them: as for indifferent ones, I would not have thee throw away any time or pains on them if thou canst get better. A few books well chosen, and well made use of, will be more profitable to thee than a great confused *Alexandrian* Library.
—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(669.) With books, as with companions, it is of more consequence to know which to avoid than which to choose: for good books are as scarce as good companions, and, in both instances, all that we can learn from bad ones is, that so much time has been worse than thrown away. That writer does the most who gives his reader the *most* knowledge and takes from him the *least* time. That short period of a short existence which is rationally employed is that which alone deserves the name of life; and that portion of our life is most rationally employed which is occupied in enlarging our stock of truth and of wisdom. —*Colton*, 1832.

(670.) Readers are not aware of the fact, but a fact it is of daily increasing magnitude, and already of terrible importance to readers, that their first grand necessity in reading is to be vigilantly, conscientiously *select;* and to know everywhere that books, like human souls, are actually divided into what we may call "sheep and goats,"—the latter put inexorably on the left hand of the Judge; and tending, every goat of them, at all moments, whither we know, and much to be avoided, and, if possible, ignored, by all sane creatures! —*Carlyle.*

9. The test of a good book.

(671.) Many books require no thought from those who read them, and for a very simple reason;—they made no such demand on those who wrote them. Those works therefore are the most valuable that set our thinking faculties in the fullest operation. For as the solar light calls forth all the latent powers, and dormant principles of vegetation contained in the kernel, but which, without such a stimulus, would neither have struck root downwards, nor borne fruit upwards, so it is with the light that is intellectual; it calls forth and awakens into energy those latent principles of thought in the minds of others, which without this stimulus, reflection would not have matured, nor examination improved, nor action embodied. —*Colton*, 1832.

(672.) A good book, like the talk of a great man, is seminal and germinant. Its seeds take root in your minds and bring forth fruit which, if not absolutely original, is yet thoroughly your own and perfectly fresh. —*W. M. Taylor.*

10. Great books.

(673.) Every great book is an action, and every great action is a book. —*Luther*, 1483–1544.

11. The most useful.

(674.) Books that you may carry to the fire and hold readily in your hand are the most useful, after all. —*Dr. S. Johnson.*

12. Voluminous.

(675.) Were all books reduced to their quintessence, many a bulky author would make his appearance in a penny paper. There would scarcely be any such thing in nature as a folio: the works of an age would be contained on a few shelves; not to mention millions of volumes that would be utterly annihilated.
—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

13. Small.

(676.) We shall generally find that the most excellent books in any art or science have been still the smallest and most compendious; and this not without ground; for it is an argument that the author was master of what he wrote, and had a clear notion, and a full comprehension of the subject before him. For the reason of things lies in a little compass, if the mind could at any time be so happy as to light upon it: most of the writings and discourses in the world are but illustration and rhetoric, which signifies as much as nothing to a mind eager in pursuit after the causes and philosophical truth of things. —*Fuller*, 1637–1701.

14. The best.

(677.) The best books are those which every reader thinks *he himself could have written.* Nature, which is the highest excellence, seems familiar and level to all. —*Pascal.*

15. Few are really valuable.

(678.) In books one takes up occasionally one finds a consolation for the impossibility of reading many books, by seeing how many might have been spared,—how little that is new or striking in the great departments of religion, morals, and sentiment. —*John Foster*, 1770–1843.

16. Poor and bad are to be shunned.

(679.) If young men would not be cursed by the infidelity and immorality which lurk within his (Byron's) pages, let them beware how they touch his volumes—as they would a beautiful form infected with the plague. —*James.*

(680.) It is with minds as with bodies: we in our growth greatly resemble the food upon which we grow. Coarse food will naturally produce a coarse body. We do not look for grace and beauty, for Caucasian symmetry and proportion from those who feed upon offal, and whale blubber, and the flesh of seals and bears; and how can we expect minds seizing with hungry avidity the most wretched mental garbage to be gifted with health or stature, with athletic vigour, or noble proportions? Impossible! and therefore in the intellectual regions we are frequently meeting with those whose false and sickly sentimentality—whose deformed and dwarfed mental proportions—betray the cradles in which they were nurtured, the food upon which they were sustained, and the kingdoms in which their days of wan and stunted intelligence have been passed.
—*E. P. Hood.*

(681.) It is right for you, young men, to enrich yourselves with the spoils of all pure literature; but he who would make a favourite of a bad book, simply because it contained a few beautiful passages, might as well caress the hand of an assassin because of the jewellery which sparkles on its fingers.
—*Joseph Parker.*

17. Modern.

(682.) The volumes of antiquity, like medals, may very well serve to amuse the curious; but the works of the moderns, like the current coin of a

kingdom, are much better for immediate use: the former are often prized above their intrinsic value, and kept with care; the latter seldom pass for more than they are worth, and are often subject to the merciless hands of sweating critics and clipping compilers: the works of antiquity were ever praised, those of the moderns read! the treasures of our ancestors have our esteem, and we boast the passion; those of contemporary genius engage our heart, although we blush to own it: the visits we pay the former resemble those we pay the great: the ceremony is troublesome, and yet such as we would not choose to forego: our acquaintance with modern books is like sitting with a friend; our pride is not flattered in the interview, but it gives more internal satisfaction. —*Goldsmith*, 1728–1774.

18. Are meant to be read.

(683.) If thou buyest fine books, only to set up in thy closet, and never readest them, thou wilt be like a man that getteth in nice provisions, and never eats of them. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(684.) It is a vanity to persuade the world one hath much learning by getting a great library. As soon shall I believe every one is valiant that hath a well-furnished armoury. . . . Some books are only cursorily to be tasted of: namely, first, voluminous books, the task of a man's life to read them over; secondly, auxiliary books, only to be repaired to on occasions; thirdly, such as are merely pieces of formality, so that if you look on them you look through them, and he that peeps through the casement of the index sees as much as if he were in the house. But the laziness of those cannot be excused who perfunctorily pass over authors of consequence, and only trade in their tables and contents. These, like city-cheats, having got the names of all country gentlemen, make silly people believe they have long lived in those places where they never were, and flourish with skill in those authors they never seriously studied. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

19. How to read them.

(685.) In reading books, observe this direction: consider the scope and design of the whole, and judge of the particular passages with reference to that; and if there be any single passage, which thou apprehendest not the meaning of, or which at the first reading seems to have another meaning than is agreeable to the author's design, build nothing upon such a passage, but wait awhile to see if the author will not explain himself; and if he does not, and thou canst not at last discern how that passage can, without some straining of words, be reconciled with others, then conclude however, and take for granted that the author, if he appears a man of judgment, is consistent with himself, and consequently that in that passage (however the words may sound) he did not mean to thwart and contradict all the rest of his book.

—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(686.) One sound book read for the purpose of instruction will afford more nourishment to the mind than a whole library skimmed over for amusement. A cottage flower gives honey to the working bee, but a king's garden affords none to the fluttering butterfly. —*E. Cook.*

CARELESS, THE

1. Their inattention to the plainest warnings.

(687.) It is said of birds that build in steeples, being used to the continual ringing of bells, the sound disquiets them not at all; or as those that dwell near the fall of the river Nilus (Nile), the noise of the water deafens them so, that they mind it not. Thus it is that the commonness of the death of others is made but, as it were, a formal thing: many have been so often at the grave, that now the grave is worn out of their hearts; they have gone so often to the house of mourning, that they are grown familiar with death; they look upon it as a matter of custom for men to die and be buried, and when the solemnity is over, the thoughts of death are over also; as soon as the grave is out of their sight, preparation for the grave is out of their mind: then they go to their worldly business, yea, to coveting and sinning, as if the last man that ever should be were buried.

—*Caryll*, 1602–1673.

(688.) Oh, the folly of men that take not warning by others! Silly fish are caught by the angle or net, and carried to the fire, yet they that remain are still greedy of the bait; Satan takes some sinners with the snares and baits of his temptations, jerks them out of the water of life, and casts them into the unquenchable fire, yet those that survive are as ready to hearken to his suggestions as if there were no such thing. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(689.) Silly man is like the foolish chickens; though the kite comes and takes away many of their fellows, yet the rest continue pecking the ground, never heeding their owner, nor minding their shelter. Death comes and snatches away one man here, a second there; one before them, another behind them, and they are killed by death, undone for ever; yet they who survive take no warning, but persist in their wicked and ungodly ways (Job iv. 20, 21).

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(690.) Wonderful stupidity! that they who see that carrying dead bodies to the grave, is as common a work as the midwifes taking children into the world, and that this life is but the road to another, and that all men are posting on to their journey's end, should think no more considerately whither so many souls do go, that daily shoot the gulf of death. Wonderful! that it should be possible for a man awake, to believe that he must shortly be gone from earth, and enter into an unchangeable, endless life, and yet not bend the thoughts of his soul, and the labours of his life, to secure his true and durable felicity! —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(691.) A plough is coming from the far end of a long field, and a daisy stands nodding and full of dew-dimples. That furrow is sure to strike the daisy. It casts its shadow as gaily, and exhales its gentle breath as freely, and stands as simple, and radiant and expectant, as ever; and yet that crushing furrow, which is turning and turning others in its course, is drawing near, and in a moment it whirls the heedless flower with sudden reversal under the sod!

And as is the daisy, with no power of thought, so are ten thousand thinking, sentient flowers of life, blossoming in places of peril, and yet thinking that no furrow of disaster is running in toward them—

that no iron plough of trouble is about to overturn them. Sometimes it dimly dawns upon us, when we see other men's mischiefs and wrongs, that we are in the same category with them, and that perhaps the storms which have overtaken them will overtake us also. But it is only for a moment, for we are artful to cover the ear, and not listen to the voice that warns us of our danger. —*Beecher.*

2. Their folly.

(692.) In a good pasture, where many good oxen are, the butcher comes and fetcheth away one and kills it; next day he fetcheth away another, and kills that too. Now, those which he leaves behind feed and fat themselves, till they are driven to the slaughter, not considering what is become of their fellows or what shall become of themselves. So, when Death comes amongst a multitude of men, here taking one and there another, we pamper up ourselves till he overtakes us also. We live as though, like Adam and Abel, we never saw a man die before us, whereas every churchyard, every ague, every sickness, should be a preacher of mortality unto us. —*Alphonsus ab Avendano*, 1590.

(693.) Careless soul! thou art like a passenger in a ship; asleep or awake, he is going his voyage. Thou art like that silly bird, that puts her head among the reeds, and then thinks she is safe from the hunter, because she sees him not. Sinner! God sees thee when thou dost not see Him, and is taking His aim at thee. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(694.) It seemeth an easy matter to a felon to think of his crime, while he is not apprehended, because he lives in hope to escape, and therefore he can laugh when he talks of the gallows; but when he comes to it, the case is altered. Offenders may escape the justice of men, but no man can so escape the hand of God. It may now seem a small and easy matter to you to think and talk of unpardoned sin; but the day is coming when you would give all the world if you had it for a pardon, as light as you do now make of it. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(695.) Verily, sirs, the case of careless sinners is never the safer, because they see not, and fear not the danger. A man in a consumption or dropsy is never the further from death, though he be never so confident that he shall not die. If a thief at the gallows have a conceit that he shall escape, that will not save his life. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(696.) We are either lost or not lost. If not, by all means "sleep on and take your rest." I should be sorry to disturb you. If the waves dance and play round your ship as she ploughs through a silver sea; if gentle zephyrs fill her sails; if no sound is heard but the song of the watch on deck, and the gentle dash of mimic billows as they break on your bows—lulling to slumber and happy dreams; then, happy voyagers, with a bright moon riding the calm heaven above, and wide sea-room below, "sleep on and take your rest." But if, instead of this, a shock has come that makes your bark shiver from stem to stern, if hurrying feet tread the deck overhead, if signal guns are flashing and booming through the darkness, if the rattling cordage tells that they lower the boats, if men, pale with fear, rush into the cabin to cry, We sink; and if, when we leap from bed on the floor, the water, rushing through many a yawning seam, splashes on our naked feet, the time is not for sleep—but for instant action, and such cries as this, "O sirs, what shall I do to be saved!" Who can miss the application of this to our condition? With that curse of a broken law impending over us, in danger of perishing every moment so long as we are out of Christ, how should we cry, Save me, I perish; and give immediate heed to the call, that Christ, seeing our danger, rises from His throne in heaven to sound down, "Lay hold of eternal life." —*Guthrie.*

3. The pitiableness of their condition.

(697.) Of all men out of hell, none more to be pitied than he who hangs over its mouth, and yet is without fear. What good does physic poured down a dead man's throat? If he cannot be chafed to some sense of his condition, all applications are hopeless; and if sharp affliction, which is the strongest physic, leaves the sinner senseless, there is little prospect that anything else will do him good. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(698.) Oh what a sight is it to see a man go merry and laughing towards damnation, and make a jest of his own undoing! to see him at the brink of hell, and will not believe it! like a madman boasting of his wit, or a drunken man of his sobriety; or as the swine is delighted when the butcher is shaving his throat to cut it; or, as the fatted lambs are skipping in the pasture, that to-morrow must be killed and eaten; or, as the bird sits singing when the gun is levelled to kill him; or, as the greedy fish run striving which shall catch the bait, that must presently be snatched out of their element, and lie dying on the bank. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(699.) The devil amuses us till the last moment, as a poor man is kept amused while the soldiers are coming to take him. When they come, he cries and struggles in vain, for they will not release him. —*Vianney.*

4. The perilousness of their position.

(700.) There is not only a little time between you and judgment, but a little time between you and execution, nothing but the slender thread of a frail life, which is soon fretted asunder; and will you, can you, sleep in sin so near eternity, and laugh and dance over the brink of hell? You cannot soon enough flee from the wrath to come. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(701.) When thou hast had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleasant draughts and morsels, and a little more of the honours and riches of the world, thy portion will be spent, and thy pleasures ended, and all is then gone that thou settest thy heart upon; of all that thou soldest thy Saviour and salvation for, there is nothing left but the heavy reckoning. As a thief that sits merrily spending the money in an alehouse that he hath stolen, when men are riding in post-haste to apprehend him; so it is with you; while you are drowned in cares or fleshly pleasures, and making merry with your own shame, death is coming in post-haste to seize upon you, and carry your souls to such a place and state, as now you little know or think of. Suppose when you are bold and busy in your sin, that a messenger were but coming post from London to apprehend you, and take away your life though you saw him not: yet if you knew of his coming, it would mar your mirth, and you

would be thinking of the haste he makes, and hearkening when he knocketh at your door. Oh, that you could but see what haste death makes, though yet it hath not overtaken you! No post so swift! No messenger more sure! As sure as the sun will be with you in the morning, though it hath many thousand and hundred thousand miles to go in the night; so sure will death be quickly with you, and then where is your sport and pleasure?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(702.) If there ever was a mild and calm teacher, it was Christ; and yet, when one asked Him, "Are there few that be saved?" He said, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." The gate was built for entering, it was designed expressly for that purpose, and God desires that men shall enter, and has made arrangements for all to enter; and yet, He saw reasons that led Him to say, calmly and affectionately, but plainly, "Strive —*agonise*—to enter in; for many will seek to enter, and shall not be able."

I know not how you feel, but one word from the lips of Christ is more potent with me than all the reasonings of philosophy. I believe in Him. And, seeing that there was danger, He was at least honest when He declared that the circumstances in which men lived were such that we should agonise—that is to say, put forth every effort—to enter eternal life. When Christ speaks thus, I know that there is mischief in the air; I know that there is peril about; I know that there is danger which may well arrest the attention and call out the utmost skill and exertion of man. I know that some have a feeling of security; but it is unwise, it is fatal. No man is in so much danger as he that thinks there is no danger.

Why, when the bell rings, when the watchman rends the air with cries of "Fire! *fire!* FIRE!" when in every direction there is the pattering of feet on the sidewalk, and when the engines come rattling up to the burning house, one after another, the inmates are awakened, and they rush out; and they are safest that are most terrified, and that suffer most from a sense of danger. One only remains behind. He hears the tumult, but it weaves itself into the shape of dreams; and he seems to be listening to some parade; and soon the sounds begin to be indistinct in his ear; and at length they cease to make any impression upon him. During all this time he is inhaling the deadly gas with which his apartment has become filled, gradually his senses are benumbed, and finally he is rendered unconscious by suffocation. And, in the midst of peril, and the thunder of excitement, that man who is the least awake, and the least frightened, is the very man that is the most likely to be burned up.

—*Beecher.*

(703.) Some years since a vessel lay becalmed on a smooth sea in the vicinity of an iceberg. In full view, the mountain mass of frozen splendour rose before the passengers of the vessel, its towers and pinnacles glittering in the sunlight, and clothed in the enchanting and varied colours of the rainbow. A party on board the vessel resolved to climb the steep sides of the iceberg, and spend the day in a picnic on the summit. The novelty and attraction of the hazardous enterprise blinded them to the danger, and they left the vessel, ascended the steep mountain of ice, spread their table on the summit, and enjoyed their dance of pleasure on the surface of the frosty marble. Nothing disturbed their security or marred their enjoyment. Their sport was finished and they made their way down to the water level and embarked. But scarcely had they reached a safe distance before the loud crash of the crumbling mass was heard. The scene of their gaiety was covered with the huge fragments of the falling pinnacles, and the giant iceberg rolled over with a shock that sent a thrill of awe and terror to the breast of every spectator. Not one of that gay party could ever be induced to try that rash experiment again.

But what is this world with all its brilliancy, with all its hopes, and its alluring pleasures, but a glittering iceberg, melting slowly away? Its false splendour, enchanting to the eye, dissolves, and as drop after drop trickles down its sides, or steals unseen through its hidden pores, its very foundations are undermined, and the steady decay prepares for a sudden catastrophe. Such is the world to many who dance over its surface, and in a false security forget the treacherous footing on which they stand. But can any one who knows what it is, avoid feeling that every moment is pregnant with danger, and that the final catastrophe is hastening on?

Is it in a merely fanciful alarm that we warn you to flee from the wrath to come, that we tell you that every moment of life is full of the deepest solemnity, and that we admonish you of the treacherous character of hopes that glitter like the pinnacles of the iceberg in the sunlight, which a moment may crumble to ruined fragments, strewn over your grave? If it is solemn to die, is it not solemn to live, when any moment may be the door through which you may pass into eternity? What are all the objects upon which you rely—health, strength, youthful vigour—but the frozen marble beneath your feet, that may yield in an hour, when you dream not, and leave you to sink in a river, which no plummet can fathom? Could you be so secure, so heedless of warning, if you realised your true condition?

CHARACTER.

I. *DISPOSITION.*

1. Differences of character.

(704.) There are differences of character which, springing from constitutional peculiarities, or early education, grace will modify, but never altogether eradicate on this side the grave. Such are those in Bunyan's pictures, all painted, no doubt, from life —as well Mr. Great-heart the giant-killer and hero of a hundred battles, as Mr. Feeble-mind, who started at his own shadow and trembled at the falling of a leaf. There are also differences among Christians which imply no defect; just as there are in countenances which are very unlike, and yet, be the complexion dark or fair, the hair of golden colour or like the raven's wing, are very beautiful. We do not expect or even wish all good men to be alike, any more than I would have all the members of a family alike; all flowers alike—none but roses in the garden, or daisies in the field; the Church of Christ like the meadows below, or the star-spangled heavens above, owing its beauty in part to that variety in unity which marks all the works of God, and mars none of them. —*Guthrie.*

2. To what extent we are responsible for it.

(705.) As to constitution—look at Martin Luther: we may see the man every day; his eyes, and nose, and mouth attest his character. Look at Melancthon: he is like a snail with his couple of horns; he puts out his horn and feels—and feels—and feels. No education could have rendered these two men alike. Their difference began in the womb. Luther dashes in saying his things; Melancthon must go round about—he must consider what the Greek says, and what the Syriac says. Some men are born minute men—lexicographers—of a German character: they will hunt through libraries to rectify a syllable. Other men are born keen as a razor; they have a sharp, severe, strong acumen; they cut everything to pieces; their minds are like a case of instruments; touch which you will, it wounds; they crucify a modest man. Such men should aim at a right knowledge of character. If they attained this, they would find out the sin that easily besets them. The greater the capacity of such men, the greater their cruelty. They ought to blunt their instruments; they ought to keep them in a case. Other men are ambitious—fond of power: pride and power give a velocity to their motions. Others are born with a quiet, retiring mind. Some are naturally fierce, and others naturally mild and placable. Men often take to themselves great credit for what they owe entirely to nature. If we would judge rightly, we should see that narrowness or expansion of mind, niggardliness or generosity, delicacy or boldness, have less of merit or demerit than we commonly assign to them. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(706.) Nature seems to treat man as a painter would his disciple, to whom he commits the outlines of a figure highly sketched, which the scholar for himself is to colour and complete. Thus from nature we derive senses and passions, and an intellect which each of us for himself has to model into a character. —*Harris.*

(707.) Neither the vices nor the virtues of man are his nature; to praise or to blame him is not to know him; approbation or disapprobation does not define him; the names of good or bad tell us nothing of what he is. Put the robber Cartouche in an Italian court of the fifteenth century; he would be a great statesman. Transport this nobleman, stingy and narrow-minded, into a shop; he will be an exemplary tradesman. This public man, of inflexible probity, is in his drawing-room an intolerable coxcomb. This father of a family, so humane, is an idiotic politician. Change a virtue in its circumstances, and it becomes a vice; change a vice in its circumstances, and it becomes a virtue. Regard the same quality from two sides; on one it is a fault, on the other a merit. The essential of a man is found concealed far below these moral badges. A *character* is a force, like gravity, weight, or steam, capable, as it may happen, of pernicious or profitable effects, and which must be defined otherwise than by the amount of weight it can lift or the havoc it can cause. It is therefore to ignore man, to reduce him to an aggregate of virtues and vices; it is to lose sight in him of all but the exterior and social side: it is to neglect the inner and natural element. —*Taine.*

(708.) We receive our minds from our birth, just as we do our bodies; and we are no more responsible for the proportions of the one than we are for the proportions of the other. But as a man, though not responsible for weakness, or deformity, or shortness, or length, or uncouthness of limbs, *is* responsible for the use to which he puts those limbs, whatever they may be, good or bad, and is responsible for the training they receive; so, though a man is not responsible for the conditions and proportions of his mind, he *is* responsible for the training which he gives it—for the restraint of some of its parts, and the development of other of its parts, and the right carriage of the whole. —*Beecher.*

3. How it is formed.

(709.) Character is consolidated habit, and habit forms itself by repeated action. Habits are like paths beaten hard by the multitude of light footsteps which go to and fro. The daily restraint or indulgence of the nature, in the business, in the home, in the imagination, which is the inner laboratory of the life, creates the character which, whether it be here or there, settles the destiny.

—*J. Baldwin Brown.*

(710.) Amongst the mountains bordering on our northern lakes, a few years back a mighty cave was discovered, consisting of fretted halls, long corridors and aisles, their roofs gemmed with pendant stalagmites, which have grown up into monster mounds of fantastic shapes, as during thousands and thousands of years in those untrodden cavernous retreats, the water, charged with carbonate of lime, has, drop by drop, formed their shapes, white, like ivory! I have watched the water falling on them, or in the finest sheet of liquid waving over their crests. To the eye it seems marvellous that such mounds of adamantine quality could have grown from the passing touch of that element; but Nature, while displaying her cunning, and exhibiting her process to the beholder, shows him what mighty strata the almost imperceptible flow of water builds up in course of time; and (what is most to our purpose) shows likewise, in the economy of her constructiveness, that every single drop, and every successive wave of liquid, though finer than tissue paper, must have made its deposit, and left its influence upon the rocky structure. Exactly so is it with our minds. Every influence, the simple, transient, trifling sights and sounds which seem almost too slight to arrest observation, and are so immaterial that they escape our memory, nevertheless (like the water over the stalactite) have passed over the surface of observation and thought, and have added their quota in the construction of our character.

—*J. C. M. Bellew.*

(711.) Do you know what that silent work is which is going on in you? O builder! do you ever think of all the structures that are going up in these great cities? There are none that are building so fast and with so many hands as that structure of which you are the subject.

We read in fairy tales of how great chasms have been bridged over in a night by benevolent spirits, dwarfs, ouphes, and what not; how they hustled together vast rocks, and piled one upon another, and built piers, and spanned them with arches, so that the brave knight could pass over them, and reach the castle, and get his lady-love. We read in fairy tales of how cities have been built in a single night; and we imagine to ourselves how, when we sleep, ten million constructing figures might carry

up the walls, and surmount them with golden domes, and how whole cities might stand in the morning where the night before there was only a wilderness. But there is something more strange actually going on in you. There is not a thought that is not striking a blow; there is not an impulse that is not doing mason work; there is not a passion thrust this way or that way that is not a workman's thrust. The imagination in all directions is building. You think that you are throwing out the net for game; you think that you are laying plans for accomplishment; but back of all the conscious work that is going on in you, back of your visible attainments, there is another work going on. There are as many master-workmen in you as there are separate faculties; and there are as many blows being struck as there are separate acts of emotion or volition. And this work is going on perpetually. Every single day these myriad forces are building, building, building. Here is a great structure going up point by point, story by story, although you are not conscious of it. It is a building of character. It is a building that is to stand. And the word of inspiration warns you to take heed how you build it; to see to it that you have a foundation that shall endure; to make sure that you are building on it, not for the hour in which you live, but for that hour of revelation, that hour of testing, when that which hath been done shall be brought out, and you shall be seen just as your are. —*Beecher.*

4. How it is to be judged.

(712.) As a man loveth, so he is; for the lover is in the thing loved more properly than in himself: wherefore, if a man love earthly things, he may be called an earthly man; but if he love heavenly things or God, he may be called an heavenly or a godly man. —*Colet*, 1444–1519.

(713.) Actions, looks, words, steps, form the alphabet by which you may spell characters.
—*Lavater*, 1741–1801.

(714.) As daylight can be seen through very small holes, so little things will illustrate a person's character.

(715.) We must not form our opinion of men as of a picture or a piece of sculpture, by one view; there is an inward depth and a heart, which we must fathom; the veil of modesty hangs over merit, and the mask of hypocrisy conceals malignity. There are only a small number of judges able to distinguish what is real, and who have a right to give an opinion. It is only little by little, and when laid bare by times and opportunities, that perfect virtue and consummate vice at last show themselves in their true colours.
—*La Bruyère*, 1646–1696.

(716.) The reflection of other men's good-will toward us we use more than anything else to estimate our characters by. Those who do this are like buoys that are always on the surface of the water, but that move with it as it rises and falls with the ocean-tides. We lie like floats on the world-tide, which goes in and out, and up and down; and we have no gauge on the shore to show what is our absolute condition. It is merely relative to the fluctuations of the ever-shifting, ever-changing tide of human feeling. —*Beecher.*

(717.) Find what the magnet is that draws each one on, and you have discovered his character. His supreme desire fixes his value. To know what he seeks is to know what manner of man he is, better than by knowing in what way he seeks it: just as you can judge a traveller's destination better by seeing which way his face is set, than by observing his mode of conveyance.
—*F. D. Huntington*

(718.) I have generally found that a man is not much better than he looks, and if a man's outward life is not right, I shall not feel bound to believe that his inward life is acceptable to God. "Ah, sir," said one in Rowland Hill's time, "he is not exactly what I should like, but he has a good heart at bottom." The shrewd old preacher replied, "When you go to the market and buy fruit, and there are none but rotten apples on the top of the basket, you say to the market woman, 'These are a very bad lot.' Now, if the woman replied, 'Yes, they are rather gone at top, sir, but they are better as you go down,' you would not be so silly as to believe her, but would say, 'No, no, the lower we go, the worse they will be, for the best are always put on the top.'" And so it is with men's characters; if they cannot be decent, sober, and truthful in their daily life, their inner parts are more abominable still; the deeper you pry into their secrets the worse will be the report. —*Spurgeon.*

5. The most powerful of all moral influences.

(719.) It is very difficult to persuade men that it is so, because they have the idea that there is only power where there is noise, bustle, and excitement. But it is really not so. All the forces in nature that are the most powerful, are the most quiet. We speak of the rolling thunder as powerful; but gravitation, which makes no noise, is ten thousand times ten thousand times more powerful. We say the red lightning is very powerful; so it is, when it rends the gnarled oak into splinters, or splits the solid battlements into fragments; but it is not half so powerful as that gentle light, that comes so softly from the skies, that we do not feel it, that travels with inconceivable speed, strikes, and yet is not felt. The things that are most noisy are not the most powerful. An eloquent speech will never have the effect of an eloquent life. The most conclusive logic that a preacher uses in the pulpit, will never exercise the effect that the piety, the consistent piety of character, will exercise all over the world. The preacher who may have few to hear him, and who has not the power of expressing clearly and intelligibly the great thoughts that he feels, in his walks amid his flock, by his beautiful and holy character, may be spreading an influence around him that will tell more upon the destinies of souls than if he had wielded all the thunders of Demosthenes, or pleaded with the persuasive eloquence of Cicero. It is not what we intend to do that strikes the most, it is what we are. —*Cumming.*

6. Its transcendent importance.

(720.) What does a man take with him when from the extreme verge of life he launches into what lies beyond? It looks as if he took nothing. Death seems to pass a sponge over all that has gone before. Be it the end, or be it a new beginning, it seems a total breaking off from all that life has

hitherto consisted in. That is what makes it terrible.

But, if we look at it truly, his past life is just the one thing that a man does take with him when he dies. He takes himself. And that self is the product of all his past experiences and actions. As an oak bears in itself the results of every shower that through long years has freshened it, of every gale that has toughened it or stripped its boughs, of the sunshine that has fed it, and the drought that has parched it; so a man, when he stands at the end of life, is what he has been made by all his joys, and sufferings, and actions. That is what he takes into the other world—his own character.

The life to come and the life that now is are parts of one another. They are related just as youth and manhood are related. The man is not the same that the boy was, but what the boy was entered into the man as a part of him. The strength I gain by my victories this year, and the weakness into which I come by defeat, will be a part of me next year. So, there is not an act, not a word or thought, but casts its influence forward into the to-morrow that lies beyond death.

The whole teaching of the Bible as to the future life centres on this—that what we are now is supremely important with reference to what we shall be then. Every warning, every encouragement, all the grand and terrible imagery of the Judgment, all the tender assurances of Christ, are directed to that end. The object of them all is to impress the transcendent importance of character. Language and thought are tasked to the utmost to express this. Visions of woe unspeakable, of joy ineffable, are used to picture the results of well-doing and evil-doing; to show that they radiate into eternity, and are immeasurable. And we have no right to break the force of this teaching by the assumption that one of two grand results is possible, and that, so a man is saved at last, his misdeeds will hurt him little. That is neither according to Scripture nor moral reason. He that is only righteous is to be "righteous still;" he that is holy, to be "holy still." According as a man has attained in this stage, so is his beginning in the next. He must commence there according as he has finished here, on a high plane or a low one. —*Beecher.*

II. *REPUTATION.*

(721.) *Your success is very much connected with your personal character.* Herod "heard John gladly," and he "did many things," because he knew the preacher to be a just and holy man. Words uttered from the heart find their way to the heart by a holy sympathy. Character is power.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(722.) A young man had volunteered, and was expecting daily to be ordered to the seat of war. One day his mother gave him an unpaid bill with money, and asked him to pay it. When he returned home at night she said, "Did you pay that bill." "Yes," he answered. In a few days the bill was sent in a second time. "I thought," she said to her son, "that you paid this." "I really don't remember, mother; you know I've had so many things on my mind." "But you said you did." "Well," he answered, "if I said I did, I did." He went away, and his mother took the bill herself to the shop. The young man had been in the town all his life, and what opinion was held of him this will show. "I am quite sure," she said, "that my son paid this some days ago; he has been very busy since, and has quite forgotten about it; but he told me that day he had, and says if he said then that he had, he is quite sure he did." "Well," said the man, "I forget about it; but if he ever said he did, he did." Wasn't that a grand character to have?

CHARACTER. CHRISTIAN

1. Its preciousness.

(723.) There are things precious, not from the materials of which they are made, but from the risk and difficulty of bringing them to perfection. The speculum of the largest telescope foils the optician's skill in casting. Too much or two little heat—the interposition of a grain of sand, a slight alteration in the temperature of the weather, and all goes to pieces—it must be recast. Therefore, when successfully finished, it is a matter for almost the congratulation of a country. Rarer, and more difficult still than the costliest part of the most delicate of instruments, is the completion of Christian character.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(724.) There are sometimes rare and beautiful wares brought into the market that are invoiced at almost fabulous rates. Ignorant people wonder why they are priced so high. The simple reason is that they cost so much to procure. That luxurious article labelled £200 was procured by the adventurous hunter, who, at the hazard of his neck, brought down the wild mountain-goat, out of whose glossy hair the fabric was wrought. Yonder pearl that flashes on the brow of the bride is precious, because it was rescued from the great deep at the risk of the pearl-fisher's life, as he was lifted into the boat half-dead, with the blood gushing from his nostrils. Yonder ermine, flung so carelessly over the proud beauty's shoulder, cost terrible battles with Polar Ice and hurricane.

And so is it that the best part of a Christian character is that which was procured at the sorest cost. Patience is a beautiful trait, but it is not worn oftenest by those who walk on life's sunny side in silver slippers. It is the product of dark nights of tempest, and of those days of adversity whose high noon is but a midnight. For "the *trial* of your faith worketh patience." Purity of soul is like purity in gold, where the hottest fires turn out the most refined and precious metals from the crucible. Joseph found his crucible in an Egyptian prison; but he came out thence with the soul of a virgin. Purity of character is often bought in this wicked city by the bitter price of a crust of bread eaten with a good conscience in an attic; when a guilty connivance would have been rewarded with French satins and a harlot's sumptuous couch.

—*Cuyler.*

2. How it is formed.

(725.) Did you ever see a sculptor make a statuette or statue? He begins with dirt, you know. He has a few rude sticks for a frame; and then he puts on the clay. When it is properly tempered, he roughs out the general form. Then he begins to scrape off the plaster. Then he works for symmetry, and lines, and grace, and proportions. Then he works for resemblances. And at last, as the work is becoming consummated, he puts on the finest

touches. And all the way through it is dirt, dirt, dirt! But this is not half so dirty as bringing up men in this world of temptation and passion, where all their desires are overflowing like a flood. Yet, as the sculptor goes on working thus with this lifeless material, to bring out at last the finest lines and lineaments, that the model, when completed, may be transmuted into the glowing marble, or bronze, or silver, or gold, as the case may be—so God is dealing with us; so He is building us up: He is taking off and putting on, that after a while, when the work is completed, we may be transmuted into higher forms, and be as pillars in the temple of our God, and become men in Christ Jesus glowing with all the light of blessedness and immortality.

—*Beecher.*

(726.) It is not great, or special, or extraordinary experiences which constitute in the best sense the "religious character." It is the uniform daily walk with God; serving Him in little things as well as great things;—in the ordinary duties and everyday avocations, as well as in the midst of grave and eventful contingencies. As the sublimest symphony is made up of separate single notes; as the wealth of the cornfield is made up of separate stalks, or rather of separate grains; as the magnificent texture, with its gorgeous combinations of colour, its pictures cunningly interweaved by the hand or the shuttle, is made up of individual threads; as the mightiest avalanche that ever came thundering down from its Alpine throne, uprooting villages and forests, is made up of tiny snow-flakes; so it is with the spiritual life. That life is itself the grandest illustration of the power of littles. Character is th product of daily, hourly actions, and words, and thoughts; daily forgivenesses, unselfishness, kindnesses, sympathies, charities, sacrifices for the good of others, struggles against temptation, submissiveness under trial. Oh, it is these, like the blending colours in a picture, or the blending notes of music, which constitute "the man!" —*Macduff.*

3. Must be positive.

(727.) He is not half a saint who is but a negative saint. The forbearance of gross corruptions is the easiest and least part of religion, and therefore will not speak any man in a state of salvation. The tree that is barren and without good fruit is for the fire, as well as the tree that brings forth evil fruit.

For men to think to excuse themselves that they do no hurt, wrong neither man, woman, or child, and are not, as the Pharisee said, as the publicans, who generally were oppressors, is but a vain, foolish thing. The idle servant might have said, "Lord, I did no harm with my talent; I did not lay it out in rioting and drunkenness, or any way to Thy dishonour; I only hid it, and did not improve it,"—yet this was enough to condemn him. Can we call ground good ground for bearing no weeds, if it never bring forth good corn? Or do we count that servant a good servant who doth not wrong his master in his estate by purloining or wasting it, if he live idle all day, and neglect the business his master appoints him? —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(728.) Reader, believe it, though thou mayest live by a negative religion, yet thou canst not die by it, much less stand before the judgment seat of Christ with it. It is true, even such a religion is of high price with men; but if alone, it is abomination in the sight of God. Reader, let me reason the case with thee. In other things all are for fruitfulness in what is good. The husbandman would have his ground fruitful in good corn, as well as empty of weeds. He would have his cattle labour, and do him service, and thinks it not enough that they are in the stable or fields, and do him no hurt. The master would have his servant industrious in his shop or field, or some way or other about his business, and is not pleased to see him sit still all day, and forbear to purloin his goods, or fight with his fellow-servants. The father who sends his child to school would have him learn the languages, and profit daily therein, and without this will not be satisfied to hear that his child sits still all day at school, learns no oaths or blasphemies, calls no names, abuses none of his companions. And, reader, why should God be contented with thy harmlessness, when thou art barren and unprofitable? Hath not God as much right to thee as thou hast to thy ground or cattle? and art not thou as much bound to God as thy servant or child is bound to thee? and why, then, shouldst thou think to put God off with that in thyself, which thou wilt not be put off with in thy ground, or cattle, or servant, or child?

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(729.) Christianity ends not in negatives. No man clears his garden of weeds, but in order to the planting of flowers or useful herbs in their room. God calls upon us to dispossess our corruptions, but it is for the reception of new inhabitants. A room may be clean, and yet empty; but it is not enough that our hearts be swept, unless they be also garnished; or that we lay aside our pride, our luxury, our covetousness, unless humility, temperance, and liberality, rise up and shine in their places. The design of religion would be very poor and short, should it look no further than only to keep men from being swine, and goats, and tigers, without improving the principles of humanity into positive and higher perfections. The soul may be cleansed from all blots, and yet still be left but a blank.

But Christianity that is of a thriving, aspiring nature, requires to proceed from grace to grace; to "virtue adding patience, to patience temperance, to temperance meekness, to meekness brotherly kindness," and the like; thus ascending by degrees, till at length the top of the ladder reaches heaven, and conveys the soul so qualified into the mansions of glory. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(730.) In galleries of art we not uncommonly notice statues which seem to be carved in very exact measurement, and yet are thoroughly disappointing. There is an absence of strength, muscle, and vigour; and then we look at some bold effort of genius where a fault is conspicuous, and yet there is so much nerve and power and effect developed in the rest of the sculpture, that we are charmed with its excellencies, and forget the blemish in the presence of so many recommendations. It is very much the same in character: a tame, powerless, unemphatic character is singularly uninteresting. —*Bellew.*

4. Should be conspicuous for truth and honour.

(731.) These qualities of truth and honour, which the world appreciates and admires, and which the Bible recognises and commends, constitute one of the developments of a Christian character. If you

have these qualities, men, after they have associated with you for years, will bear this testimony respecting you: "He is like a glass bee-hive. You can always see what his motives are. He is full of honey. The more you know him, the better you will like him. He is true and honourable." But there are men who are like another kind of bee-hive —one in which the bees are all dead, and there is nothing left except empty comb and miserable moth-millers. —*Beecher.*

5. Should be complete.

(732.) You shall rarely find a man eminent in sundry faculties of mind, or sundry manuary trades. If his memory be excellent, his fantasy is but dull: if his fancy be busy and quick, his judgment is but shallow: if his judgment be deep, his utterance is harsh. Which also holds no less in the activities of the hand. And if it happen, that one man be qualified with skill of divers trades, and practice this variety, you shall seldom find such one thriving in his estate. With spiritual gifts, it is otherwise: which are so chained together, that who excels in one, hath some eminency in more; yea, in all. Look upon faith: she is attended with a bevy of graces: he that believes cannot but have hope; if hope, patience: he that believes and hopes, must needs find joy in God; if joy, love of God: he that loves God, cannot but love his brother: his love to God breeds piety and care to please, sorrow for offending, fear to offend; his love to men, fidelity and Christian beneficence. Vices are seldom single; but virtues go ever in troops: they go so thick, that sometimes some are hid in the crowd; which yet are, but appear not. They may be shut out from sight: they cannot be severed.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(733.) In the body you observe, there are many members, yet all make but one body; and every member so useful, that the others are beholden to it. So in the Christian there are many graces, but one new creature; and the eye of knowledge cannot say to the hand of faith, I have no need of thee; nor the hand of faith to the foot of obedience; but all are preserved by the mutual care they have of one another. For as ruin to the whole city may enter at a breach in one part of its wall, and the soul run out through a wound in a particular member of the body; so the ruin of all grace, may, yea, must needs follow on the ruin of any one. There is indeed a stronger bond of necessity between graces of our souls, than there is between the members of our body. 'Tis possible, yea ordinary for some member to be cut off from the body, without the death of the whole, because all the members of the body are not vital parts. But every grace is a vital part in the new creature, and so essential to its very being, that its absence cannot be supplied *per vicarium*. In the body, one eye can make a shift to do the office of its fellow which is put out; and one hand do the other's work that is cut off, though may be not so exactly; but faith cannot do the office of love, nor love the work of obedience. The lack of one wheel, spoils the motion of the whole clock; and if one grace should be wanting, the end would not be attained for which this rare piece of workmanship is set up in the saint's heart.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(734.) Let your faith set all graces on work in their proper order and proportion; and carry on the work of holiness and obedience in harmony; and set not one part against another, nor look at one while you forget or neglect another.

Every grace and duty is to be a help to all the rest, and the want or neglect of any one is a hindrance to all: as the want of one wheel or smaller particle in a clock or watch will make all stand still, or go out of order. The new creature consisteth of all due parts, as the body doth of all its members. The soul is as a musical instrument, which must neither want one string, nor have one out of tune, nor neglected, without spoiling all the melody. A fragment of the most excellent work, or one member of the comeliest body cut off, is not beautiful; the beauty of a holy soul and life, is not only in the quality of each grace and beauty, but in the proportion, feature, and harmony of all.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(735.) A little infant has all the parts of an adult: there is nothing added to him even to his dying hour: the only difference between him in the different periods of his life is, that his parts are more matured by age, and capable of greater exertion when he arrives at manhood than they were in the earlier stages of his existence. The different rays of light may be separated by a prism, and so be brought under distinct and separate consideration: but it is the assemblage of all the rays that constitute light.

In like manner, we may separate in idea the graces of a Christian: but where there is one truly operative, there is, and must be all. —*Simeon.*

(736.) When the apostle Peter exhorts all believers to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, he employs a word in the original Greek, ἐπιχορηγήσατε, which signifies, *to lead a chorus or band of musicians.* The idea involved in the expression is, that perfect harmony should exist between all these virtues, as between the notes of a piece of music, each enhancing the effect of the other.

There is harmony in colours as well as in sounds; we see an example of it in every object of nature; and when the proper hues are associated together, the complementary ones contrasting and harmonising with one another, the effect is exceedingly pleasing. As in the field of nature, so in the Christian character, all the graces should blend in such a way that the effect of the whole may be to the eye what sweet melody is to the ear.

Were this the case, no more beautiful or convincing exhibition of the work of the Spirit could be given to the world. Like the four rows of precious stones in the breastplate of the Jewish high-priest, each jewel shining by its own coloured light, and yet contributing to the brilliancy of the whole, this breastplate of righteousness worn by the Christian would invest him with a sacred character, make him an interpreter of the oracles of God, and an instrument of salvation to men. But alas! how rare is such a symmetry of the graces in the Christian character; how seldom are the stones of the spiritual building laid with colours that harmonise with one another. Graces that charm us by their beauty, lie close by the side of defects that repel us. The good qualities are overshadowed by glaring weaknesses. The blue of love may be placed side by side with the sickly green of envy and jealousy, the purple of humility, with the red and angry glare of passion. What virtue is there that does not at times sin against its fellows? What Christian is there, so

perfect, that we have not to say of him, as our Lord said of the Asiatic churches after enumerating a long list of their good works, "Nevertheless, I have *somewhat* against thee"? —*Macmillan.*

6. How it is to be judged.

(737.) Plutarch speaks of two men that were hired at Athens for some public work, whereof the one was full of tongue, but slow at hand, and the other blank in speech, yet an excellent workman. Being called upon by the magistrates to express themselves, and to declare at large how they would proceed, when the first had made a long speech, and described it from point to point, the other seconded him in few words, saying, "Ye men of Athens, what this man hath said in words that will I make good in true performance." And as he was adjudged the better artisan, so is the man of action the better Christian. It is not the man of words, but the man of deeds—not the leafy, but the fruitful, not the discoursing, but the doing Christian—that shall be blessed here in this world and happy in that which is to come. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(738.) There are many men like ponds, clear at the top, and mud at the bottom: fair in their tongues, but foul in their hearts.
—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(739.) That is a man's mind and will which is habitually his mind and will. When the very inclination and bent of your will is right, then only is your heart right. A bowl may, by a rub, or bank, be turned contrary to the bias; but when it is over the rub, it will follow the bias again. So the soul is, when hindered from ascending a little while, but when it is got over the stop, it will be mounting upward. A stone will move upwards against its nature, while it is followed by the strength of the hand that cast it; but when the strength is spent, it will quickly fall again. It is not an extraordinary act that you can try yourselves by, but such a free course and tenor of your lives as will prove that you have a new nature, or a heart inclined and habituated to God. The main business, therefore, is to prove that you are habitually resolved.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(740.) A Christian may have some hardness in his heart, yet not have an hard heart. A field may have tares in it, yet we call it a field of wheat.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(741.) There is a ring about the Christian man that is not to be mistaken. Do what you will with him, he is not what the other man is, and you cannot make him so. Here is a new coin which looks amazingly like a sovereign, and I turn it over; it is so clever a counterfeit that I cannot discover whether it is gold or no. Here is another: it is a light sovereign I find. I look at them both, and at first sight I am inclined to think that my new minted sovereign is the best of the two; for, say I, the other is evidently much worn and light. But there is a ring about the Christian that proves him to be gold, after all, even when he is worn and short in weight. You may deface him so that the king's image is not apparent upon him, but he is gold for all that; he only needs to be tried, and in the hour of trial that golden sound of grace will detect him, and he will prove still to be one in whom God hath made a difference. —*Spurgeon.*

(742.) Beethoven was in the habit of playing his symphonies on an old harpsichord as a test. They would thus be made to stand out in their true character, with nothing to hide their faults, or exaggerate their beauties. If, then, they commended themselves to his ear, they were good, and might safely be sent forth to the world.

Thus wisely may we test our character, endeavouring to ascertain how it manifests itself—not on great and rare occasions, or before the public eye, where there is a chance for display and applause, but in private, in the little, homely, everyday duties, which attract no particular attention, and reward us with no praise.

If, in the retired nook of your own breast, in the regulation of your thoughts and feelings; if, in the bosom of your family, in the monotonous round of home life each day, you preserve a sweet, serene temper, and go forward cheerfully, taking a real pleasure in duty as duty, and in all these little matters honestly strive to serve and please the heavenly Master; if, in a word, your piety sounds well on such an unpretending harp, it is good, genuine, tested; it will one day win acclamation from a vaster and nobler throng than ever was thrilled by the genius of Beethoven.

7. The final test in this world.

(743.) Talking recently with a lapidary upon the value of gems and the constant increase of false and spurious stones in the market, we asked: "How do you detect the real from the false—the genuine from the paste?" His reply was: "In these modern days, when art has made marvellous progress; when the keen eye, the steady hand, the wealth of science, are all summoned to aid the workman, there leap out from the furnace and the forge gems that shine and sparkle side by side with the diamond and the chrysoprace, and the spurious dazzles the beholder even as the pure. We try acids, and the false will bear the sharp tooth which heretofore has been sure to detect the counterfeit. We subject the stone to a fiery ordeal, and it comes out unharmed. We try that keen-eyed officer from the sun itself—polarised light, and the jewel shines and smiles unharmed by that terrible test. *Time alone is the detective.* With the passing years the glory and the beauty of the false pretender fades, and the lustrous gem becomes but a piece of glass or a brittle stone."

So time alone detects character and reveals the true man. When each fading year brings out into clearer relief the crystal beauty of the soul; when with the creeping on of age there shines from the eye a tenderer, softer light; when, as one draws nearer the sunset, there is a divine radiance beaming from every feature,—then may we be sure of the existence of a true diamond, whose lustre eternity itself cannot dim. These are the ones of whom it is said: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Brilliant talents, a high position, commanding influence, the applause of an admiring people, are no tests of a man's character; they may all centre about him, and yet he be false within. Time, with its trials and burdens, its corroding care and bitter temptations, will surely prove of what stuff he is made.

8. The standard of **judgment in the world to come.**

(744.) When Christ comes with His scales, thou shalt not be measured *with that man;* but every man shall be weighed *with God.*

—*Donne*, 1573–1631.

9. **In its first stages is sometimes unlovely.**

(745.) A young Christian is like a green fruit. It has perhaps a disagreeable austerity, which cannot be corrected out of its proper course; it wants time and growth: wait a while, and by the nourishment it receives from the root, together with the action of the sun, wind, and rain, in succession from without, it will insensibly acquire that flavour and maturity, for the want of which an unskilful judge would be ready to reject it as nothing worth.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(746.) With all their faults, methinks there is something very beautiful and engaging in the honest vehemence of a young convert. Some cold and rigid judges are ready to reject these promising appearances on account of incidental blemishes. But would a gardener throw away a fine nectarine, because it is green, and has not yet attained all that beauty and flavour which a few more showers and suns will impart? —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(747.) When a strong spring gushes up in a stagnant pool, it makes some commotion at the first; and looking at the murky stream with its flotilla of duckweed tumbling down the declivity, and the expatriated newts and horse-leeches crawling through the grass, and inhaling the miasma from the inky runnel, you may question whether the irruption of this powerful current has made matters any better. But come anon, when the living water has floated out the stagnant elements, and when, instead of mephitic mud, skinned over with a film of treacherous verdure, the bright fountain gladdens its mirrored edge with its leaping fulness, then trips away on its merry path, the benefactor of thirsty beasts and weary fields.

So the first manifestations of the new and the spiritual element in a carnal mind are of a mingled sort. The pellicle of decency, the floating duckweed of surface-seemliness, which once spread over the character, is broken up, and accomplishments and amusing qualities, which made the man very companionable and agreeable, have for the present disappeared. There is a great break-up; and it is the passing away of the old things, which is at first more conspicuous and less pleasing than the appearance of the new. In these earlier stages of regenerate history, the contrition and self-reproach of the penitent often assume the form of an artificial demureness and voluntary humility; and in the general disturbance of those elements which have long lain in their specious stagnation, defects of character formerly hidden, are perceived sooner than the beauties of a holiness scarce yet developed. But "spring up, O well! sing ye unto it." If this incursive process go freely on—if the living water spring up fast enough to clear out the sedimentary selfishness of the natural mind, with its reptile inmates—if the inflowings of heavenly life be copious enough to impart a truly "fervent spirit"—come again. Survey that character when the love of God has become its second nature. In place of the silt and evil savour, the mean and sordid motives which once fermented there, view the simplicity and godly sincerity—the light-welcoming transparency, which reflects the Sun of righteousness above it, and the forms of truth around it; and instead of the fast evaporating scantiness of its former selfishness, follow its track of diffusive freshness through the green pastures which it gladdens, and beneath those branches which gratefully sing over it.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

10. **How it is to be sustained.**

(748.) A Christian life is the living Christ manifesting Himself. It is the vital power putting forth leaves and fruits—the vine sending out its strength into the branches. It cannot be too deeply impressed upon us that Christianity is a profound connection of the soul with Christ—that it is not an imitation of a splendid model, but the indwelling of a living person—that the Christ form is only the outward development of the Christ nature, the life manifesting itself after its kind. You all know that the various forms of vegetable creation are sustained and perfected by a secret, silent, but resistless power which we call life. It is this that lifts the oak in the forest, and spreads its mighty branches to the storm; and this that carpets the earth with verdure and decks the fields with teeming flowers. In the great and in the small, in the tree and in the herb, in the pine of the mountain and the grasses of the field, this secret but resistless principle asserts its power. Now, thus is it with us as Christian men; our Christianity is a principle of life; we are not imitations, we are alive; we are not artificial flowers, we are flowers growing in the garden; or, to keep to the metaphor of our text, we are branches growing in the Vine. —*J. W. Boulding.*

CHEERFULNESS.

1. **Is not levity.**

(749.) Between levity and cheerfulness there is a wide distinction; and the mind which is most open to levity is frequently a stranger to cheerfulness. It has been remarked that transports of intemperate mirth are often no more than flashes from the dark cloud; and that in proportion to the violence of the effulgence is the succeeding gloom. Levity may be the forced production of folly or vice; cheerfulness is the natural offspring of wisdom and virtue only. The one is an occasional agitation; the other a permanent habit. The one degrades the character; the other is perfectly consistent with the dignity of reason, and the steady and manly spirit of religion. To aim at a constant succession of high and vivid sensations of pleasure is an idea of happiness perfectly chimerical. Calm and temperate enjoyment is the utmost that is allotted to man. Beyond this we struggle in vain to raise our state; and in fact depress our joys by endeavouring to heighten them. Instead of those fallacious hopes of perpetual festivity with which the world would allure us, religion confers upon us a cheerful tranquillity. Instead of dazzling us with meteors of joy which sparkle and expire, it sheds around us a calm and steady light, more solid, more equal, and more lasting. —*Blair*, 1718–1756.

2. **Is better than mirth.**

(750.) I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth. The latter I consider as an act, the former as a habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often

raised into the greatest transports of mirth who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy. On the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such an exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into any depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, that breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity.
—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

3. Is not a sign of weakness of character.

(751.) Leaves seem light and useless and idle and wavering and changeable; they even dance; yet God has made them part of the oak. In so doing He has given us a lesson not to deny the stout-heartedness within because we see the lightsomeness without. —*J. C Hare.*

4. Its helpfulness.

(752.) Give us, Oh, give us the man who sings at his work! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible of fatigue whilst he marches to music. The very stars are said to make harmony as they revolve in their spheres. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its powers of endurance. Efforts, to be permanently useful, must be uniformly joyous—a spirit all sunshine—graceful from very gladness—beautiful because bright —*Carlyle.*

(753.) A man who acquires a habit of giving way to depression is on the road to ruin. When trouble comes upon him, instead of rousing his energies to combat it, he weakens, and his faculties grow dull, and his judgment becomes obscured, and he sinks in the slough of despair. And if anybody pulls him out by main force and places him safe on solid ground, he stands there dejected and discouraged, and is pretty sure to waste the means of help which have been given him. How different it is with the man who takes a cheery view of life even at its worst, and faces every ill with unyielding pluck! He may be swept away by an overwhelming tide of misfortune, but he bravely struggles for the shore, and is ever ready to make the most of the help that may be given him. A cheerful, hopeful, courageous disposition is an invaluable trait of character, and should be assiduously cultivated.

(754.) Patience and cheerfulness adorn the ruins of fortune, as ivy does those of castles and temples.

5. Promotes health.

(755.) Cheerfulness is the best promoter of health. Repinings, and secret murmurs of heart, give imperceptible strokes to those delicate fibres of which the vital parts are composed, and wear out the machine insensibly; not to mention those violent ferments which they stir up in the blood, and those irregular disturbed motions which they raise in the animal spirits. I scarce remember, in my own observation, to have met with many old men, or with such who (to use our English phrase) wear well, that had not at least a certain indolence in their humour, if not a more than ordinary gaiety and cheerfulness of heart. The truth of it is, health and cheerfulness mutually beget each other; with this difference, that we seldom meet with a great degree of health which is not attended with a certain cheerfulness, but very often see cheerfulness where there is no great degree of health.

Cheerfulness bears the same friendly regard to the mind as to the body. It banishes all anxious care and discontent, soothes and composes the passions, and keeps the soul in a perpetual calm.
—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

6. Is a Christian duty.

(756.) Many Christians do greatly wrong themselves with a dull and heavy kind of sullenness; who, not suffering themselves to delight in any worldly thing, are thereupon ofttimes so heartless, that they delight in nothing. These men, like too careless guests, when they are invited to an excellent banquet, lose their dainties for want of a stomach; and lose their stomach for want of exercise. A good conscience keeps always good cheer: he cannot choose but fare well that hath it; unless he lose his appetite with neglect and slothfulness. It is a shame for us Christians, not to find as much joy in God, as worldlings do in their forced merriments, and lewd wretches in the practice of their sins.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(757.) Christian, what ill news hath Christ brought from heaven with Him, that makes thee walk with thy folded arms and pensive countenance? (Psal. cxxxii. 16). To see a wicked man merry, or a Christian sad, is alike uncomely. "A feast is made for laughter," saith Solomon. I am sure God intended His people's joy in the feast of the Gospel; mourners were not to sit at God's table (Deut. xxvi.). Truly the saint's heaviness reflects unkindly upon God Himself; we do not commend his cheer, if it doth not cheer us. What saith the world? "The Christian's life is but a melancholy walk," sure thinks the carnal wretch, "it is a dry feast they sit at, where so little wine of joy is drunk." And wilt thou confirm them in this their opinion, Christian? Shall they have thy example to produce against Christ and His Word, which promise peace and joy to all that will come to this feast? O God forbid, that thy conversation, wherein thou art to hold forth the Word of life, to live in the eyes of the world, and which ought to be as a comment or gloss upon the Word, to clear up the truth and reality of it to others; that this should so disagree from the text, as to make the gladsome tidings spoken of in it more disputed and questioned in the thoughts of the unbelieving world than before. It is an error, I confess, and that a gross one, which the Papists teach; that we cannot know the Scriptures to be the Word of God, but by the testimony of the Church; yet it is none to say, that a practical testimony from the saints' lives, hath great authority over the consciences of men, to convince them of the truth of the Gospel. Now they will believe 'tis good news indeed the Gospel brings, when they can read it in your cheerful lives; but when they observe Christians sad with this cup of salvation in their hands, truly they suspect the wine in it is not so good as the preachers commend it to them for. Should men see all that trade to the Indies come home poorer than they went, it would be hard to persuade others to venture thither for all the golden mountains said to be there. O Christians, let the world see you are not losers in your joy, since you have been acquainted with the Gospel; give not them cause to think by your uncomfortable walking, that when they turn Christians, they

must bid all joy farewell, and resolve to spend their days in a house of mourning.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(758.) If we consider cheerfulness in three lights, with regard to ourselves, to those we converse with, and to the great Author of our being, it will not a little recommend itself on each of these accounts. The man who is possessed of this excellent frame of mind is not only easy in his thoughts, but a perfect master of all the powers and faculties of his soul. His imagination is always clear, and his judgment undisturbed; his temper is even and unruffled, whether in action or in solitude. He comes with relish to all those goods which nature has provided for him, tastes all the pleasures of the creation which are poured about him, and does not feel the full weight of those accidental evils which may befall him.

If we consider him in relation to the persons whom he converses with, it naturally produces love and good-will towards him. A cheerful mind is not only disposed to be affable and obliging, but raises the same good-humour in those who come within its influence. A man finds himself pleased, he does not know why, with the cheerfulness of his companion. It is like a sudden sunshine that awakens a secret delight in the mind, without her attending to it. The heart rejoices of its own accord, and naturally flows out into friendship and benevolence towards the person who has so kindly an effect upon it.

When I consider this cheerful state of mind in its third relation, I cannot but look upon it as a constant habitual gratitude to the great Author of nature. An inward cheerfulness is an implicit praise and thanksgiving to Providence under all its dispensations. It is a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the Divine will in His conduct towards man. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(759.) I have, in former papers, shown how great a tendency there is to cheerfulness in religion, and how such a frame of mind is not only the most lovely, but the most commendable, in a virtuous person. In short, those who represent religion in so unamiable a light are like the spies sent by Moses to make a discovery of the land of promise, when by their reports they discouraged the people from entering upon it. Those who show us the joy, the cheerfulness, the good-humour, that naturally springs up in this happy state, are like the spies bringing along with them the clusters of grapes and delicious fruits that might invite their companions into the pleasant country which produced them.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(760.) If any man has springs of cheerfulness and of good-nature in him, in the name of the God of benevolence let him not stop them up. Let him rather keep them open, that they may be a source of joy and consolation to his fellow-men. I have sometimes heard it said of young men that before they joined the Church they were good fellows, but that afterward there was nothing in them. It is because some men think that religion consists in tying up the natural faculties. On the contrary, I think it consists in untying them, in giving them a wholesome development, and so making them better and sweeter and larger.

We do not put a colt into the harness for the sake of diminishing his power, but simply for the sake of directing it; and we are putting the harness on men, not to take away their power, but to organise it for use, and to make it more facile. And in regard to good cheer, humour, buoyancy of disposition, hopefulness—if a man has it naturally, it is an inestimable gift; and religion should make it more—not less. —*Beecher.*

(761.) When people want to make things attractive in farming, they give exhibitions of their products. The women bring their very best butter, moulded into tempting golden lumps; and the men bring the noblest beets and vegetables of every kind; and from the orchards they bring the rarest fruits: and when you go into the room where all these things are displayed, they seem to you attractive and beautiful.

It seems to me that is the way a Christian church ought to represent the Christian life. You ought to pile up your apples and pears and peaches and flowers and vegetables, to show what is the positive fruit of religion. But many people in Christian life do as farmers would do who should go to a show, and carry—one, pigweed; another, thistles; another, dock; and another, old hard lumps of clay;—and should arrange these worthless things along the sides of the room, and mourn over them. What sort of husbandry would that be? Christians are too apt to represent the dark side of religion in their conversation and meetings.

Christ prayed for His disciples, that they might bring forth fruit. He declared to them that in the Divine administration, God, as vintner, sought to make the vine bring forth more and more fruit. Bearing fruit, sweet, luscious, and blessed, is the business of the Christian life. —*Beecher.*

(762.) It is necessary for some people to remember that cheerfulness, good spirits, light-heartedness, merriment, are not unchristian nor unsaintly. We do not please God more by eating bitter aloes than by eating honey. A cloudy, foggy, rainy day is not more heavenly than a day of sunshine. A funeral march is not so much like the music of angels as the songs of birds on a May morning. There is no more religion in the gaunt naked forest in winter than in the laughing blossoms of the spring, and the rich, ripe fruits of autumn. It was not the pleasant things in the world that came from the devil, and the dreary things from God; it was "sin brought death into the world and all our woe;" as the sin vanishes, the woe will vanish too. God Himself is the ever-blessed God. He dwells in the light of joy as well as of purity, and instead of becoming more like Him as we become more miserable, and as all the brightness and glory of life are extinguished, we become more like God as our blessedness becomes more complete. The great Christian graces are radiant with happiness. Faith, hope, charity—there is no sadness in them;—and if penitence makes the heart sad, penitence belongs to the sinner, not to the saint; as we become more saintly, we have less sin to sorrow over. No, the religion of Christ is not a religion of sorrow. It consoles wretchedness and brightens with a Divine glory the lustre of every inferior joy. It attracts to itself the broken-hearted, the lonely, the weary, the despairing, but it is to give them rest, comfort, and peace. It rekindles hope; it inspires strength, courage, and joy. It checks the merriment of the thoughtless

who have never considered the graver and more awful realities of man's life and destiny, but it is to lead them through transient sorrow to deeper and more perfect blessedness, even in this world, than they had ever felt before the sorrow came.

—*Dale.*

CHILDHOOD

1. Its beauty.

(763.) The morning, with every flower glistening in dews, the fresh air loaded with perfumes, the hills bathed in golden light, the skies ringing with the song of larks, is beautiful. Beautiful as is the morning of day, so is that of life. Fallen though we are, there remains a purity, modesty, ingenuousness, and tenderness of conscience, about childhood, that looks as if the glory of Eden yet lingered over it, like the light of day on hilltops at even, when the sun is down. The Word of God, no doubt, declares infants as well as others to be dead in trespasses and sin: and I don't say but there is death; still it is like death before the body has grown stiff and cold, the colour of life fled the cheek, or decay effaced its beauty. Look at a little child! It does not behave itself unseemly; does not rejoice in iniquity; does not glory in its shame; nor stand with unblushing front before a shocked and wondering world to avow its vileness, and proclaim itself seducer, liar, murderer. Blushes mantle on its cheek; and it has a conscience in its bosom, which protests against thoughts and words and actions, that men live to boast of. Sins, afterwards committed without compunction, and rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue, are followed in early life by fears and uneasy feelings, stings of conscience and bitings of remorse; and the child is no more like what the man becomes, than a rosebud, bursting its sheath, breathing odours, and opening into beauty, is like that vile, soiled, and rotten thing which I have seen hanging on the leafless branch—a nest of worms, and smelling rank of decay.

—*Guthrie.*

2. Its sacredness.

(764.) Can we think that Holy Scripture thus tells us of the sacred Childhood of Jesus, and means us not to reverence childhood? Feel we not (at least, if we be not deadened by this world's vanities) a drawing forth of our inmost hearts towards them, a tender love, a reverence for them, which, alas! we cannot have for ourselves, and often not for others of riper years? —*Pusey.*

3. Christ's sympathy for childhood.

(765.) Jesus was the first great teacher of men who showed a genuine sympathy for childhood,—perhaps the only teacher of antiquity who cared for childhood as such. Plato treats of children and their games, but he treats them from the stand-point of a publicist. They are elements not to be left out in constructing society. Children, in Plato's eyes, are not to be neglected, because children will inevitably come to be men and women. But Jesus was the first who loved childhood for the sake of childhood. In the earlier stages of civilisation it is the main endeavour of men to get away from childhood. It represents immaturity of body and mind, ignorance and folly. The ancients esteemed it their first duty to put away childish things. It was Jesus who, seeking to bring about a new and higher development of character, perceived that there were elements in childhood to be preserved in the highest manhood; that a man must, indeed, set back again toward the innocence and simplicity of childhood if he would be truly a man. Until Jesus Christ, the world had no place for childhood in its thoughts. When He said, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," it was a revelation. —*Eggleston.*

CHILDREN

I. Why they are sent to us.

(766.) Tell me not of the trim, precisely-arranged homes where there are no children; "where," as the good Germans have it, "the fly-traps always hang straight on the wall;" tell me not of the never-disturbed nights and days, of the tranquil, unanxious hearts, where children are not! I care not for these things. God sends children for another purpose than merely to keep up the race:—to enlarge our hearts, to make us unselfish, and full of kindly sympathies and affections; to give our souls higher aims, and to call out all our faculties to extended enterprise and exertion; to bring round our fireside bright faces and happy smiles, and loving, tender hearts. My soul blesses the Great Father every day, that He has gladdened the earth with little children. —*Mary Howitt.*

2. Necessary to complete the home.

(767.) A house is never perfectly furnished for enjoyment unless there is a child in it rising three years old, and a kitten rising three weeks.

—*Southey.*

3. Their preciousness.

(768.) God bless the dear children! What would our homes be without them! We may have done much for them. They have done more for us. What a salve for a wounded heart there is in the soft palm of a child's hand. Did harp or flute ever have such music as there is in a child's "good-night." From our coarse, rough life, the angels of God are often driven back; but who comes into the nursery without feeling that angels are hovering around.

On one of the Lake steamers there was a father and two daughters journeying. They seemed extremely poor. A benevolent gentleman stepped up to the poor man, to proffer some form of relief, and said, "You seem to be very poor, sir." "Poor, sir!" replied the man, "if there's a poorer man than me a troublin' the world, God pity both of us!" "I will take one of your children, and adopt it, if you say so. I think it would be a great relief to you." "A *what?*" said the poor man. "A relief! Would it be a relief to have the hands chopped off from the body, or the heart torn from the breast? A relief, indeed! God be good to us! What do you mean, sir?" —*Talmage.*

4. Are causes of anxiety as well as of joy.

(769.) Yet it may be doubted whether the pleasure of seeing children ripened into strength be not overbalanced by the pain of seeing some fall in the blossom, and others blasted in their growth; some shaken down by storms, some tainted with cankers, and some shrivelled in the shade; and whether he that extends his care beyond himself does not multiply his anxieties more than his pleasures, and

weary himself to no purpose, by superintending what he cannot regulate. —*Dr. S. Johnson.*

5. Are little men and women.

(770.) When I see the motherly airs of my little daughters when playing with their puppets, I cannot but flatter myself that their husbands and children will be happy in the possession of such wives and mothers. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

6. Preciousness of their love.

(771.) I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing when they, who are so fresh from God, love us. —*Dickens.*

7. Their happiness.

(772.) I seem, for my own part, to see the benevolence of the Deity more clearly in the pleasures of very young children than in anything in the world. —*Paley.*

8. Their hopefulness.

(773.) Nothing seems to weigh down their buoyant spirits long; misfortune may fall to their lot, but the shadows it casts upon their life-path are fleeting as the clouds that come and go in an April sky. Their future may, perchance, appear dark to others, but to their fearless gaze it looms up brilliant and beautiful as the walls of a fairy palace. —*Tegner.*

9. Their selfishness.

(774.) I know it is a shocking thing to say, but the children are mostly selfish: so long as you are administering to their amusement or comfort, they will love you, but the moment it becomes necessary to thwart a whim or control a passion, you are altogether hateful; and they hate you for the time being very cordially. I have been loved and hated myself a dozen times a week; and I know a little damsel now who, when her temper is crossed, tells her governess that she hates her pet cat, and is not above giving the innocent pussy a sly blow or kick as proxy for its much-enduring mistress. —*Household Words.*

10. Their susceptibility to impressions of every kind.

(775.) It is the law of human nature that, when it is beginning to grow, it shall be soft as wax to receive all kinds of impressions, and then that it shall gradually stiffen and become hard as adamant to retain them. The rock was once all fluid and plastic, and gradually it cools down into hardness. If a finger-dint had been put upon it in the early time, it would have left a mark that all the forces of the world could not make, nor can obliterate now. In our great museums you see stone slabs with the marks of rain that fell hundreds of years before Adam lived; and the footprint of some wild bird that passed across the beach in those old, old times. The passing shower and the light foot left their prints on the soft sediment; then ages went on, and it has hardened into stone; and there they remain and will remain for evermore. That is like a man's spirit; in the childish days so soft, so susceptible to all impressions, so joyous to receive new ideas, treasuring them all up, gathering them all into itself, retaining them all for ever. And then, as years go on, habit, the growth of the soul into steadiness and power, and many other reasons beside, gradually make us less and less capable of being profoundly and permanently influenced by anything outside us; so that the process from childhood to manhood is a process of getting less impressible. —*Maclaren.*

(776.) How quick a child is to observe, how ready to catch and retain impressions; no photographic plate is so exquisitely sensitive to the image which the sun paints upon it. —*Cuyler.*

11. The importance and power of parental example.

(777.) We may read in the fable what the mother crab said to the daughter: "Go forward, my daughter; go forward!" The daughter replied, "Good mother, do you show me the way!" whereupon the mother, crawling backward and sidling, as she was wont, the daughter cried out, "Lo, mother! I go just as you do!" —*Griffith.*

(778.) If you would have honour from your children, set them a good example. It makes children despise their parents, when the parents live in a contradiction to their own precepts; when they bid their children be sober, yet they themselves will be drunk: they bid their children fear God, yet are themselves loose in their lives. Oh! if you would have your children honour you, teach them by an holy example. A father is a looking-glass which the child oft dresseth himself by; let the glass be clear, and not spotted. —*Watson*, 1696.

(779.) Amongst the causes assigned for the continuance and diffusion of the same moral sentiments amongst mankind, may be mentioned *imitation.* The efficacy of this principle is more observable in children; indeed, if there be anything in them which deserves the name of an *instinct*, it is their *propensity* to *imitation.* Now, there is nothing which children imitate or apply more readily than expressions of affection and aversion, of approbation, hatred, resentment, and the like; and when these passions and expressions are once connected, which they soon will be by the same association which unites words with their ideas, the passion will follow the expression, and attach upon the object to which the child has been accustomed to apply the epithet. —*Paley.*

12. Their claims upon us.

(780.) Children are travellers newly arrived in a strange country; we should therefore make conscience not to mislead them. —*Locke*, 1632–1704.

13. Importance of early training.

(781.) Reason would teach us, if revelation did not, that childhood was the most propitious period of life to instil those precepts—ingraft those truths—and form those habits which become the people of God, who are emphatically styled a *holy and peculiar people.* It is common sense to put the seal to the wax while it is soft; to bud the tender twig with the fruit it should bear; to go to the fountain-head, and guide the current of the stream; and to lay hold upon the young tendrils of the shooting vine, and to train them as we would have them to go. —*Jackson*, 1640.

(782.) There is little hope of children who are educated wickedly. If the dye have been in the wool, it is hard to get it out of the cloth. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(783.) Every thing must be taken in its time.

Let a bladder alone till it be dry, and all the wind in the world cannot fill it, no not so much as raise it up; whereas being new and moist, the least breath enlarges it. It is not otherwise in ages and dispositions. Inform a child in precepts of learning and virtue, of which his years make him capable, how pliable he yields, how happily is he replenished with knowledge and goodness! But let him alone till time and example have hardened him, till he be settled in an habit of evil, and contracted and clung together with sensual delights, he becomes utterly indocible; sooner may such a plant bow than brake, such a bladder be broken than extended.

—*Hall*, 1576–1656.

(784.) What if some prove naught that are well brought up? it is not the generality of them. Will you say that Noah's family was no better than the drowned world, because there was one Cham in it; nor David's because there was one Absalom; nor Christ's because there was one Judas?

But what if it were so: have men need of the less teaching, or the more? You have more wit in the matters of this world. You will not say, "I see many labour hard, and yet are poor, and therefore it is as good never to labour at all;" you will not say, "Many that go to school learn nothing, and therefore they may learn as much though they never go; or many that are great tradesmen break, and therefore it is as good never to trade at all; or many great eaters are as lean as others, and many sick men recover no strength though they eat, and therefore it is as good for men never to eat more; or many plough and sow, and have nothing come up, and therefore it is as good never to plough more." What a fool were he that should reason thus! And is he not a thousand times worse that shall reason thus for men's souls? Peter reasons the clean contrary way, "If the righteous be scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" And so doth Christ, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter, and not be able."

Other men's miscarriages should quicken our diligence, and not make us cast away all. What would you think of that man that should look over into his neighbour's garden, and because he sees here and there a nettle or weed among much better stuff, should say, "Why you may see these men that bestow so much pains in digging and weeding, have weeds in their garden as well as I that do nothing, and therefore who would be at so much pains?" Just thus doth the mad world talk; you may see now that those that pray and read and follow sermons, have their faults as well as we, and have wicked persons among them as well as we. Yea, but that is not the whole garden, as yours is; it is but here and there a weed, and as soon as they spy it, they pluck it up, and cast it away.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(785.) Do all that in you lies to check and discourage in them the first beginnings of sin and vice; so soon as ever they appear pluck them up by the roots. This is like the weeding of corn, which is a necessary piece of good husbandry. Vices like ill weeds grow apace, and if they once take to the soil, it will be hard to extirpate and kill them; but if we watch them and cut them up as soon as they appear, this will discourage the root and make it die.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(786.) It is of the last importance to season the passions of a child with devotion, which seldom dies in a mind that has received an early tincture of it. Though it may seem extinguished for a while by the cares of the world, the heats of youth, or the allurements of vice, it generally breaks out and discovers itself again as soon as discretion, consideration, age, or misfortunes have brought the man to himself. The fire may be covered and overlaid, but cannot be entirely quenched and smothered.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(787.) Those soils which are the most productive are called vegetable, to distinguish them from sandy and clayey soils; and, as their name imports, they are produced from the decay of a succession of vegetable productions. It is by much bearing in a lower kind that they attain their fertility in a higher. For everything is so created and constituted of God, as to be able to fructify the seeds of some one plant or another. The very rock, when exposed to the heat of the sun, you will find covered with a moss, then with a lichen, and then perhaps with a grass; and so on, according to a succession which my knowledge of the vegetable kingdom doth not enable me to describe. And when the plant, of whatever kind it is, hath come to perfection, and yielded its stem and leaves and fruits and seeds, all these, except the seed, decay, and resolve themselves into earth again; whereby another coating is furnished to the ground; and so by much bearing a good and deep soil is at length produced, fit for the seeds of the husbandman. In like manner it is in man, that by much bearing of fruits in the lower degrees of instinct and knowledge, of kindly feelings and honest practices, a soil in due time is prepared which will receive and fructify the seed of the Word of God, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit to the praise and glory of God.

It is further to be observed, that the plants and seeds which are first produced by any soil in this progress towards fertility, are of an inferior kind in the scale of vegetable life, and fit only for the nourishment of insects and fowls, but not for the nourishment of man or beast, or at least in a very insufficient degree. But chiefly, it would seem, are they ordained of God for this very end of preparing a soil upon which the richer fruits and more nourishing plants may grow; the production of the lower being, as it were, to serve as the ground-work for the production of the higher kind. And so in human nature the right education and training of children in the ways of understanding and truth and honesty and dutifulness is to be diligently ensued; not so much for the present advantages, or disadvantages though these be many, but with a long-sighted wisdom to the future man, and a full conviction that we are thereby laying the materials for a more precious husbandry of spiritual things, to be carried on by an omnipotent and invisible hand.

And still further it is to be observed, that if, in due time, when the soil hath been ripened for the tillage of animal food, it should not be turned to this use, then doth it change its nature, and heave up into moss, or corrupt into marsh, or take on some other unproductive and even noxious quality; whereby nature doth signify, that, when she has laboured so long for man's support and well-being, if he will not profit by her care, she will straightway avenge his neglect of her by something troublous to his convenience, offensive to his taste, or

even destructive to his life. This again teacheth us, that, after a man has been reared up in the observation of all the duties, and the practice of all the moralities, and the study of all the faculties of his nature and opportunities of his place; if he refuse the seed of the Word of God, for which all the rest is but the preparation, or if you withhold it from him, he will, for want of the wholesome influences thereof, become puffed up with pride, filled with conceit, intoxicated with power, or in some other way evil-conditioned, the end of whom will be worse than the beginning. —*Irving.*

(788.) A celebrated theological professor of Princeton was asked by a sceptic: "Doctor, how do you explain this? You say that 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' Now, how do you account for the fact that your Bill is such a dissipated fellow?" The Doctor replied: "The promise is, when he is *old* he will not depart from it. Bill is not *old* yet!" Subsequent years have shown the wisdom of the Doctor's faith. Bill is *old* now, and a Christian.
—*Talmage.*

14. Must first of all be taught to exercise self-restraint.

(789.) Young people who have been habitually gratified in all their desires will not only more indulge in capricious desires, but will infallibly take it more amiss when the feelings or happiness of others require that they should be thwarted, than those who have been practically trained to the habit of subduing and restraining them, and consequently will, in general, sacrifice the happiness of others to their own selfish indulgence. To what else is the selfishness of princes and other great people to be attributed? It is in vain to think of cultivating principles of generosity and beneficence by mere exhortation and reasoning. Nothing but the practical habit of overcoming our own selfishness, and of familiarly encountering privations and discomfort on account of others, will ever enable us to do it when required. And therefore I am firmly persuaded that indulgence infallibly produces selfishness and hardness of heart, and that nothing but a pretty severe discipline and control can lay the foundation of a magnanimous character.
—*Lord Jeffrey.*

15. Must be taught line upon line.

(790.) In dibbling beans the old practice was to put three in each hole: one for the worm, one for the crow, and one to live and produce the crop. In teaching children, we must give line upon line, and precept upon precept, repeating the truth which we would inculcate, till it becomes impossible for the child to forget it. We may well give the lesson once expecting the child's frail memory to lose it; twice, reckoning that the devil, like an ill bird, will steal it; thrice, hoping that it will take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward to the glory of God. —*Spurgeon.*

16. Their curiosity is not to be repressed, but instructed.

(791.) Curiosity in children nature has provided to remove that ignorance they were born with; which, without this busy inquisitiveness, will make them dull.

Children should always be heard, and fairly and kindly answered, when they ask after anything they would know, and desire to be informed about. Curiosity should be as carefully cherished in children as other appetites suppressed.
—*Locke*, 1632–1704.

17. Books for them must be carefully chosen.

(792.) The influence exercised by works of fiction is overlooked by those who suppose that a child's character, moral and intellectual, is formed by those books only which are put into his hands with that *design*. As hardly anything can accidentally touch the soft clay without stamping its mark on it, so hardly any reading can interest a child without contributing in some degree, though the book itself be afterwards totally forgotten, to form the character; and the parents, therefore, who, merely requiring from him a certain course of *study*, pay little or no attention to story-books, are educating him they know not how. —*Whately.*

18. Must be instructed in the Scriptures.

(793.) Would mathematical science thrive if Euclid and the Principia were to cease from the studies of our youth? Would the public watchfulness of the people over their rulers thrive if they were to refrain from perusing the daily intelligence, and conversing of public affairs? Will religion thrive if the Word of God be not studied and its topics conferred on? If at that season when our youth of first family and ambition are preparing their minds for guiding affairs, by courses of early discipline in public schools, and those of second rank are entered to the various professions of life, if then no pains be taken to draw their attention to the sacred writings, and impress principles of piety and virtue upon their minds, how can it be expected that religion should even have a chance? One cannot always be learning; youth is for learning, manhood for acting, and old age for enjoying the fruits of both. I ask, Why, when the future lawyer is studying Blackstone or Lyttleton; the future physician, Hippocrates and Sydenham; the future economist, Smith and Malthus; the future statesman, Locke and Sydney; each that he may prepare for filling a reputable station, in the present world,—Why is the future immortal not at the same time studying the two Testaments of God, in order to prepare for the world to come, in which every one of us hath a more valuable stake? If immortality be nothing but the conjuration of priests to cheat the world, then let it pass, and our books go to the wind like the sibyls' leaves; but if immortality be neither the dream of fond enthusiasts, nor the trick of artful priests, but the revelation of the righteous God; then let us have the literature and the science, and the practice for the long after-stage of our being, as well as for the present time, which is but its porch. These pleadings are to men who believe immortality (we may hereafter plead with those otherwise minded); therefore justify your belief, and show your gratitude by taking thought and pains about the great concerns of that immortality which you believe. —*Irving.*

19. Should be trained to attend public worship.

(794.) The question is often asked how shall we get our working-classes to attend public worship. The answer may be supplied by an incident of my boyhood. On the mantle-shelf of my grandmother's

best parlour, among other marvels was an apple in a phial. It quite filled up the body of the bottle, and my wondering inquiry was, "How could it have been got into its place?" By stealth I climbed a chair to see if the bottom would unscrew, or if there had been a join in the glass throughout the length of the phial. I was satisfied by careful observation that neither of these theories could be supported, and the apple remained to me an enigma and a mystery. But as it was said of that other wonder, the source of the Nile—

"Nature well known no mystery remains,"—

so was it here. Walking in the garden I saw a phial placed on a tree bearing within it a tiny apple, which was growing within the crystal; now I saw it all; the apple was put into the bottle while it was little, and it grew there. Just so must we catch the little men and women who swarm our streets—we call them boys and girls—and introduce them within the influence of the church, for alas! it is hard indeed to reach them when they have ripened in carelessness and sin.

—*Spurgeon.*

20. Are not incapable of faith.

(795.) There are persons who appear to think that the comprehensions of the theology of Christianity, or of the philosophy of the atonement, is essential to its efficiency, and that therefore children are incapable of faith. We hold a totally different opinion. Much that is called theology and philosophy on this subject, is neither Divine revelation nor sound human wisdom, and we devoutly wish that much which is presented to us as an explanation of the atonement, had never been put forth by lip, or pen, or press. We believe that it is possible to accept all the intended benefit from the sin-offering of the Saviour, without comprehending or knowing even all that God has spoken on the topic. To know that Christ died for the ungodly, and that Jesus died for us, is all the knowledge of the atonement that is essential to salvation; and none can deny that a little child is capable of such knowledge. That subsequent sense of mystery, which leads us men to look for explanations, has nothing whatever to do with the efficacy of the sacrifice of the Son of God. On the contrary, as many dyspeptic persons are robbed of nutriment from the food which they eat, by reading books upon digestion, so many Christians are deprived of much comfort from "the precious blood of Jesus," by their everlasting "Why?" and "How is it?"—and by their not receiving the kingdom of heaven as a little child. "A little child." Yes, a little child, who feels the meaning of those words, "for us," in the phrase, "Christ died for us,"—the child who can say, Father goes to work "for" me, and mother has made herself so tired "for" me, can attach a sufficient meaning to the words, "Jesus died for us," to qualify him to believe on that Jesus for the saving of the soul.

—*Samuel Martin.*

(796.) A Sunday-school teacher was trying to make his class understand the dependence of the branches on the vine. "Jesus is the vine; we are the branches. We derive all our life and happiness from Him." "Yes," said a little fellow, "Jesus is the vine; grown-up people are the branches; and *we are the buds.*"

21. Their repentance real.

(797.) We have already admitted that a child's knowledge of sin is necessarily small, that its sense of sin is feeble, and its sorrow for sin shallow. But then it must be remembered that, comparatively speaking, the actual transgressions of most children are but few, and that godly sorrow is a slow growth, even in the adult convert. Moreover, the genuineness of repentance is entirely independent of the number and of the character of the sins to be repented of, and equally independent of the degree of regret and self-chiding which are experienced. How slight is the deviation from the main line at what are termed the points of a railway junction; and yet a divergence, almost imperceptible at first, leads to a terminus, far away from that into which the metals of the trunk line would have conducted the train. The tiny daisy as really turns its face to the sun, as the tall and stately sunflower. A drop of water from the snow which melts on the grass blade, as it grows upon the bank of the glacier stream, as really finds its way to the ocean, as the waters that rush from beneath the glacier itself. The grain of gold dust is as really precious metal as the bar of gold. True life is as really in the germ or in the fœtus, as in the full-grown animal or tree. The tears of the tiny infant as effectually lave the eye, as the tears of a full-grown man. We are too apt to apply the standard of quantity to spiritual things. Thus prayers are estimated by their length or frequency, and pecuniary gifts by their commercial value, and service by the time devoted to it. It is quite true that the tears of a child are not continuous—

"The tear on childhood's cheek that flows,
Is like the dewdrop on the rose."

It is true that the sighs of a child are not heavy; they are not, as in the soul of manhood and womanhood, ocean waves, but they are rather like the ripple upon the waters of some sheltered lake. It is true that the emotions of a child are not the hardy blossoms of a sturdy fruit tree, but the tender and delicate bloom of a tree that has as yet yielded little more than promise of fruit. Nevertheless, that blossom, which winds will tear and shake, is the outflowing of life; that ripple on the lake shows susceptibility in the water towards its sister element, air; and those dewdrop tears show that earth and heaven, man and God, are working upon the child's nature. The hands of the infant united, as we have all seen them joined in the familiar statue of Hannah's child, and in the pictorial representations of the infant Samuel, may express as real a repentance, and may as distinctly appeal to heaven, as the publican's smiting upon his breast, and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" —*Samuel Martin.*

22. Should be taught to look to Jesus.

(798.) Godly children are God's workmanship, created by Jesus Christ, and if we would be the means of leading children into true godliness, we must bid them to look to our Saviour Jesus. I say to Him, not at Him. Some who have to do with the religious instruction of children, require them to look at Christ instead of to Him. There is a vast difference between these things. The child looks

at the queen, when he goes to see her proceed in state to open the Parliament; but he looks to his mother, when he relies on her for the supply of his daily wants. We look at the statue, say of Jenner, or of Abernethy, but we look to our medical attendant for advice and healing. We look at Pitt or Fox, as they now stand before us in marble or stone, but we look to the prime minister of the day for the conduct of our national affairs. We Christians know for ourselves, that it is not by looking at Jesus, as at a great sight, that we are saved; but by looking to Him, as to a loving, personal Redeemer; therefore, in speaking to children of the Son of God, it is important to speak of Him, not as of a Being to be looked at, but looked unto.

—*Samuel Martin.*

(799.) Mirabeau was once asked what was the best way of teaching popular liberty? He replied, "Begin with the infant in the cradle, and let the first name it lisps be Washington." So we would say to Christian parents, the best way to teach your children the knowledge of that liberty which makes them free indeed, is to begin in the cradle, and let the first name you teach them to speak be Jesus.

23. True godliness in children is childlike.

(800.) The ability to talk religiously is no sign of early piety. Speech seasoned with religious phrases and with texts of Scripture, may be a mere matter of taste, or may spring from a desire to please Christian kindred and friends, or from a wish to be noticed, and to receive attention from particular persons. Further, the profession of piety is no proof of early godliness, for this may be mere imitation. The most certain sign of early piety is that which is called in Scripture "doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord." "By their fruits ye shall know them." Godly conduct is godliness outside, and it proves the existence of godliness within. But the point to which we would call attention is this, that very often a degree of perfection is looked for in a child, before his claim to be accounted godly is allowed, and a degree of maturity is required, which is not demanded from an adult professor of religion. The waters of the Gulf Stream (which in or near the Gulf of Mexico, are of an indigo-blue), are said to be so distinctly marked, that their line of junction with the common sea-water may be traced by the eye. Often one half of a vessel may be seen floating in the Gulf Stream water, while the other half is in the common water of the sea; so sharp is the line, and such the want of affinity between those waters, and such the reluctance, so to speak, on the part of the Gulf Stream to mingle with the common water of the sea. In like manner, through much in a child's conduct that is disobedient and unloving and godless, may be sometimes seen a stream of obedient, loving, and Christian action, proving that a fountain of living water has been opened in the heart, and affording reason to hope that in due time, as this fount is made deeper and wider, the pure stream will expand, until it covers the entire outer life. Or, to adopt another illustration, we sometimes see in a little child the moral fighting of a little soldier, and the moral courage of a little hero. With a disposition to do wrong, and with many temptations to that which is evil, the child fights with all his power of heart and arm. He is sometimes defeated, but still life, even to that little one, is a battle—a hard and honest struggle. The children who are marked out by these observations, exhibit the most trustworthy signs of true godliness. If life be all peaceful, and calm, and united, it is difficult to say, what of apparent godliness is traceable to constitution, and temperament, and imitation. But if there be a stream within a stream, if there be a hard and heavy conflict, then we may say, Here is the finger of God, here is the hand of Jesus Christ, and here is the workmanship of the Holy Ghost.

—*Samuel Martin.*

24. A child's faith in prayer.

(801.) God answers all true believing petitions that are addressed to Him, and the more we trust Him the safer we are. One cannot be too confident.

A Sunday-school pupil one time had a great grown-up sister, whom he loved very much. She was gay and worldly and would not go to church. This boy said one day to his teacher: "Oh! I wish Sarah would read the Bible." His teacher replied: "Well, you must pray God to lead her to do so, and that will do her good and make her a Christian." So, when the school prayer-meeting was held, the teacher gave out that one of the scholars wished his sister prayed for. After others had prayed, to the surprise of everybody the lad himself rose and reverently uttered a little prayer. Then at once he left the room. His teacher rebuked him afterwards because he went out of the meeting. "Oh!" said he, "I did so want to see how Sarah would look with a Bible in her hands." Now that is the right spirit. We must follow up our prayers, and see what becomes of them.

—*C. S. Robinson.*

25. How religion is to be commended to them.

(802.) We have especially cause to bear in mind a remark of the Rev. C. Simeon's, when we are attempting to bring the young under religious influences. A lady had asked him if we ought always to be talking about religion. "No, no!" answered the good man, rather precipitately, "let your speech be seasoned with salt; seasoned with salt, madam, not a whole mouthful." Nothing produces more fatal results than "dinning" religion into a child; the "whole mouthful" crammed into the child's mouth being simply rejected with disgust. Though, in dealing with children, everything should be seasoned with the salt of true religion, yet we must remember that small vessels are soon filled, and He who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" certainly meant us to be touched with the infirmities of little children.

26. Their religious training devolves especially upon their parents.

(803.) Our children are not born with Bibles in their heads or hearts. And who ought to be the instructor, if not the parent? yea, who will do it with such natural affection? As I have heard sometimes a mother say in other respects, Who can take such pains with my child, and be so careful as myself that am its mother? Bloody parents then they are, who acquaint not their children with God or His Word; what do they but put them under a necessity of perishing, if God stir not up some to show more mercy than themselves to them? Is it

any wonder to hear that ship to be sunk or dashed upon the rock which was put to sea without chart or compass? no more is it they should ingulph themselves in sin and perdition that are thrust forth into the world (which is a sea of temptation) without the knowledge of God, or their duty to Him. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(804.) The Church began at first in a family, and was preserved by the godly care of parents in instructing their children and household in the truths of God, whereby the knowledge of God was transmitted from generation to generation; and though now the Church is not confined to such strait limits, yet every private family is as a little nursery to the Church; if the nursery be not carefully planted, the orchard will soon decay. Oh, could you be willing, Christians, that your children when you are laid in the dust, should be turned into the degenerate plants of a strange vine, and prove a generation that do not know God? Atheism needs not to be planted, you do enough to make your children such, if you do not endeavour to plant religion in their minds. The very neglect of the gardener to sow and dress his garden, gives advantage enough to the weeds to come up. This is the difference between religion and atheism, religion doth not grow without planting, but will die even where it is planted without watering. Atheism, irreligion, and profaneness are weeds that will grow without setting, but they will not die without plucking up; all care and means are little enough to stub them up. And, therefore, you that are parents, and do not teach your children, deal the more unrighteously with God, because you neglect the best season in their whole life for planting in them the knowledge of God, and plucking up the contrary weeds of atheism and irreligion. Young weeds come up with most ease, sinful ignorance in youth becomes wilful ignorance, yea, impudence in age: you will not instruct them when young, and they will scorn their ministers when they are old. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(805.) Some will further object, and say, "It is the work of ministers to teach both us and our children, and therefore we may be excused."

Answer.—It is first your duty, and then the minister's. It will be no excuse for you, because it is their work, except you could prove it were only theirs. Magistrates must govern both you and your children: doth it therefore follow that you must not govern them? It belongs to the schoolmaster to correct them, and doth it not belong also to you? There must go many hands to this great work, as to the building of a house there must be many workmen, one to one part, and another to another; and as your corn must go through many hands before it be bread: the reaper's, the thresher's, the miller's, the baker's; and one must not leave their part, and say, It belongs to the other: so it is here in the instructing of your children: first you must do your work, and then the minister do his: you must be doing it privately night and day; the minister must do it publicly and privately as oft as he can. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(806.) It is not laws and orders that will reform us, if the men be not good, and reformation begin not at home. When children go wicked from the hands of their parents, thence some come such to the universities, and so we come to have an ungodly ministry, and in every profession they bring this fruit of their education with them. When gentlemen teach their children only to hunt, and hawk, and game, and deride the godly, what magistrates, and what parliaments, and so what government, and what a commonwealth are we likely to have, when all must be guided by such as these! Some perverse, inconsiderate persons lay the blame of all this on the ministers; that people of all sorts are so ignorant and profane; as if one man can do the work of many hundreds. I beseech you that are masters and parents, do your own duties, and free ministers from these unjust aspersions, and the Church from her reproach and confusion. Have not ministers work enough of their own to do? Oh, that you knew what it is that lieth on them! And if, besides this, you will cast upon them the work of every master and parent in the parish, is it likely, indeed, to be well done? How many sorts of workmen must there be to the building of a house? And if all of these should cast it upon one, and themselves do nothing, you may judge how much were likely to be done. If there be three or four schoolmasters in a school, amongst three or four hundred scholars, and all the lower that should fit them for the higher schools should do nothing at all but send all these scholars to the highest schoolmaster as ignorant as they received them, would not his life be a burden to him, and all the work be frustrated and spoiled? Why, so it is here. The first work towards the reforming and making happy of Church and Commonwealth, lies in the good education of your children; the most of this is your work; and if this be left undone, and then they come to the ministers raw and ignorant, and hardened in their sins also, what can a minister do? Whereas, if they come trained up in the principles of religion, and the practice of godliness, and were taught the fear of God in their youth, oh, what an encouragement would it be to ministers! And how would the work go in our hands! I tell you seriously, this is the cause of all our miseries and unreformedness in Church and State, even the want of a holy education of children. Many lay the blame on this neglect and that, but there is none hath so great a hand in it as this. What a school must there needs be where all are brought raw, as I said, to the highest form! What a house must there needs be built, when clay is brought to the masons' hands instead of bricks! What a commonwealth may be expected if all the constables and justices should do nothing but cast all upon king and parliament! And so, what a Church may we expect when all the parents and masters in the parish shall cast all their duty on their ministers!

I entreat you that are parents, also to consider what excellent advantages you have above all others for the saving of your children. They are under your hands while they are young, and tender, and flexible; but they come to ministers when they are grown older, and stiffer, and settled in their ways, and think themselves too good to be catechised, and too old to be taught. You have a twig to bend, and we an oak. You have the young plants of sin to pluck up, and we the deep-rooted vices. The consciences of children are not so seared with a custom of sinning and long-resisting grace as others. You have the soft and tender earth to plough in, and we have the hard and stony ways, that have been trodden

on by many years' practice of evil. When they are young, their understandings are like a sheet of white paper, that hath nothing written on, and so you have opportunity to write what you will. But when they are grown up in sin, they are like the same paper written over with falsehoods, which must all be blotted out again, and truth written in the place. And how hard is that! We have hardened hearts to beat on like a smith's anvil, that will not feel us; we may tell them of death and judgment, heaven and hell, and they hear us as if they were asleep or dead; you have the soft clay to mould, and we have the hardened burned bricks. You have them before they are possessed with prejudice and false conceits against the truth, but we have them to teach when they have many years lived among those that have scorned at godliness, and taught them to think God's ways to be foolish preciseness. Custom hath not ensnared and engaged our little ones to contrary ways, but of old sinners, the Lord Himself hath said, "that if the Ethiopian can change his skin, and the leopard his spots, then may those that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." Doth not the experience of all the world show you the power of education? What else makes all the children of the Jews to be Jews; and all the children of the Turks to be Mahometans; and of Christians to be in profession Christians; and of each sect or party in religion to follow their parents and the custom of the place? Why now, what an advantage have you to use all this for the furtherance of their happiness, and possess them as strongly beforehand against sin, as else Satan would do for it; and so Satan would come to them upon some of those disadvantages that now Christ comes on.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

27. Their precocious developments are to be checked.

(807.) Here is a great tree overlaid with blossoms. It is not possible that all these should prosper; one of them must needs rob the other of moisture and growth.

I do not love to see an infancy over hopeful: in these pregnant beginnings, one faculty starves another; and, at last, leaves the mind sapless and barren. As, therefore, we are wont to pull off the too-frequent blossoms that the rest may thrive; so, it is good wisdom to moderate the early excess of the parts of progress of over-forward childhood.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

28. Should be trained to industry.

(808.) When your children are grown up, put them to some lawful calling, wherein they may serve their generation. And it is good to consult the natural genius and inclination of a child; forced callings do as ill, sometimes, as forced matches. To let a child be out of a calling is to expose it to temptation. A child out of a calling is like fallow-ground; and what can you expect should grow up but weeds of disobedience? —*Watson*, 1696.

(809.) Honest work is the best employment for fallen man; and the bread of idleness breeds sin and trouble in those that eat it. This is often illustrated in the luxuriant affluence of tropical vegetation. The unsought bounty of nature there feeds a race of idle and dissolute men,

> "Where every prospect pleases,
> And only man is vile;"

and the plenty granted by Heaven becomes a dire calamity to those who misimprove the benefits bestowed by God. "Mr. Dilke believes that the banana plant is one of the greatest curses of tropical countries, because it will support life with no labour. It grows as a weed, and hangs down its bunches of ripe, tempting fruit into your lap as you lie in its cool shade. It will make nothing; you can eat it raw or fried, and that is all; you can eat it every day of your life without becoming tired of its taste; without suffering in your health you can live on it exclusively. 'The terrible results of the plentiful possession of this tree are seen in Ceylon, at Panama, in the coast lands of Mexico, and at Auckland in New Zealand. At Pitcairn's island, the plantain grove has beaten the missionary from the field; there is much lip Christianity, but no practice to be got from a people who possess the fatal plant. The much-abused cocoanut cannot come near it as a devil's agent.'"

Such are the results of eating the bread of idleness, and yet how many parents toil, and save, and hoard, that they may bring up their children in idleness, and leave to them a fortune as fatal as the banana plant, a fortune which exempts them from toil, but seduces them into sin; spares them from the sorrows of want, and the curse of labour, but which dooms them to the bondage of sin and corruption in this world, and the vengeance of eternal fire at last.

29. Learn little from the experience of their parents.

(810.) Ah! do men learn by the experience of others? They are like birds, which allow themselves to be caught in the same nets in which already a hundred thousand of their species have been caught. There is no one who does not enter quite fresh into life, and the follies of the fathers are no warning to the children. —*Fontenelle.*

30. Their discipline.

(811.) They who provide much wealth for their children, but neglect to improve them in virtue, do like those who feed their horses high, but never train them to the manage. —*Socrates.*

(812). As we are wont to slack the strings of our bows and lutes to make them the stiffer, and to hold the better when we list to shoot or play: so, likewise, it is needful that parents and schoolmasters should require no more of their children and scholars than they are able to do, lest they discourage them and make them to hate their study or any other thing whereto they would bring them.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(813.) In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is *to conquer their will.* To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must, with children, proceed by slow degrees, as they are able to bear it; but the subjecting the will must be done at once, *and the sooner the better;* for, by neglecting timely correction, they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which are hardly ever conquered, and not without using such severity as would be as painful to me as the child. In the

esteem of the world *they* pass for kind and indulgent, whom I call *cruel*, parents, who permit their children to get habits which they know must afterwards be broken. When the will of a child is subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of its parents, then a great many childish follies and inadvertencies may be passed by. Some should be overlooked, and others mildly reproved; but no *wilful* transgression ought to be forgiven without such chastisement, less or more, as the nature and circumstances of the offence may require. I insist upon conquering the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind.

—*Mrs. S. Wesley.*

(814.) The main thing to be considered in every action of a child is how it will become him when he is bigger, and whither it will lead him when he is grown up. —*Locke*, 1632–1704.

(815.) Discipline should respect each child in particular according to his disposition. In the same family there may be a variety of tempers, which will require a varied method of treatment, in addition to the general principles of education which will apply alike to all minds. And therefore, as the farmer consults the nature of his land, adapting the seed to the soil; and as the physician studies the constitution of his patient, suiting the remedy to the disease; so ought every parent to study the dispositions of all his children, that he may adapt his discipline to the particularities of their respective tempers. —*James.*

31. Their correction.

(816.) A father is as it were a prince and a judge in his family: there he gives laws, and inflicts censures and punishments upon offenders. But how misbecoming a thing would it be to see a judge in choler pass sentence upon a man? It is the same thing to see a father in the heat and fury of his passion correct his child. If a father could but see himself in this mood, and how ill his passion becomes him, instead of being angry with his child, he would be out of patience with himself.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(817.) Great severities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended. And many times those who were bred up in a very severe school, hate learning ever after for the sake of the cruelty that was used to force it upon them: and so likewise an endeavour to bring children to piety and goodness by unreasonable strictness and rigour, does often beget in them a lasting disgust and prejudice against religion; and teaches them, as Erasmus says, "To hate virtue at the same time that they teach them to know it;" for by this means virtue is represented to the minds of children under a great disadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together, so that whenever they think of religion, they remember the severity which was wont to accompany the instructions about it; and the natural hatred which men have for punishment, is by this means derived upon religion itself. And indeed how can it be expected that children should love their duty when they never hear of it but with a handful of rods shook over them?

I insist upon this the more, because I do not remember to have observed more notorious instances of great miscarriage than in the children of very strict and severe parents; of which I can give no other account but this—that nature when it is thus overcharged recoils the more terribly; it hath something in it like the spring of an engine, which being forcibly pressed, does, upon the first liberty, return back with so much the greater violence. In like manner the vicious dispositions of children, when restrained merely by the severity of parents, do break forth strangely as soon as ever they get loose and from under their discipline.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(818.) I would not have children much beaten for their faults, because I would not have them think bodily pain the greatest punishment.

—*Locke*, 1632–1704.

(819.) If a child, when questioned for anything, directly confess, you must commend his ingenuity, and pardon the fault, be it what it will.

—*Locke*, 1632–1704.

(820.) Excess of severity is one danger. My mother, on the contrary, would talk to me, and weep as she talked. I flung out of the house with an oath; but wept too when I got into the street. Sympathy is the powerful engine of a mother. I was desperate: I would go on board a privateer. But there are soft moments to such desperadoes. God does not, at once, abandon them to themselves. There are times when the man says—"I should be glad to return; but I should not like to meet that face!" if he has been treated with severity.

Yet excess of laxity is another danger. The case of Eli affords a serious warning on this subject. Instead of his mild expostulation on the flagrant wickedness of his sons—"Nay, my sons, it is no good report that I hear"—he ought to have exercised his authority as a parent and magistrate in punishing and restraining their crimes.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(821.) Be very gentle with the children God has given you; watch over them constantly; reprove them earnestly, but not in anger. In the forcible language of Scripture, "Be not bitter against them." "Yes, they are good boys," I once heard a kind father say; "I talk to them very much, but do not like to beat my children—the world will beat them." It was a beautiful thought, though not elegantly expressed. Yes: there is not one child in the circle round the table, healthful and happy as they look now, on whose head, if long enough spared, the storm will not beat. Adversity may wither them, sickness may fade, a cold world may frown on them, but amidst all let memory carry them back to a home where the law of kindness reigned, where the mother's reproving eye was moistened with a tear, and the father frowned "more in sorrow than in anger." —*Elihu Burritt.*

32. Should be trusted.

(822.) Give a dog a bad name—and hang him. Treat a man as a rascal and his moral character will have to be founded on adamantine virtue, or it will split. There was never a schoolmaster who trusted

all to his own shrewdness and nothing to the children's honour that did not have a tricky lot of scholars. "As well have the game as the name," is more than a poacher's proverb. On the contrary, while trustfulness is liable to imposition, persistent confidence breeds honour and not deceit, certainly in the long run. "There's no use in lying to the Doctor," said the boys of Rugby, in good old Dr. Arnold's time; "he believes everything you say!"

—*Stawin.*

33. Should be encouraged in virtuous actions.

(823.) Encourage that which you see good and commendable in your children. *Virtus laudata crescit.* Commending that which is good in your children, makes them more in love with virtuous actions; and is like the watering of plants, which makes them grow more. —*Watson*, 1696.

34. Suffer for their parents' sins.

(824.) This is a truth evident by universal experience. It is seen every day, in every part of the world. If Mr. Paine indulge in intemperance, and leave children behind him, they may feel the consequences of his misconduct when he is in the grave. The sins of the father may thus be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. It would, however, be their affliction only, and not their punishment. Yet such visitations are wisely ordered as a motive to sobriety.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

35. A reason for parental solicitude on their behalf.

(825.) Consider what a sad inheritance you have conveyed to your children. You have transmitted to them corrupt and depraved natures, evil and vicious inclinations: you have begotten them in your own image and likeness, so that by nature they are children of wrath. Now, methinks, parents that have a due sense of this should be very solicitous, by the best means they can use, to free them from that curse; by endeavouring to correct those perverse dispositions, and cursed inclinations, which they have transmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken estate which from you is descended upon them.

When a man hath by treason tainted his blood and forfeited his estate, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his children, and think of the injury he hath done to them by his fault; and how solicitous is he, before he die, to petition the king for favour to his children; how earnestly doth he charge his friends to be careful of them and kind to them; that by these means he may make the best reparation he can of their fortune which hath been ruined by his fault.

And have parents such a tenderness for their children, in reference to their estate and condition in this world; and have they none for the good estate of their souls and their eternal condition in another world? If you are sensible that their blood is tainted, and that their best fortunes are ruined by your sad misfortune, why do you not bestir yourselves for the repairing of God's image in them? Why do you not travail in birth till Christ be formed in them? Why do you not pray earnestly to God, and give Him no rest, who hath reprieved, and, it may be, pardoned you, that He would extend His grace to them also, and grant them the blessings of His new covenant?

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

36. Are not to be apprenticed to ungodly masters.

(826.) Think how precious the soul of your child is. It is immortal, it is capable of communion with God and angels: and will you let this soul be lost, by placing it in a bad family? If you had a horse you loved, you would not put him into a stable with other horses that were sick and diseased; and do you not love your child better than your horse?

—*Watson*, 1696.

37. Their influence for good.

(827.) Children are not apt to remember how much good they can do merely with words they can speak. Sometimes I think they can do even more than men and women; for nobody is half as likely to be angry with a child for telling him what he ought not to do as he would, perhaps, be with a minister or some older person. I have known the hardest sort of people to be quite kind and thoughtful when rebuked by those who were too small for them to strike or curse for being faithful.

Not long ago, I read, there was a Highland boy sitting on the door-stone, with some half-dozen others. They were singing Sunday-school hymns. Along came a half-drunken man, who said with an awful oath, "Does your master teach you nothing better than these silly songs?" When up spoke this sharp little fellow, six years old: "Why, yes, sir. He teaches us it is wicked for any one to *swear!*" The man hurried on silently, as if he were ashamed; and afterwards told how he had become a better man because of the rebuke the child gave him.

There was a great and good man lecturing in London; and he happened to say: "Everybody has influence; even that little girl." And as he said this, he pointed to a child sitting on her father's knee. "That is true," said the man, right out in the meeting. Afterward he waited to make an apology for the interruption. "I could not help speaking," he said. "I used to be a drunkard, and this little girl of mine pleaded with me to stop going to the ale-house. I was angry, and knocked her down. But she got up and came straight to me, saying: 'Twasn't you, father, but the rum, that struck me.' And I felt so sorry that I never went again. This little child is my very best friend in the world." —*C. S. Robinson.*

(828.) A few days I saw a large, strong man come forward as a candidate for church membership. By the hand he held a fair, delicate child of nine years, and pointing to her as the tears rolled down his cheeks, he said: "*She showed me the way.* I knew I was a sinner, and needed the pardon and sanctification, but I kept putting the matter off. I heard the most powerful sermons, but would say: 'Go thy way for this time.' My pious wife entreated me to be reconciled to Jesus, but I turned a deaf ear to all her persuasions. But when my little daughter came again and again, and putting her loving little arms about my neck would say, 'Dear father, won't you go to heaven, too? Father, you don't know how good Jesus is. O father! He died for you and me; can't you love Him?'—I could resist no longer; and blessed be the God of my dear child, He is

mine too now, and shall be mine to all eternity." Thus was the father's soul saved through the prayers and entreaties of a little child.

38. Their death.

(829.) If a young man, or if a young daughter die, what a great mourning beginneth there to be! "Alas! he is taken away in his young days before his time; he should first have been married, and had a good wife upon earth, and in his last age have died in peace and rest." Hereof cometh it that we think the death of children to be unnatural, even as when the flame of fire through water is violently quenched. The death of the aged we think to be natural, as when the fire quencheth of itself, according to the saying of Cicero. The death of young persons is compared to unripe apples that with violence are plucked off from the tree: the death of the aged is thought to be as when ripe apples fall down of themselves.

If God had promised every one a long life, then mightest thou complain at the shortening of the life of thyself or of thy friends against God's promise. No man hath cause to complain of an untimely death; whatsoever one hath lived over and beside the first day of his birth, it is an increase.

Moreover, though we remain a long season in this fickle transitory life, yet is all our time but short, especially towards the endless eternity. Therefore it hath but a slender difference to depart hence in youth, or in age.

He that is upon the sea, and with a good strong wind is carried soon to the haven where he would be, is happier than he that for lack of wind is fain to sail still many days upon the sea with much trouble and weariness. Even so the more happy is he, whom death taketh away from the stormy sea of this world. Seeing there is set before us a universal native country, and he that is long in going thither obtaineth no more than he that is speedily gone thither beforehand; should not one wish that he had soon overcome the foul dangerous way that leadeth to the heavenly harbour?

The sooner one payeth his debt, the better it is. If there were none other remedy, but that with an hundred more thou must needs be beheaded, and thou art the first that is put to execution, art thou not then the first that is dispatched of the pain?

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(830.) If a great lord had called thee and thy son, and promised thee much wealth and good, shouldst thou weep when thy son goeth to him, and thou thyself wilt shortly follow after? No, verily; but thou wouldst order thy matter so that thou mightest be there out of hand. Why unquietest thou thyself then so sore for the death of thy son or friend? The Almighty Lord hath called him and thee to His eternal kingdom, to place thee and him among the princes of heaven. Thy son passeth hence through the gates of death; he shall rise again to honour. Why vexest thou then thyself? Why orderest not thou thyself joyfully to follow him? for thou hast not lost him, but only sent him before. If it were possible that thy son knew of thy immeasurable wailing, and could speak unto thee, without all doubt he himself would rebuke it.

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(831.) Ye have lost a child; nay, she is not lost to you, who is found in Christ; she is not sent away, but only sent before; like unto a star which, going out of sight, does not die and vanish, but shines in another hemisphere.

—*Rutherford*, 1661.

(832.) Ah! we sometimes, I fear, compel Jesus to take "away" our children, that through the bereavement He may overcome and melt savingly our callous hearts. It mindeth me of another little story worth telling. A shepherd had folded safely and well a flock of ewes—all save one, which would not enter, do what he would. The gate was flung wide open, and with all gentle constraint he sought to guide it in—sparing it the rough bark of his dog. But no! still it would run back. At last, for the shades of evening were falling, and folded all must be, if he were not to be "too late" for home himself—he sprang out, seized her lamb, raised it tenderly to his bosom, laid it right upon his heart as he would his own nestling babe, and carrying it within the fold, placed it down there. Then, ah! then the poor ewe ran in—ran in after her little lamb, and was safe with it. It is a parable. But fathers! mothers! still away from the Good Shepherd, and grieving sorely over your Willie or Mary, will you not run in after your little lamb? Will you compel Him to take another and another?

—*Grosart.*

(833.) God cultivates many flowers, seemingly only for their exquisite beauty and fragrance. For when, bathed in soft sunshine, they have burst into blossom, then the Divine hand gathers them from the earthly fields to be kept in crystal vases in the deathless mansions above. Thus little children die—some in the sweet bud, some in the fuller blossom; but never too early to make heaven fairer and sweeter with their immortal bloom.

—*Wadsworth.*

39. Death of an infidel's child.

(834.) As Lucy —— lay on her sick bed, all that a tender mother could do to mitigate pain, or to restore God's gift of health, was done in vain. The angel of death was on the threshold, prepared to take the child through the dark valley to her eternal home. She had lain some hours still; at last she roused up and saw her parents watching, one on either side of the bed. She looked at them both with penetrating gaze which is so often seen in eyes that are soon to close on all mortal sights, and said, reaching out her hand feebly towards her father: "Father, I'm sure I'm dying—I feel I am. What would you wish me to believe? what you have taught about Jesus?" The man shook from head to foot, as if smitten through with a dart. He answered: "Oh Lucy dear, believe what your mother has taught you." "Ah—yes! then that is—is true—true, mother dear; He's your Jesus and He's mine." She spoke with difficulty; a cough impeded her utterance. For a few minutes all were still, then there was one look, one smile, the quivering lips whispered: "Blessed Je"—— Angel ears alone heard the finish of the sentence, as the soul went up to heaven. Creeping on her knees round the bed to her husband's side, the wife took his hand, and said, "He was her Jesus; He is mine; He wants to be yours. Oh, pray—pray, let me beseech you—pray this prayer: 'Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.'" . . . Some years have passed since the scene recorded, and the infidel father has become a humble happy Christian.

CHRIST.

I. *HIS DEITY.*

1. The doctrine of His Deity pervades the New Testament.

(835.) So thoroughly intermingled with the whole texture of New Testament Scripture is the Godhead of the Saviour, that no criticism which does not destroy the book can altogether extinguish its testimony. We have seen a copy of the Gospels and Epistles which was warranted free from all trace of the Trinity, but it was not the Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We beheld it, and we received instruction. It did not want beauty; for the parables, and the sermon on the mount, and many a touching passage, still were there. But neither would a garden want beauty if the grass-plots and green bushes still remained, though you had carefully called out every blossoming flower. The humanity of Jesus still is beautiful, even when the Godhead is forgotten or denied. Or rather it looked like a coronation tapestry, with all the golden threads torn out, or an exquisite mosaic from which some unscrupulous finger had abstracted the gems and only left the common stones: you not only missed the glory of the whole, but in the fractures of the peace and the coarse plaster with which the gaps were supplied, you saw how rude was the process by which its jewels had been wrenched away. It was a casket without the pearl. It was a shrine without the Shekinah. And yet, after all, it was not sufficiently expurgated; for after reading it, the thought would recur, how much easier to fabricate a Gnostic Testament exempt from all trace of our Lord's humanity, than a Trinitarian Testament ignoring His Divinity. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

2. The doctrine of His Deity is essential to our respect for Him.

(836.) Whatever may be the fate of the question as to the divinity of Christ, textually, and upon the lower grounds of philosophy, it seems impossible to me to accept Jesus as a mere man without throwing out the most striking elements of His character. All those things which lift themselves above the ordinary horizon of an instructor, and leave us almost gasping by their boldness, must be left out, if we so regard Him. Christ must have been either insane or Divine. If he was a man, for Him to have made such claims for Himself as He did indicated insanity. On the supposition that He was Divine, these claims are rational, and indicate a Being transcending the measure of a man. He was our exemplar of the Father. He was the manifestation of God to men. He epitomised in Himself the universal. The obscure in His teaching is that in which He glides from the local and temporary to higher things, that in their nature are universal, and are therefore difficult of comprehension by us. "I am the way,"—I am a practical development. "I am the truth,"—I represent the reality. "I am the life,"—not an abstraction, not a system, do I bring; I bring the life itself. I represent to the world, by a practical life, the great elements which concern the world to come. He stands for system, for practice, and for being, all at once.
—*Beecher.*

3. Proofs of His Deity.

(1.) *His unchangeableness.*

(837.) Cæsar is not Cæsar still, nor Alexander Alexander still; but Jesus is Jesus still, and shall be for ever (Heb. xiii. 8). —*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(2.) *The statements of the Gospels concerning Him.*

(838.) He was oppressed with hunger; but He feeds the thousands in the desert, and He is the living and celestial Bread. He was parched with thirst; but He cried aloud, "If any one thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink;" and He promised to be a fountain unto believers. He was *weary;* but He was the rest of those who are "weary and heavy-laden." He was weighed down with sleep; but He walked lightly on the wave, and He rebuked the winds, and He bare up Peter from the rolling billows. . . . . If the things which evince His humanity have afforded thee a pretext for error, let the circumstances which attest His Divinity remove thy mistake. —*Gregory Nazianzen.*

(3.) *His influence on human affairs.*

(839.) I want to call your attention to His influence in human affairs as an element of progress. If I have read history aright, that influence saved the world. Nothing else could have done it. If Christ was only a man, then we have such a leader as we have no examples of. Was it possible that a man should preach sermons that should be universalised? Yet Christ's have been. If He was only a Hebrew reformer, though he had been inspired of God, though He has spoken with clarion notes, though he had thundered with supreme honesty and boldness, yet would His influence have died away. If He was a prophet, then He would take His place among the prophets, and we should look upon Him as upon Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. Yet did these prophets but typify and foretell His coming. But if, on the other hand, we look upon Him as Divine, if we believe that in some fashion the power of God the Father was resident in Him, then we should have a right to see an influence that never wanes, a voice that never stills, a fulfilment of all prophecies, an utter change in the fashion of the world's politics, science, and its philosophy. And this is exactly what has occurred. The great men whom we have heard and have honoured sink into pigmies if you but compare them with Christ. A moment before towering above the average of humanity like mountain peaks, now they shrink and wane into mole-hills before the great presence of the mighty Christ. Who is Luther, pray you, but the lowliest follower of Christ? And who, pray, is Calvin? and who are all those grand heroes of past ages, at whose mention our blood thrills—who are all the great and the good who have stood up and suffered for the truth? Are they Christ's, or what? They are no more to be compared to Him, than the petty rushlight's flame to the broad zone of light that streams from the great sun. Christ leads, they follow. He commands, they obey. He stands among them, they kneel in humblest adoration. —*Hepworth.*

(4.) *His demands upon the soul.*

(840.) Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy: He asks that for which a philosopher may often seek in vain at the hands of his friends, or a father of his children, or a bride of her spouse, or a man of his brother: He asks for the human heart: He will have it entirely to Himself: He demands it unconditionally; and forthwith his demand is granted. Wonderful! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man, with

all its powers and faculties, becomes an annexation to the empire of Christ. All who sincerely believe in Him experience that remarkable supernatural love towards Him. This phenomenon is unaccountable; it is altogether beyond the scope of man's creative power. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame: time can neither exhaust its strength nor put a limit to its range. This is which strikes me most. I have often thought of it. This it is which proves to me quite convincingly the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

—*Napoleon I.*

(5.) *His influence on the soul.*

(841.) As there can be no argument of chemistry in proof of odours like a present perfume itself; as the shining of the stars is a better proof of their existence than the figures of an astronomer; as the restored health of his patients is a better argument of skill in a physician than laboured examinations and certificates; as the testimony of the almanack that summer comes with June is not so convincing as is the coming of summer itself in the sky, in the air, in the fields, on hill and mountain: so the power of Christ upon the human soul is to the soul evidence of His divinity, based upon a living experience, and transcending in conclusiveness any convictions of the intellect alone, founded upon a contemplation of mere ideas, however just and sound.

If Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God in the experience of those who trust and love Him, there needs no further argument of His Divinity. —*Beecher.*

(842.) The Deity of the Son of God is, to me, not proved merely in propositions. I believe that he who believes in the Godhead of Jesus Christ has all history, all etymology, all philosophy, and all true reading of the case entirely on his side. But I do not look to propositions, to logical formulæ, to any bare statements, however exact, for the proof and confirmation that this claim, now read as my text, is a claim founded in righteousness. Do you think that I build my hopes of eternity upon some little etymological technicality? Do you suppose that my dependence is founded altogether upon the construction of a phrase or the mood and tense of a verb? We have nothing to fear from that side of the argument, so far as I have been able to collate the testimonies of competent men. But I do not rely upon it in preaching the deity of the Son of God, and in committing myself to the great claim which Jesus makes in this text on behalf of His own nature. What do I trust then? The *moral* reach, the spiritual compass, the indefinable and inexpressible *sympathy* of the man. When He touched my heart into life, I did not say, "Hand me down the Greek grammar and the Hebrew lexicon, and three volumes of the encyclopædia, to see how this really stands." I did not say, "Let me see what the 'Fathers' have said about this." I knew it to be a fact. Nobody ever did for me what He has done. Once I was blind, now I see. I go to other men—writers, speakers, teachers—hear what they have to say, and behold, they are broken cisterns that can hold no water. I go to the Son of God, whose teaching is written in the New Testament, and it gets into the deep places of my life; it redeems me; it goes further than any other influence and does more for me than any other attempt that ever was made to recover and bless my life. It is, therefore, in this great sweep of His, in this reply to every demand that is made upon His resources, this infinite sufficiency of His grace, that I find the exposition and the defence of His Godhead. Some things must be *felt;* some things must be laid hold of by *sympathy*, affection, sensibility. The heart is in some cases a greater interpreter than the understanding. There is a time when logic has to say, "I can do no more for you; do the best you can for yourself!" Then love goes forward, and necessity feels it; and it is in that further insight and penetration that the Godhead of the Nazarene, as it appears to me, is vindicated and glorified.

Shall a man say to me this morning, I thought, as I was looking out upon the sunny scene, that he will prove to me that the firmament is the symbol of infinity? I had in my imagination such a person calling upon me this morning. He said he had come for the purpose of proving to me that the firmament was about the best natural symbol of infinity that we have. And he proceeded,—what to do? To take out of his side-pocket a little foot-rule; and he said, "Now let me prove this to you." And he laid the foot-rule upon one end of the horizon, began to count, "One—two—three." And I left him there saying, "A plague on your foot-rule; and upon your own thick head too! I *feel* it! I feel what the firmament is! Away with you!" I know that that firmament is to me, from a natural point of view, infinite. I feel it. If no foot-rule had ever been invented, I should have known that that great arch, full of light, all but translucent, almost letting heaven come through it, is God's natural symbol of the Infinite!

As I looked upon the sun this November morning, shining through some beautiful blue clouds, a man called upon me to prove that that sun was, in his judgment, so far as he could make out by "the tables," about sufficient to light the world. He turned over long pages of logarithms, and tables of various kinds, fractions and decimals, and long processions of figures; he asked me for a slate and a pencil, and he was going to make it out to my satisfaction that the sun was just about sufficient to enlighten a hemisphere at a time. I ordered him off! Why? I *saw* it; I *felt* it; the whole thing was before me, and if that man had never been born, and the slate had never been made, I should have *known* that this great sun poured light upon the earth until there was not room enough to receive it, and that the splendour ran off at the edges and flamed upon other stars! And yet sometimes men call upon us with slates, pencils, sponges, for the purpose of showing us by their calculations that Jesus Christ cannot be God the Son. I have lived long enough to know that *He is God enough for me.* What more can I want? He raises the dead; He redeems my life from destruction; He fills the mouth with good things; He numbers the hairs of my head; He carries me up-hill many a time when I am weary and the wind is bleak; He visits me in my distress and affliction. His words are—

"Music in the sinner's ear.
And life, and health, and peace!"

My Lord! My God! I will not receive Thee merely through grammars, technical discussions, and "various readings." I will receive Thee because when Thou dost come into my heart, I know that all the heaven that I can contain is already within me when Thou art near. My Lord! and my God!

—*Joseph Parker.*

(843.) If Christ be not Divine, every impulse of the Christian world falls to a lower octave, and light and love and hope alike decline.

—*David Swing.*

4. Rendered it impossible that He should be holden of death.

(844.) The hypostatical union of Christ's human nature to His Divine, rendered a perpetual duration under death absolutely impossible. For how could that which was united to the great source and principle of life be finally prevailed over by death, and pass into an estate of perpetual darkness and oblivion? Even while Christ's body was divided from His soul, yet it ceased not to maintain an intimate, indissolvable relation to its divinity. It was assumed into the same person; for according to the Creed of Athanasius, "as the soul and body make one man, so the divine nature and the human make one Christ." And if so, is it imaginable that the Son of God could have one of His natures rent wholly from His person? His divinity, as it were, buoyed up his sinking humanity, and preserved it from a total dissolution: for, as while the soul continues joined to the body (still speaking *in sensu composito*), death cannot pass upon it, forasmuch as that is the proper effect of their separation; so, while Christ's manhood was retained in a personal conjunction with His godhead, the bands of death were but feeble and insignificant, like the withs and cords upon Samson, while he was inspired with the mighty presence and assistance of God's Spirit.

It was possible, indeed, that the divine nature might for a while suspend its supporting influence, and so deliver over the human nature to pain and death, but it was impossible for it to let go the relation it bore to it. A man may suffer his child to fall to the ground, and yet not wholly quit his hold of him, but still keep it in his power to recover and lift him up at his pleasure. Thus the divine nature of Christ did for a while hide itself from His humanity, but not desert it; put it into the chambers of death, but not lock the everlasting doors upon it. The sun may be clouded, and yet not eclipsed, and eclipsed, but not stopped in his course, and much less forced out of his orb. It is a mystery to be admired, that anything belonging to the person of Christ should suffer; but it is a paradox to be exploded, that it should perish. For surely that nature which, diffusing itself throughout the universe, communicates an enlivening influence to every part of it, and quickens the least spire of grass according to the measure of its nature, and the proportion of its capacity, would not wholly leave a nature, assumed into its bosom, and, what is more, into the very unity of the Divine Person, breathless and inanimate, and dismantled of its prime and noblest perfection. For life is so high a perfection of being, that in this respect the least fly or mite is a more noble being than a star. And God has expressly declared Himself, "not the God of the dead, but of the living:" and this in respect of the very persons of men; but how much more with reference to what belongs to the person of His Son! For when natures come to unite so near, as mutually to interchange names and attributes, and to verify the appellation by which God is said to be man, and man to be God; surely man so privileged and advanced, cannot for ever lie under death, without an insufferable invasion upon the entireness of that glorious person, whose perfection is as inviolable as it is incomprehensible.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

5. Entitles Him to our worship.

(845.) "And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Did they sin in worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ? After their long career of intimacy, did love to such a Being, who had exhausted the symbolism of life to express His life-giving relations to them; with every conceivable incitement to reverence and worship; with love, wonder, joy, and gratitude kindling their imaginations towards Him; without a solitary word of caution lest they should be snared by their enthusiasm, and bestow upon Him the worship which belonged only to God, did they sin in worshipping Christ? If they did, was not Christ Himself the tempter? If they did not, may not every living soul worship Him? Is there any other question of divinity which man need be troubled about but a divinity which the soul may worship, and on which it may rely for salvation?

Let me place another case before you for judgment. A maiden, the daughter of a prince, has wandered from her father's house, and has lapsed from virtue, seeking pleasure in ways every year more degrading. A noble youth appears among her gross companions, not to partake in their orgies, but with a gentle grace and eloquent persuasion to inspire an ambition of better things. To her he brings her father's importunity. Drawn to him by all that is attractive in pure manhood, she is met with more than encouragement—with sympathy, with tenderness, with expression of love so exquisite, so new, so eloquent, that her soul dies in her with a sense of unworthiness. But he comforts and encourages her: "Because I live thou shalt live also." And when she fears to weary him, and seeks alone to find her upward way, he whispers, "Not without me, for without me ye can do nothing." When the returning power of habits conquered but not subdued drives her to despair, he re-illumines hope, saying, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, and you shall also." And then, amid blushing flowers, he pours the tide of love in strange words that thrill the heart and fascinates the imagination. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Come to me in every hour of trial, and I will give thee rest. Grow to me and mingle my life with your own, as the branch derives its life from the vine. Thy heart is my home; I will dwell there. Not God and His dearest ones are more united than I and thou."

By all these words, by all this love, by all these hopes, by the ineffable joy of his presence, by his noble example and his unwearied teachings, by the inspiration of his life, and the lifting power of his soul put beneath hers, she comes back to virtue and womanhood, and with sacred ardour turns to him who has saved her, to love him with a love that leaves nothing unmingled in it, that carries up with it the dew from every flower that blossoms in her heart! What if he sternly shuts her opening heart, and puts away the reverence of her love and the devotion of her soul, saying, "Give these to your father. It is wicked to bestow them upon me!" If it be wicked to love, what is it to have deliberately inspired such love, and then to refuse it?

And shall I follow Christ through all my life, behold His beauty, twine about Him every affection, lean upon Him for strength; behold Him as my leader, my teacher; feed upon Him as my bread, my wine, my water of life; see all things in this world in that light which He declares Himself to be; in His strength vanquish sin, draw from Him my hope and inspiration, wear His name and love His works, and through my whole life, at His command, twine about Him every affection, die in His arms, and awake with eager upspring to find Him whom my soul loveth, only to be put away with the announcement that He is not the recipient of worship? Well might I cry out in the anguish of Mary in the garden, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." —*Beecher.*

II. *HIS INCARNATION.*

1. Its necessity.

(846.) Logicians may reason about abstractions, but the great mass of mankind never feel an interest in them. They must have images. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers; a philosopher might adore so noble a conception, but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity, embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the pride of the portico, and the fasces of the lictors, and the swords of thirty legions were humbled in the dust.

—*Macaulay*, 1800–1859.

(847.) What theologians call the natural perfections of the Godhead, eternal existence, almighty power, infinite wisdom, with other attributes of the same order, suffered temporary eclipse in the incarnation of the Divine Word. Christ came with no majesty or terror, to fill the imagination with excitement or awe; with no visible pomp which could interfere with the full effect of the moral revelation. The circumstances in which He lived, all the incidents of His moral life gave emphatic and almost exclusive prominence to His moral and spiritual character. The divine justice, and mercy, and goodness, and compassion, and truth, all the elements of holiness, all the qualities which constitute moral perfection, are revealed to us in Him as they were never revealed before. The words which represent these attributes existed in the world before, but they did not stand then for ideas of the same magnitude and glory as those for which they stand now. We talk of mountains before we have seen the Alps—but when once we have looked on the glittering glaciers, and the desolate wastes of eternal snow, the word has a sublimity of meaning it never had till then. So, although in the mind of Moses and of David and of Isaiah, there were true and noble conceptions of the divine mercy, they must have been dim and poor when compared with the thoughts which John and Peter and Paul had of the same perfection.

—*R. W. Dale.*

(848.) The incarnation of God is a necessity of human nature. If we really and truly have a Father, we must be able to clasp His feet in our penitence, and to lean on His breast in our weary sorrowfulness. If He be God, we must see exhibitions of what we believe to be Divine. If He be glorious, we must see His glory. It must shine in something or in some person whom we can apprehend, or else we can never have knowledge of the glory of God. Where does that glory shine? Paul says that "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ."

—*Deems.*

2. Its nature.

(849.) Others, as the Arians and the Eunomians, admitted that Christ took on Him a real human body, yet denied that He took on Him a human soul; asserting that His Divine nature supplied the functions that it required. But upon this supposition with what show of reason can it be affirmed that He took upon Him our nature, since the human nature is adequately compounded and made up of body and soul as its two essential, constituent parts: so that a body is no more a man's nature without the concomitance of a rational soul, than a carcass is a man; or that two units can make a perfect number of four. —*South*, 1633–1716.

3. Veiled, but did not conceal His divine glory.

(850.) It is recorded of Moses, who was a type of Christ, that after his familiar converse with God, descending from the mount, his face shone with such an excessive brightness, as it were by reflection from the face of God, that coming to the Israelites to deliver to them the Divine laws, he was fain to cover it with a veil: yet some rays of that miraculous splendour were visible through that mysterious veil, to assure them it was Moses himself who directed and governed them according to God's will.

Thus when the Son of God came down from the heaven of heavens to instruct the world, He shadowed the light of Deity with a veil of flesh: yet He was not so absolutely concealed under His humanity, but that from time to time beams of the Divine nature appeared in works so proper to God, that the apostle says, "We saw His glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

4. Incomprehensible, but not incredible.

(851.) Seneca prudently observes that extraordinary effects in nature are unaccountable to us, as to their immediate proper causes, whilst we only consider the usual principles by which it works. Nay in the most common works of nature, how many things are so perceptible to sense that none is so stupid as to deny them, yet imperceptible to reason as to the manner of their production!

Who understands the admirable conjunction of the soul and body in man? How two metals of so precious and so base alloy, gold and lead, a spirit and matter, the one celestial, the other earthly, should so strictly combine, and notwithstanding such diversity in their natures and properties embrace with such concord in their inclination? Now if the sharpest eye, fixed with the greatest attention cannot discern the manner of this natural union when the thing is above all doubt, can there be any pretence to disbelieve supernatural mysteries because we are not able to comprehend how they are effected? —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(852.) You are unable to explain the wonderful union of God and man in the nature of Christ; but are you more perfectly able to explain the wonderful union of matter and spirit in your own? Are you able to explain how it is that matter seems to be affected by the laws of spirit, so that the hands beckon, the feet walk, and the lips have language in obedience to the determinations of the intellect and will? or how is it that the spirit seems to be affected by the laws of matter, so that an afflicted body will sometimes make a clouded soul? In both cases you must believe, not on the ground of your ability to explain the thing in question, but on the ground of its support by appropriate evidence.

—*Stanford.*

5. The greatest of all marvels.

(853.) Christ came from the bosom of His Father, from the incomprehensible, surpassing glories in the Godhead, from an eternal enjoyment of an absolute, uninterrupted bliss and pleasure, in the mutual, ineffable intercourse between Him and His Father. The heaven of heavens was His habitation, and legions of cherubims and seraphims His humble and constant attendants. Yet He was pleased to disrobe Himself of all His magnificence, to lay aside His sceptre and His glories, and, in a word, to "empty Himself," as far as the essential fulness of the Deity could be capable of such a dispensation.

And, now, if by the poor measures of a man we may take an estimate of this great action, we shall quickly find how irksome it is to flesh and blood to have been happy, to descend some steps lower, to exchange the estate of a prince for that of a peasant, and to view our happiness only by the help of memory. For how hard a task must obedience needs be to a spirit accustomed to rule! How uneasy must the leather and the frieze sit upon the shoulders that used to shine with the purple and the ermine! All change must be grievous to an estate of absolute, entire, unmingled happiness; but then to change to the lowest pitch, and that at first, without inuring the mind to the burden by gradual intermediate declensions, this is the most afflicting calamity that human nature can be capable of. And yet what is all this to Christ's humiliations? He who tumbles from a tower surely has a greater blow than he who slides from a molehill. And we may as well compare the falling of a crumb from the table to the falling of a star from the firmament, as think the abasement of an Alexander from his imperial throne to the condition of the meanest scullion that followed his camp, any way comparable to the descension of Him who was "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person," to the condition of a man, much less of a servant and a crucified malefactor,—for so was Christ treated: this was the strange leap that He made from the greatest height to the lowest depth, concerning which it might be well pronounced the greatest wonder in the world, that He should be able so far to humble Himself, were it not yet a greater that He could be willing.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

6. The most conspicuous display of the Divine goodness.

(854.) The power of God doth brightly shine in the creation, the wisdom of God may be discerned in the government of things: but the incarnation of God is that work, is that dispensation of grace, wherein the Divine goodness doth most conspicuously display itself, how indeed possibly could God have demonstrated a greater excess of kindness toward us, than by thus, for our sake and good, sending His dearest Son out of His bosom into this sordid and servile estate, subjecting Him to all the infirmities of our frail nature, exposing Him to the worst inconveniences of our low condition? What expressions can signify, what comparisons can set out the stupendous vastness of this kindness? If we should imagine that a great prince should put his only son (a son most lovely, and worthily most beloved) into rags, should dismiss him from his court, should yield him up into the hardest slavery, merely to the intent that he thereby might redeem from captivity the meanest and basest of his subjects, how faint a resemblance would this be of that immense goodness of that incomparable mercy, which, in this instance, the King of all the world hath declared towards us, His poor vassals, His indeed unworthy rebels. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

III. *THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD.*

(855.) God is best known in Christ; the sun is not seen but by the light of the sun.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(856.) In nature, we see God, as it were, like the sun in a picture; in the law, as the sun in a cloud; in Christ, we see Him in His beams: He being "the brightness of His glory, and the exact image of His person." —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(857.) The light of Divine wisdom in the greatest works of nature, holds not the proportion of the meanest star unto the sun in its full strength, unto that glory of it which shines in this mystery of God manifested in the flesh, and the work accomplished thereby. —*Owen*, 1613–1683.

IV. *HIS CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.*

(858.) We are apt to forget that it was *during this time* that *much of the great work of the second Adam was done.* The growing up through infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, from grace to grace, holiness to holiness, in subjection, self-denial, and love, *without one polluting touch of sin*, this it was which, consummated by the three years of active ministry, by the Passion and by the Cross, constituted "*the obedience of one man*," by which many were made righteous. We must fully appreciate the words of this verse in order to think rightly of Christ. He had emptied Himself of His glory. His infancy and childhood were no *mere pretence*, but the Divine Personality was in Him carried through these states of weakness and inexperience, and gathered around itself the ordinary accession and experience of the sons of men. All the time the consciousness of His mission on earth was ripening,—"the things heard of the Father" (John xv. 15) were continually imparted to Him; the Spirit, which was not given by measure unto Him, was abiding more and more upon Him, till the day when He was fully ripe for His official manifestations,—that He might be offered to His own, to receive or reject Him,—and then the Spirit led Him up to commence His conflict with the enemy. As yet, He was in favour with man also,—the world had not yet begun to hate Him; but we cannot tell

how soon this feeling toward Him was changed, for He alleges (John vii. 7), "Me the world hateth because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil;" and we can hardly conceive such testimony, in the years of gathering vigour and zeal, long withheld. The incidents of Luke iv. 28, 29, can scarcely have arisen *only* from the anger of the moment.

—*Alford.*

(859.) In regard to the second period, that of our Lord's youth and early manhood, one event at its commencement, which shows us how that grace unfolded itself in heavenly wisdom, is fully made known to us,—one event, but one only, to which one short verse (Luke ii. 52) is added, to teach us how that wisdom waxed momentarily more full, more deep, more broad, until like some mighty river seeking the sea, it merged insensibly into the omniscience of His limitless Godhead.

(860.) How full of meaning is the fact that we have nothing told us of the life of our blessed Lord between the twelfth and thirtieth years! What a testimony against all our striving and snatching at hasty results, our impatience, our desire to glitter before the world, against the plucking the unripe fruit of the mind, and the turning of that into a season of stunted and premature harvest, which should have been a season of patient sowing, of earnest culture and silent ripening of the powers.

—*Trench.*

(861.) There is no more difficult subject in theology than that of the development of the human soul in Jesus. When we would trace the development of any other man, we soon find ourselves checked as Moses was when he wished to advance too near the burning bush. Moses said, with the curiosity natural to an educated and philosophical mind, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." But he heard a voice which said, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Still, we are permitted to trace this subject as far as to learn in His youth, at least, Jesus grew in wisdom. His attainment of knowledge, at that period of His life, was progressive. Nor can we reasonably suppose it was otherwise afterwards: He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. —*L. H. Wiseman.*

(862) We, being defective in nature, are developed through error. By slow correction of mistakes, we arrive at intellectual, by slow correction of faults, at moral excellence. But it is quite possible to conceive the entirely natural development of Christ's perfect nature, limited by time; the development, as it were, of a fountain into a river, perfect as the fountain, but not more than the fountain as a child; perfect as the rivulet, but not more than the rivulet as a boy; perfect as the stream, but not more than the stream as a youth; and perfect as the majestic river as a man. At each stage greater than at the last, more developed, but as perfect as possible to nature at each; and as the water of the fountain, rivulet, stream, and river is the same throughout, self-supplied, perennial in its source and flowing, so was it with the nature of Christ, and with His growth.

—*Stopford Brooke.*

(863.) There are two conceivable kinds of development; one, development through antagonism, through error, from stage to stage of less and less deficiency. This is our development; but it is such because evil has gained a lodgment in our nature, and we can only attain perfection through contest with it. But there is another kind of development conceivable, the development of a perfect nature limited by time. Such a nature will always be potentially that which it will become; *i.e.*, everything which it will be is already there, but the development of it is successive, according to time; perfect at each several stage, but each stage more finished than the last. The plant is perfect as the green shoot above the earth, it is all it can be then; it is more perfect as the creature adorned with leaves and branches, and it is all it can be then; it reaches its full perfection when the blossom breaks into flower. But it has been as perfect as it can be at every stage of its existence; it has had no struggle, no retrogression, it has realised in an entirely normal and natural way, at each successive step of its life, exactly and fully that which a plant should be.

Such was the development of Christ. He was the perfect child, the perfect boy, the perfect youth, the perfect flower of manhood. Every stage of human life was lived in finished purity, and yet no stage was abnormally developed; there was nothing out of character in His life. He did not think the thought of a youth when a child, nor feel the feelings of a man when a youth; but He grew freely, nobly, naturally, unfolding all His powers without a struggle, in a completely healthy progress.

A second illustration may make the matter clearer. The work of an inferior artist arrives at a certain amount of perfection through a series of failures, which teach him where he is wrong. By slow correction of error he is enabled to produce a tolerable picture. Such is our development.

The work of a man of genius is very different. He has seen, before he touches the pencil, the finished picture. His first sketch contains the germ of all. The picture is there; but the first sketch is inferior in finish to the next stage, and that to the completed picture. But his work is perfect in its several stages; not a line needs erasure, not a thought correction; it develops into its last and noblest form without a single error. Such was Christ's development,—an orderly, faultless, unbroken development, in which humanity, freed from its unnatural companion, evil, went forward according to its real nature. It was the restoration of humanity to its original integrity, to itself, as it existed in the idea of God. —*Stopford Brooke.*

V. *HIS BAPTISM.*

(864.) Why should our Lord, who was *without sin*, have come to *a baptism of repentance?* Because He was *made sin for us.* For the same reason He suffered the curse of the law. It became Him, being *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, to go through those rites and purifications which belonged to that flesh. There is no more strangeness in His having been baptized by John that in His keeping the passovers. The one rite, as the other, belonged to *sinners*, and *among the transgressors He was numbered.* —*Alford.*

VI. *HIS FORTY DAYS' FAST.*

(865.) "And when He had fasted forty days He was afterwards an hungred." How are we intended

to understand a fast of this length, manifestly impossible to man under ordinary conditions? Not by bringing in, as some have done, Christ's divine power as the explanation of all; which would indeed rob this fact of its significance for us.

We must seek the explanation elsewhere. We are far too much accustomed, in a stiff dualism, to conceive of the spiritual and material as of two worlds altogether apart, with a rigid line of demarcation between them, so that the powers and influences of the higher cannot pass over effectually to operate in the sphere of the lower. Yet all the experience of our daily life contradicts this, and we note the higher continually making itself felt in the region of the lower. The wayworn regiment, which could scarcely drag itself along, but which revives at the well-known air, and forgets all its weariness, what does it but declare that the spirit is lord not merely in its own domain, but is meant to be, and even now in no inconsiderable degree is, the lord of the provinces of man's life that lie beneath it? Matter instead of offering a stubborn resistance to spirit, proves in many and marvellous ways to be plastic to it. Sensuality debases and degrades the countenance; purity and love ennoble it, casting a beam even upon the outward shape. What is the resurrection of the body, or the ultimate glorification of nature, or the larger number of those miracles wrought by the Lord in the days of His flesh, but the workings of spirit upon matter? So too, it fared with His forty days' fast. To bring in here His Divine power, or to suppose that He then fasted otherwise than as a man, is, as has been urged already, to rob the whole transaction of its meaning. Upborne and upholden above the common needs of the animal life by the great tides of spiritual gladness, in the strength of that recent baptism, in the solemn joy of that salutation and recognition from His Father, He found and felt no need for food all these forty days. —*Trench.*

VII. *HIS TEMPTATION.*

(866.) The gloom and temptation of the wilderness preceded the glorious career of our Lord's ministry, as heavy mists often precede a brilliant summer's day. —*L. H. Wiseman.*

(867.) In the wilderness Jesus was not tempted as He was divine, but as He was human. The wind agitates the surface of the ocean, while its hidden depths remain untroubled. These temptations troubled the outer humanity: the inner divinity they could not touch; nor was the inner divinity called forth in resisting them. As a man He suffered, as a man He resisted, as a man He conquered. —*L. H. Wiseman.*

(868.) It is not probable that He was at any time long together freed from Satanic molestations; though the great temptations, at the close of forty days, are more minutely recorded; as the sailor tells of one or two fearful storms which he has weathered, leaving lighter squalls unmentioned. And as the devil is often busiest with us when we wish to be most intent on heavenly meditations, knowing that if he can thwart and distract us then, he is depriving us of our strength and hope in the midst of busy outward duties, it is unlikely that he would leave our Saviour unmolested during the whole of the forty days which He spent in communing with His Father. —*L. H. Wiseman.*

(869.) Did Christ, then, merely suffer in the wilderness as any other man has done? Suffering is a question of nature. The educated man suffers more than the uneducated man; the poet probably suffers more than the mathematician; the commanding officer suffers more in a defeat than the common soldier. The more life, the more suffering; the billows of sorrow being in proportion to the volume of our manhood. Now Jesus Christ was not merely a man, He was man; and by the very compass of His manhood He suffered more than any mortal can endure. The storm may pass as fiercely over the shallow lake as over the Atlantic, but by its very volume the latter is more terribly shaken. No other man had come with Christ's ideas; in no other man was the element of self so entirely abnegated; no other man had offered such opposition to diabolic rule; all these circumstances combine to render Christ's temptation unique, yet not one of them puts Christ so far away as to prevent us finding in His temptation unfailing solace and strength. —*Joseph Parker.*

(870.) Our Lord's temptations brought out clearly into view the perfectness of His character. Says Epictetus concerning Hercules, "Had he sat at home by the fireside, and passed his life in effeminate ease and indulgences, he had never been Hercules. They were the lion, the hydra, the boar, and all those monsters he so laboriously defeated, which exercised his gallantry. What honour had he acquired if his virtue had not been thus dangerously employed? What benefit had mankind reaped from so great a soul if he had declined the occasions of exerting it?"

(871.) A certain class of modern sceptics are accustomed to represent the temptation of Christ as originating in His own thoughts at the discovery that He possessed miraculous power. The question then presented itself, What should He do with the awful gift? And it occurred to Him that He might use it for His own aggrandisement. Now, that such a thought may have occurred to Him may not be denied; but if this were all, it is difficult to understand where the temptation was. The hoary saint knows that he could kill that child for the penny in its hand; but the bare occurrence of the thought is no temptation. If the thought occurred to Christ, and was attended by strong desires in Him to pervert His miraculous power to His own personal interest in the world, then it might have been truly said of Him, "He hath a devil." But this militates against the conceded perfection of Christ, and must be condemned by these same sceptics who now so loudly proclaim that our Saviour's great superiority consisted in the fact that His heart was always right. —*M'Rae.*

VIII. *MADE PERFECT BY SUFFERING.*

(872.) He was made like to men in the curse, though not in the sin; which was necessary for His being a merciful high priest. This qualification of compassion could not result in such a high manner from anything so well as from an experimental knowledge of the miseries we had contracted. No man is so affected with the wretched state of men in a shipwreck by beholding it in a picture, as when he sees the ship dashed against the rocks, and hears the cries and beholds the strugglings of the passengers for life; nor is any man so deeply

affected with them upon sight, as upon feeling the same miseries in his own person. That makes a man's compassion more readily excited upon seeing or hearing of others in the like state. Now, had not Christ run through the chief miseries of human life, and the punishment of death, He had not had that experimental compassion which was necessary to qualify Him for this priesthood. It was by being made perfect through sufferings that He became "the author of eternal salvation."

—*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

(873.) "The Captain of our salvation was made perfect by sufferings, and for suffering death was crowned with glory," because His sufferings did constitute Him a perfect Captain or Redeemer in performance; though before He was perfect in ability. As he that undertaketh to redeem some Turkish galley-slaves by conquering their navy, is made a perfect redeemer, or conqueror, when he hath taken the fleet, though yet the prisoners are in his power, to release them on such terms as seem best to him. And as a man is a perfect chirurgeon, when (besides his skill) he is furnished with all his instruments or salves (how costly soever) though yet the cure is not done: or as he that hath ransomed prisoners is a perfect ransomer, when he hath paid the price, though yet they are not delivered, nor have any actual right themselves to claim deliverance by. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

IX. *HIS LIFE CANNOT BE WRITTEN.*

(874.) The effect of studying the life of Christ is, that after you have devoted weeks and weeks and weeks to one phase of His character, and you are called to write it out when it is finished, the impression on your mind is that you are just ready to begin on that point; and you throw away your manuscript and try again. And you gather from the Gospels all the materials that you can, and turn them in every way to make a more massive and a more perfect representation; and at last it flashes upon your mind that you are attempting to exhaust that which in its nature is inexhaustible and infinite.

Who can take an opal and paint it? It is only so much as you can at one point see that you can paint. You cannot paint the flash, nor the lustre, nor the varying colours. And you can only conceive of actual life. You cannot take in such a nature as Christ's, with all its relations to heaven above and to the earth beneath, and all its social and æsthetic qualities, and all its divine elements, not simply because they elude your grasp, running out beyond analysis and research, but because they are so combined, so changeable, so constantly coming and going, with various phases and in various ways, that no man can give the whole of it. There is always more; and when that is expressed there is still more. There is no end to it.

—*Beecher.*

X. *HIS CHARACTERS AND TITLES.*

1. The Word of God.

(875.) The Divine Person who has accomplished the salvation of mankind is called the Word, and the Word of God (Rev. xix. 13); not only because God at first created, and still governs all things by Him, but because, as men discover their sentiments and designs to one another by the intervention of words, speech, or discourse, so God, by His Son, discovers His gracious designs in the fullest and clearest manner to men.

—*Igdalia.*

2. The Consolation of Israel.

(876.) Piscator observeth that "the consolation of Israel" is the periphrasis of Jesus Christ; because all the consolation of a true Israelite, as Jacob's in Benjamin, is bound up in Christ. If He be gone, the soul goeth down to the grave with sorrow. As all the candles in a country cannot make a day—no, it must be the rising of the sun that must do it; the greatest confluence of comforts that the whole creation affordeth, cannot make a day of light and gladness in the heart of a believer; no, it must be the rising of this Sun of Righteousness. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

3. The Light of the world.

(877.) The light of the law shone only on the Jews; but this Light spread itself wider, even over all the world. —*Lightfoot*, 1602-1675.

4. The Sun of Righteousness.

(878.) Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, for as by nature there was no guile found on His lips, so is He habitually and actually righteous. He is compared to the sun. First, because, as all light was gathered into the body of the sun, and from it derived to us, so it pleased God that in Him should the fulness of all excellency dwell; and therefore those that look for perfection out of Christ, do look for light without the sun.

Secondly, as there is but one sun, so there is but one Sun of Righteousness; and therefore what needeth two heads, or two husbands? One must needs be an adulterer. Christ does all by the Spirit, which is His vicar. Other vicar needs He not, though there are a thousand worlds more.

Thirdly, as the sun is above in the firmament, so Christ is exalted up on high, to convey His graces and virtues to all His creatures here below, even as the sun conveys life and quickens the earth, yea, all things thereon, though itself be but one.

Fourthly, as the sun works largely in all things here below, so does Christ.

Fifthly, as the sun is the fountain of light, and the eye of the world, so Christ is the fountain of all spiritual light. "I am the light of the world," saith He of Himself, He was that light that enlightens the world, saith St. John of Him; and therefore Zacharias termeth Him "the dayspring from on high."

Sixthly, as the sun directs us whither to go, and which way, so does Christ teach us to go to heaven, and by what means; what duties to perform, what things to avoid, and what things to bear.

Seventhly, as the sun is pleasant and darkness is terrible, so Christ is comfortable, for He makes all at peace when He comes, and sends His Spirit, the Comforter. Now He is in heaven. Therefore as ignorance and error is expressed by darkness, so, contrarily, joy and honour and knowledge which brings it is expressed by light; and Christ is our director, our supporter, and without Him what are we? and what do we but glory in our shame?

Eighthly, by the beams of the sun is conveyed influence to make things grow, and to distinguish

between times and seasons. Thus Christ, by His power, makes all things cheerful, and therefore is called the "quickening spirit," for He quickens the dead and dark soul, which, till Christ shine on us, is a dungeon of ignorance and unbelief; and as His Spirit blows on our spirits, so also it works a spring in the growth of grace, or a summer in strength of zeal.

Ninthly, the sun works these effects, not by coming down to us, but by influence; and shall we then be so sottish as to imagine that Christ of necessity must come bodily in the sacrament to us, or else there is no work of the Spirit by that ordinance. Can the sun be thus powerful in operation by nature, and shall not this Sun of Righteousness be more powerful by the influence of His Spirit to comfort and quicken us, though He comes not bodily down into a piece of bread?

Tenthly, as the sun does work freely, drawing up vapours to dissolve them into rain upon the earth, to cherish it when it is dry, so does Christ. He freely came from heaven to us, and freely draws up our hearts to heaven, which cannot ascend thither but by His exhaling power. Christ is our loadstone, that draws these iron, hard hearts of ours upward, causing us to contemn this base world, counting it "dross and dung," as the Church is shadowed out in Revelation treading the moon under her feet.

Eleventhly, as the sun shines upon all, yet doth not heat all, so Christ is offered to all. He shines on all where the gospel comes, but all are not enlightened; and all that are enlightened do not burn in love to Him; nay, some are more hardened by it, as it is the nature of the sun to harden some bodies.

Twelvthly, and lastly, as the sun quickens and puts life into dead creatures, so shall Christ, by His power, quicken our dead bodies, and raise them up again when He shall come to judgment.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

5. The door.

(879.) You are not shut out of your Father's house, poor prodigal. The door is opened. You have not to stand and knock by the month together with processes of repentance and reformation. A door is opened. Christ is that door. If you come to Christ you have come to God; if you trust in Jesus you are saved. The door to the ark was wide enough to admit the hugest beasts as well as the tiniest animals, and the door into God's mercy is wide enough to let in the greatest sinner as well as the more refined moralist. —*Spurgeon.*

(880.) Christ is the door of salvation. Wide enough is that door for the admission of all. "If any man," is the superscription on its portals. Whatever be the age, the country, the colour of skin; rich or poor, young or old, bond or free;—free as that sun in heaven which shines with indiscriminate splendour on molehill and mountain, on cottage and palace, on blade of grass and stately palm or cedar: free as that mountain stream, singing its way amid birch and heather to lake or ocean; free as that stream is to the fish that sports in its pools, or to the wild deer of the forest, or to the wayside pilgrims to slake their thirst; free as that ocean is to every vessel and every craft, from the rude fisherman's boat and the plank of the castaway, to the iron fortress, carrying its impenetrable sheathing and its sleeping thunders;—so free is that door of entrance into the Fold of the Heavenly Shepherd. Around it, rich and poor may congregate together, with this plea, "The Lord is the Redeemer of us all." It is not like the doors opening into the high places of the world. These are patent only to the favoured few. These can only be opened by the key of influence, or merit, or intellect, or rank, or money (the golden key which fits all locks); while the multitude—the vast majority—stand outside, excluded. But all are warranted and welcome here. —*Macduff.*

(881.) The old city of Troy had but one gate. Go round and round and round the city, and you could find no other. If you wanted to get in, there was but one way, and no other. So to the strong and beautiful city of heaven there is but one gate, and no other. Do you know what it is? Christ says, "I am the door."

6. The Vine.

(882.) A beautiful theory has recently been established in vegetable physiology, which illustrates in a most striking manner the nature of the union between Christ and believers, as symbolised by a vine and its branches. This theory proceeds on the assumption that all plants, without exception, are strictly annual; the only difference between the more fugitive and the more permanent species being that the one kind is propagated exclusively by seeds, while the other is propagated by both buds and seeds. This notion is opposed to the popular belief, and to the apparent evidence of our senses. A tree, under which class the vine of course is included, is generally supposed to be a single plant, like a primrose or a lily, only that it does not fade in autumn, and is possessed of perennial growth. The common idea is that it is an individual, having the same kind of individuality or personality that a man has; the root, trunk, branches, leaves, and blossoms being component parts of one and the self-same single plant, just as the body, limbs, and various organs are component parts of one and the self-same human being. And this certainly is the impression which at first sight it produces. Recent scientific researches, however, have proved this belief to be erroneous. A tree is now found to be not a single individual, a single plant, but, on the contrary, an aggregate of individuals, a body corporate. The idea involved in a genealogical tree is exactly that which is involved in a natural tree; the former consists of living and dead persons, as the latter consists of living and dead plants. In its full wealth of summer foliage and vigour, a tree is literally a vegetable colony, propagating its individual plants vertically in the air, instead of spreading them out horizontally over the earth's surface, like herbaceous plants. It is neither more nor less, to use the language of one who has written a special treatise upon the subject, than a collection of living and growing, but separate and distinct, plants—the production of the current year, and likewise of the dead remains of a still larger number of individual plants of the same kind or species, the production of a series of bygone years. Each season new shoots or annual plants spring up from the buds which crown the old ones; and these are the only living parts of the tree. Each season, at the close of the year, these shoots or annual plants, having fulfilled the purposes of their existence, die completely—there being no provision in vegetable, as in animal economy, to repair wasted tissues; but

though dead and composed of very perishable materials, they escape decomposition, to which all dead organic matter is liable when exposed to the action of the elements, owing to the roots of the new buds with which they are tipped growing over them, inclosing them on every side and throughout their entire length. They are thus hermetically encased in the tree, and serve to increase its size, affording to the new plants that are to spring from them a temporary soil and a permanent mechanical support. A tree is thus like a cluster of coral—each new generation of living organisms developing parasitically upon the remains of a past generation, living and dead being built up into one compact corporate organisation. And just as there is no limit to the growth and increase of coral structures, except the strength of the waves and the absence of secreting materials in the sea, so there can be no limit on account of this peculiarity of its construction to the size and age of a tree, except the limit imposed by soil and external circumstances.

Now, viewed in this light, what a beautiful and appropriate type does the vine afford of the mystical body of Christ, that sacred and spiritual corporation composed of Christ, and of all who have been united to Him by a living faith as the living Head—belonging to every age and country, belonging to every class and denomination, *living and dead!* This spiritual body is one organisation; but, like a coral cluster, it is composed of numberless distinct and separate individuals. This sacred vine is a unity; but, like a natural tree, it is made up of countless separate plants. The union between Christ and His people, and between each of themselves, is of the closest and most vital description. Each member has his own personality, his own individual existence; and yet, living or dead, he is regarded as a scion, or branch, of one common stock—a component and integral part of one tree. The same bond unites each to all; the same sap pervades all; the same life animates them all. Christ is not the trunk, nor the branches, but the whole vine; they are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. They are *His fulness*, in the same sense that all the separate plants grow on a tree, and the remains of those that are dead, make up the outline, and form, and substance of that tree.

—*Macmillan.*

7. The Saviour.

(883.) At the very utterance of the name,—a Saviour,—every heart exults with a delight otherwise unknown. To the generous breast no other object is so beautiful, no other sound so welcome. Never do we shed such rapturous tears, or feel so passionate a joy, as when we witness the heroism and the self-devotion of some act of magnanimous deliverance. Power softens into loveliness, when thus exerted. Danger and toil, encountered in such a cause, impart a stern, yet irresistible attraction. It is thus we think of the patriot, bleeding for the freedom of his country; of the philanthropist, regardless of his own security amidst pestilence, and darkness, and the ministers of death, that he may release the wretched captive, and break the yoke of the oppressor; of the advocate, defending the home of the widow or the heritage of the orphan, and turning into mockery the venality of accusation, and the menaces of vengeance; of the statesman, who stands forth single-handed, but with a dauntless heart, to turn back the flood of tyranny or faction, when threatening to engulf in common ruin the welfare of his people and the safety of mankind; and of the pilot, adventurously urging his way through the pitiless and maddening surge, that he may snatch some solitary victim from the horrors of shipwreck, and bear him, naked and shivering, to the shore. What, then, shall be the glory of Him who plunged, with all the consciousness of unsheltered peril, into the very depths of misery, to rescue the perishing soul! Or what shall be the measure, either of our admiration or our gratitude, when we celebrate, beholding its last triumphs, the emancipation of a world! Advocate, friend, brother,—these are beloved names; and, like a grateful odour, they give life to the drooping spirit; but if the name of Saviour be more endearing than them all, then what is that ravishment of love with which the rescued sinner shall hail at length the blessed name of Jesus! —*M'All.*

8. The Giver of Peace.

(884.) I went into a German church in one of the old quaint cities of the Middle Ages, as twilight-time was falling over the old buildings, to hear an organ. The building was dark as I entered it, for only a single candle struggled with the gloom that possessed the aisles and nave, the columns, and arches, and old monuments, and made all things weird and spectral. Some hundred people sat there; and the strange thing began its wonderful work of sound, calling up all the faculties from their chambers—the watchmen of the soul from their citadels and cells. How it groaned through the old building! How those wonderful sounds throbbed against the pillars and shook them, and rumbled along beneath our feet, and travelled thrillingly and palpitatingly overhead among the arches. You know what an organ can do; how it can sigh, and shout, and storm, and rage; and how it can madden, and how it can soothe. And then, when the wonderful creature I was listening to had poured out these preludes of its power, it began to utter some marvellous delirium of music (I think Mendelssohn's *Walpurgis Night*); it imposed on the imagination the whole scenery of a wild tempest—a storm of nature among heaths and mountains! The thunder rolled near and far among the crags; the rain hissed in the wind; the flash of the lightning went by you! the storm possessed—it overwhelmed you! The blasts of the tempest and the bolts of the thunder were like giant spirits striving together in night and solitude; while fear, and terror, and awe, and horror, held revelry and carnival. And then, I will tell you what came—I had never heard it before—I thought it was a human voice. Amidst the hurricane on the organ it rose so clear, so calm, so ineffably restful and light, so high over the surges and the wailing of the rain, the thunder, and the wind. It was the *vox humana* stop, that wondrous simulation, the *human voice* stop, the mightiest marvel of all the artifices of music; the storm continued, but still it sang on, and rose on the wings of light and of sound, over all the hurricanes that hurried from the pipes and the keys. Then I thought of the one Human-Voice Stop in Time, that said, "*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?*" "*The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:* HE UTTERED HIS VOICE; *the earth melted.*" Amidst the crash of kingdoms, thrones, peoples, and opinions; amidst panics, and horrors, and fears,

and travails, *one Voice*, and only one, has been heard. ONE human voice, able to sway all storms, to pierce to and sing in the heavens, high above those lower regions where the tempests have their home. It is "*He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth*," who has spoken to us by His Son, the voice including every human chord—"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace. Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

—*E. P. Hood.*

9. Our life.

(885.) Christ is our life. How *His* life is made to be, at the same time, our own, is a mystery of grace, of which you have seen types in the garden, where just now so many millions of God's thoughts are springing and growing into beautiful expression. You once grafted something on to a fruit-tree. The process, though delicate, was most simple. You only had to be careful that there should be clean, clear, close contact between the graft and the tree. The smallest shred or filament of wrapping round the graft would have prevented the life of the tree from flowing into it. The weak, bleeding graft was fastened on to the strong stem just as it was: then in due time it struck; then gradually the tiny slip grew into the flourishing bough; and lately, as you stood looking at that miracle of tender formation and soft bright flush, you almost fancied it was conscious. It seemed to say, "I live; nevertheless, not I, but the tree liveth in me; and the life I now live in the foliage, I live by faith in the shaft of the tree. I trust to the tree only; every moment I am clinging to it, and without it I can do nothing." —*Stanford.*

XI. *VARIOUS EMBLEMS OF CHRIST.*

(886.) Cast thine eyes which way thou wilt and thou shalt hardly look upon anything but Christ. Jesus has taken the name of that thing upon Himself. Is it day? and dost thou behold the sun? He is called the Sun of Righteousness. Or is it night? and dost thou behold the stars? He is called a Star, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob." Or is it morning? and dost thou behold the morning star? He is called "the bright Morning Star." Or is it noon? and dost thou behold clear light all the world over? He is "that Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Come nearer: if thou lookest upon the earth, and takest a view of the creatures about thee, dost thou see the sheep? "As a sheep before her shearer is dumb." Or seest thou a lamb? "Behold the Lamb of God." Seest thou a shepherd watching over his flock? "I am the Good Shepherd." Or seest thou a fountain, waters, rivers? He is a Fountain. Or seest thou a tree good for food, or a flower? He is "the Tree of Life, and the Lily of the Valley, and the Rose of Sharon." Art thou adorning thyself, and taking a view of thy garments? "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Art thou eating meat, and taking a view of what thou hast on thy table He is the Bread of God; the true Bread from Heaven; the Bread of Life.

—*Ambrose.*

XII. *TYPICAL REFERENCES TO CHRIST.*

1. Jacob's ladder.

(887.) Some writers appear anxious to prove that the appearance which the patriarch saw was not precisely that of a ladder, but probably that of a pyramid or pillar. There is a want of dignity, they think, in the image of a ladder, and they would therefore substitute a more imposing. But though many of the same truths might be taught, if there were the supposed change in the emblem, we are no ways affected by the homeliness of the figure, but think, on the contrary, that it adds to its fitness. It was the declaration of prophecy in regard to the Christ, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." And therefore, if He is to be delineated as connecting earth and heaven, we should expect the image to be that of a ladder, a common instrument, with nothing of the grand and attractive, rather than of a splendid tower, such as that of Babel, which men themselves would delight to rear, and when reared to admire. Besides, however, we would avoid the straining a type. We own that the representation of Christ, under the figure of a ladder, appears to us to include the most exact references to the appointed mode of salvation. How do I look to be saved? by clinging to Christ. How do I expect to ascend up to heaven? by mounting step by step, the whole height of Christ's work, so that He is made unto me of God, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." It is no easy thing, the gaining eternal life through the finished work of the Mediator. It is a vast deal more than the sitting with the prophet in his car of fire, and being borne aloft, without effort, to an incorruptible inheritance. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There must be, if we may thus express it, a holding fast to Christ, and a climbing up to Christ: to look back is to grow dizzy, to let go is to perish. And that we are to mount by the Mediator, and, all the while, to keep hold of the Mediator; that we are in short to ascend by successive stages, stretching the hand to one line after another in the work of the Redeemer, and planting the foot on one step after another in the covenant made with us in Christ—what can more aptly exhibit this, than the exhibiting Christ as a ladder, set upon the earth that men may scale the heavens? The necessity for our striving, and yet the uselessness of that striving, if not exerted in the right manner; the impossibility of our entering heaven except through Christ, and the equal impossibility of our entering it, without effort and toil; the fearful peril of our relaxing, for an instant, our spiritual vigilance and earnestness, seeing that we hang, as it were, between earth and heaven, and may be thrown by a moment's carelessness, headlong to the ground; the completeness and singleness of the salvation which is in Jesus, so that, if we adhere to it, it is sufficient, but there are no modes which meet in it, or branch off from it; swerve a single inch, and you have no footing, but must be hopelessly precipitated: all these particulars seem indicated under the imagery of a ladder, and could not perhaps have been equally marked, had some other emblem been given of the connecting of earth and heaven by the Mediator Christ.

—*Melvill*, 1798-1871.

XIII. *HIS OFFICES.*

1. Our representative.

(888.) As the burgess of a town or corporation, sitting in the parliament house, beareth the person of that whole town or place, and what he saith the

whole town saith, and what is done to him is done to the whole town, even so Christ upon the cross stood in our place and bare our persons, and whatsoever He suffered we suffered, and when He died all died with Him—all the faithful died in Him, and, as He is risen again, so the faithful are risen in Him. —*Boys*, 1560–1643.

2. Our mediator.

(889.) His mediatorship includes His appearing for us in heaven, His owning of our cause, and of our souls to God the Father: "Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us." He does not in an ordinary way and manner appear for us in heaven; but with an emphasis, He does openly and publicly, before all the saints and angels, appear for us in the presence of God the Father. It is a comfort unto a man sometimes to have a good friend at court, at the king's elbow, that may own him and appear for him; but though a man have a friend at court, sometimes if there be any danger, he will not appear and own him; it may be he will own him, and countenance his cause as long as there is no danger, but no longer. But now, here we have a Friend in heaven, that will appear for us, and own our causes, and our souls, and in all conditions appear for us.
—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(890.) What doth our Lord and Saviour Christ, our great High Priest, when He offers up our gifts unto God the Father?

First, He doth take our persons, and carries them in unto God the Father, in a most unperceivable way to us. He knows that if our persons be not first accepted, our duty cannot be accepted.

Secondly, As He doth take our persons, and lead and carry us into the presence of God the Father: so, when we do perform any duty, He doth observe what evil or failing there is in that duty, and draws it out, takes it away before he presents the duty unto God the Father. A child that would present his father a nosegay, goes into the garden, and he gathers flowers and weeds together; but coming to his mother, she takes them, and picks out the weeds, and binds up the flowers by themselves, and so it is presented to the father. Thus it is with us: we go to duty, and we gather weeds and flowers together; but the Lord Jesus Christ comes and picks out the weeds, and then He presents nothing but flowers unto God the Father. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(891.) A mediator is considered in two ways, by nature or by office, as the Fathers distinguish. He is a mediator by nature, as partaking of both natures, divine and human; and mediator by office, as transacting matters between God and man.
—*Waterland.*

3. Our intercessor.

(892.) Christ's presence and employment in heaven lays a strong engagement on God to bring His whole force and power into the field upon all occasions for His saints' defence. One special end of His journey to heaven, and abode there, is, that He might (as the saints' solicitor) be ever interceding for such supplies and succours of His Father, as their exigencies call for; and the more to assure us of the same before He went, He did (as it were) tell us, what heads He meant to go upon in His intercession, when He should come there; one of which was this, That His Father should keep His children while they were to stay in the world, from the evil thereof (John xvii. 15). Neither doth Christ take upon Him this work of His own head, but hath the same appointment of His Father, for what He now prays in heaven, as He had for what He suffered on earth. He that ordained Him a priest to die for sinners, did not then strip Him of His priestly garments (as Aaron) but appoints Him to ascend in them to heaven, where He sits a priest for ever by God's oath. And this office of intercession was erected purely in mercy to believers, that they might have full content given them for the performance of all that God had promised; so that Jesus Christ lies lieger at court as our ambassador, to see all carried fairly between God and us according to agreement: and if Christ follow His business closely, and be faithful in His place to believers, all is well. And doth it not behove Him to be so, who intercedes for such dear relations? Suppose a king's son should get out of a besieged city, where he hath left his wife and children (whom he loves as his own soul) and these all ready to die by sword or famine, if supply come not the sooner; could this prince, when arrived at his father's house, please himself with the delights of the court, and forget the distress of his family? Or rather would he not come post to his father (having their cries and groans always in his ears) and before he eat or drink, do his errand to his father, and entreat him if ever he loved him, that he would send all the force of his kingdom to raise the siege, rather than any of his dear relations should perish? Surely, sirs, though Christ be at the top of His preferment, and out of the storm in regard of His own person, yet His children, left behind in the midst of sins, Satans, and the world's batteries, are in His heart, and shall not be forgotten a moment by Him.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(893.) Based upon the atonement is the intercession of Christ. "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father." He is there to-day advocating our cause. Whether He presents His petitions in words or not I cannot tell. Perhaps His presence there is quite enough. We read that Œschylus was condemned to death by the Athenians, and about to be led to execution. His brother, Amyntas, had signalised himself in the service of his country, and just as his brother was condemned he entered the court. He came in, and, without saying a word, he lifted up his arm—the stump of his arm, for he had lost his hand in battle. He lifted it up in the sight of all but said not a word, and when the judges saw this mark of suffering they forgave the guilty brother for the sake of him who had imperilled his life in behalf of the country. And perhaps Jesus Christ has only to present Himself before the throne of His Father and show the marks of suffering to obtain acquittal and pardon for transgressors. —*J. C. Jones.*

4. Our example.

(894.) When Alexander the Great marched through Persia, his way was stopped with ice and snow, insomuch that his soldiers, being tired out with hard marches, were discouraged and would have gone no further. which he perceiving, dismounted his horse, and went on foot through the midst of them all, making himself a way with a

pickaxe; whereat they all being ashamed, first his friends, then the captains of his army, and last of all the common soldiers, followed him. So should all men follow Christ their Saviour, by that rough and unpleasant way of the cross that He hath gone before them—He having drank unto them the cup of His passion, they are to pledge Him when occasion is offered; He having left them an example of His suffering, they are to follow Him in the self-same steps of sorrow. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(895.) It is reported in the Bohemian story, that S. Wenceslaus, their king, one winter night going to his devotions in a remote church, barefooted in the snow and sharpness of unequal and pointed ice, his servant, Podavivus, who waited upon his master's piety, and endeavoured to imitate his affections, began to faint through the violence of the snow and cold, till the king commanded him to follow him and set his feet in the same footsteps which his feet should mark for him; the servant did so, and either fancied a cure or found one, for he followed his prince, helped forward by shame and zeal for his imitation, and by the forming footsteps for him in the snow. In the same manner does the blessed Jesus: for since our way is troublesome, obscure, full of objections and danger, apt to be mistaken and to affright our industry, He commands us to mark His footsteps, to tread where His feet have stood, and not only invites us forward by the argument of His example, but He hath trodden down much of the difficulty, and made the way easier and fit for our feet. For He knows our infirmities, and Himself hath felt their experience in all things but in the neighbourhoods of sin; and therefore He hath proportioned a way and a path to our strength and capacities, and, like Jacob, hath marched softly and in evenness with the children and cattle, to entertain us by the comfort of His company and the influence of a perpetual guide.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(896) The master doth not only rule the scholar's book for him, but writes him a copy with his own hand. Christ's command is our rule; His life our copy. If thou wilt walk holily, thou must not only endeavour to do what Christ commands, but as Christ Himself did; thou must labour to shape every letter in thy copy, action in thy life, in a holy imitation of Jesus. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(897.) Blessed be God for this example—for the glory of the condescension, patience, faith, and endurance of Jesus Christ in the extremity of all sorts of sufferings. This hath been the pole-star of the Church in all its storms. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(898.) Our religion sets before us, not the example of a stupid stoic who had by obstinate principles hardened himself against all sense of pain beyond the common measures of humanity, but an example of a man like ourselves, that had a tender sense of the least suffering, and yet patiently endured the greatest. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(899.) I have read of a distinguished general who conducted an army by forced marches, through a sterile as well as hostile country. They were foot-sore, worn, and weary; supplied with the scantiest fare, and toiling all day long, through heavy sands, and beneath a scorching sun. Yet his brave men pressed on—such as fell out of the line by day, unless shot down by the foe, who crouched like tigers in every bush, and hung in clouds on their flanks and rear, rejoining their ranks in the cool and darkness of the night. Thus this gallant army, undaunted and indomitable, accomplished a great achievement in arms. And how? They were inspired by their commander. Foregoing the privileges of his rank, he dismounted from his horse to put himself not only at the head of his men, but on a level with them. He shared their hard bed; he lived on their scanty rations; every foot they walked, he walked; every foe they faced, he faced; every hardship they endured, he bore; and with cheek as brown, and limbs as weary, and couch as rude as theirs, he came down to their condition—touched by their infirmities, and teaching them by his example what part to act and with what patience to endure. They would have followed him to the cannon's mouth—his cry not Forward, but Follow.

—*Guthrie.*

(900.) In looking at Jesus Christ, as He moves high and apart from all of us in His perfectly spotless life, one sometimes feels as we have felt when gazing on the bright but distant glory of a star that holds on its lofty course through the far realms of space. We wish to be like Christ; we long to be like Christ; but to reach His high, and holy, and pure, and spotless character, seems to be like wishing to reach that orb so beautiful, and bright, and lovely, where haply sorrow never weeps, and sin has never entered. But to rise to His example, to attain to His holy and blameless life, ah! that seems as impossible as to climb the ethereal heights where that bright orb is shining, as it shone on Eden, and shall shine when the judgment of this world is come. We say Who is sufficient for these things? The one seems at times as impracticable and impossible as the other.

Impossible! With God all things are possible. He has never promised that we shall reach the one; but His truth and His Word are pledged for it, that we shall attain to the other. —*Guthrie.*

(901.) Endeavour to follow the Great Shepherd habitually. The Syrian sheep does not follow its shepherd by fits and starts; seeking to be near him only when the wolf is prowling, or when the dog is on its track; when the night shadows are falling, or the pasture is diminishing. It is generally found close to its protector and guide. It is an undeviating, trustful companionship, in sunshine and storm, in fulness and in drought, in summer and winter.

So it is, or ought to be, with the believer;—a constant, consistent, habitual following of his Lord, seeking ever to have a realising sense of His nearness. Not merely when trouble is nigh; in the hour of affliction and sad calamity, or of impending death; but in the midst of life's joyous sunshine, when verdure is on the mountain side, when the rills are singing their way down to the lower valley, and the tinkling bells, answering from fold to fold, tell of nothing but peace, and safety, and repose.

—*Macduff.*

(902.) Christ's example is opposed, not to temperance, but to asceticism. Even the example of Jesus Christ must be followed in the light of common sense. What He might do in one age or nation we may find perilous in a different state of society. It is our bounden duty to abstain from that

which causeth our brother to offend, whether it be meat or wine. But let us always distrust those who twist the plain language of Scripture in an endeavour to prove that what Christ drank was not wine. —*Eggleston.*

XIV. *HOW HIS CHARACTER IS TO BE STUDIED.*

(903.) In the character of our Lord, the more we examine the more we shall break upon new beauties, and fresh convictions of its loveliness. When we stand upon some eminence and look down long vistas of landscape, the eye is so enchanted with the combination that it cannot at first examine, or even perceive, the details of beauty that subsequently discovered make appreciation deeper than first impressions were delightful. It is so in the character of Christ. We are struck with the combinations of virtues: but it is after mature and pondering observation that the nice beauties and rare excellencies of that sublime life present themselves to our detection. And, to sustain the comparison, I may add, that as in the landscape many of the finest points of the picture lie in shadow and are obscured until the light (which always plays in flitting masses upon the banks of mountains) suddenly strikes upon these particular spots, and lifting them out of their dimness invests them with peculiar brilliancy and attraction to our eyes: so it is in surveying the character of our Lord. Points that have lain obscure, and have escaped our minute attention, suddenly startle us with their vivid excellence, as the light and inward illumination of God's Spirit pour life and meaning into words that have heretofore given no admonition to our hearts. —*Bellew.*

(904.) If you *desire* to fashion Him to your mind that your heart may love Him, I will tell you how. Sit down and read His life—not in parts; not a chapter one day, and another the next; not a paragraph with your coat and hat at your elbow, ready to start for New York; but read His life straight through, giving your mind and your heart time to take in the meaning of what you read. Thus you may view Him in His loveliness, and your affections cannot fail of being touched. If you went into an artist's studio to look at the picture of some distinguished person of whose appearance you wished to get a clear idea, how do you think it would answer to have, at your first visit, all of that painted face, except the forehead, covered? Looking at that a little while, you go away, and come again the following day. The forehead is covered now and the lower parts of the face, but the eyes are visible. You look at them a few moments and go away as before. The next day they gave you a view of the nose, exclusively; the next you behold the upper lip; next they gave you the lower lip, and finally the chin. Now you have seen the whole face; but do you know how it looks? No, you don't. You can form no idea of the effect of such a combination of features; you can't imagine what the expression of the face is; you don't know it from Adam's. Now, who would for a moment put up with such portrait-seeing? We say when we come up before a picture, "Get out of the way: let me see the whole effect of this." But it is in this dissected manner that men look at the character of Christ. Not so do they study Washington, nor any other man of whose character they wish to form an opinion, and of whose personal deserts they wish to judge. Why should Christ be so unjustly treated? Did it ever occur to you that there are four lives of Christ, each one written by men of different minds, that all forms of minds might be suited? Study those lives *by the whole*, and you will find how to love Him. —*Beecher.*

XV. *HOW HIS CLAIMS ARE TO BE TESTED.*

(905.) As this image of God, the holiness of the soul, is the very end and work of a true Saviour, so the true effecting of it on all true Christians is actually their begun salvation; and therefore the standing infallible witness of Christ, which should confound unbelief in all that are indeed His own.

This is a testimony in every holy soul, which the gates of hell shall not prevail against. He that undertaketh to cure all of the plague, or stone, or gout, or fever, that will take his medicines, and be ruled by him, is certainly no deceiver if he do that which he undertaketh. He that undertaketh to teach all men arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, &c., who will come and learn of him is certainly no deceiver if he do it. What is it that Jesus Christ hath undertaken? think of that, and then tell me whether He be a deceiver. He never undertook to make His disciples kings, or lords, or rich, or honourable in the world; nor yet to make them the best logicians, orators, astronomers, mathematicians, physicians musicians, &c., but to make them the best men: to renew them to the love of God in holiness, and thereby to save them from their sins, and give them repentance unto life. Nor hath He promised this to all that are baptized or called Christians, but only to those that sincerely consent to learn of Him, and take His counsel, and use the remedies which He prescribeth them. And is it not certain that Christ doth truly perform this undertaking? How, then, can He be a deceiver, who doth perform all that He undertaketh? Of this all true Christians have a just demonstration in themselves, which is His witness.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(906.) He that will but inquire into the Gospel and receive it and obey it so far as he hath reason to do it, and not be false to his own reason and interest, shall receive that renewing, sanctifying, spirit, which will be an abiding witness in himself. But if he will reject known truth, and refuse known duty, and neglect the most reasonable means that are proposed to him, he must blame himself if he continue in unbelief, and want that evidence which others have. Suppose that in a common plague, one physician should be famed to be the only and infallible curer of all that take his remedies; and suppose many defame him, and say, "He is but a deceiver," and others tell you, "He hath cured us, and many thousands, and we can easily convince you that his remedies have nothing in them that is hurtful, and therefore you may safely try them, especially having no other help." He that will so far believe in him, and trust him now, as to try his remedies, may live; but he that will not, must blame none but himself if he die of his disease. He that trieth, shall know by his cure and experience, that his physician is no deceiver; and he that will not, and yet complaineth that he wanteth that experimental knowledge, doth but talk like a peevish self-destroyer. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

XVI. *HIS RELATION TO THE LAW.*

(907.) The earth bringeth forth fruit of itself, but first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. So did the blade spring out of the law of nature; the ear in the law written; but we have in the Gospel the pure grain, or full corn, which is Christ Jesus. Therefore, as the stalk or ear are of necessary use till the corn be ripe, but, the corn being ripe, we no longer use the chaff with it: so, till Christ was exhibited in the flesh, which lay hidden in the blade and spike of the law, the ceremonies had their use; but since that, by His death and passion, this pure wheat is threshed and winnowed, and by His ascension laid up in the garner of heaven—they are of no further use. The Jews were taught by those shadows that the body should come, and we know by the same shadows that the body is come; the arrow moveth whilst it flieth at the mark, but, having hit the mark, resteth in it: so the law, which did level and shoot at Christ with so many movable signs and sacraments, (as one may say) cease from her motion of practising them any more, having attained to her full end in Christ Jesus. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(908.) Christ fulfilled the law. Summer fulfils spring; noon fulfils morning; the fruit fulfils the blossom; manhood fulfils infancy.

—*Joseph Parker.*

XVII. *HIS METHOD OF TEACHING.*

(909.) His mode of speaking of heaven is like that of a prince who, having been educated in a splendid court, could speak with ease of many magnificent things, at the sudden view of which a peasant would be swallowed up in astonishment, and would find himself greatly embarrassed in an attempt to explain them to his equals at home.

—*Doddridge.*

(910.) In a numerous collection of our Saviour's apophthegms there is not to be found one example of sophistry or of false subtility, or of anything approaching thereunto. —*Paley.*

(911.) It is very striking that the very means of instruction which our Lord adopted should have hid the truth even from His followers. The parables of Christ were sometimes obscure and confounded to His foes; that is not strange. Where there is no taste or desire for instruction, the clearest and simplest lessons may be vain. How much sooner we detect what we are familiar with than what is strange; how much sooner understand what we love than what we hate, how much sooner recognise what we expect than what we have no thought of meeting. "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." It was a *judgment*, but not an arbitrary and cruel one. *It was a punishment* which the blinded deserved, and *it was one which* they inflicted upon themselves. Parables were among the easiest and most interesting methods of instruction. They addressed a variety of powers; and thus were suited to a variety of minds, and a variety of faculties in the same mind. They suited all ages and stages of mental development, were windows through which any kind of eyes might see the truth. But if the eye was at fault and could not see, or could not see aright, then the windows had no use; and the means of light conveyed no image, or a false one. There is often, and especially in moral matters, more in the learner than the lessons; and as an ancient heathen said, "Wise men learn more from fools than fools learn from wise men." The carnal listeners to Christ suggested more truth to Him than they received from Him. Even the symbolic illustration of the truth, which should have revealed it, concealed it. It is so still. To the gross and earthly the sign hides the reality it should make known; the instrument obscures the agent it should discover, the form weakens the power it should assist; the symbol covers up the truth it should display; and however much men may, like the Jews, admire the miracle, they, like the Jews, care nothing for the "sign." Parables would have been no judgment, if there had been no obtuseness and perverseness in the hearers. Only the weak of sight are chastised by light; only wrongdoers have "coals of fire" heaped on their heads by love. —*A. J. Morris.*

XVIII. *HIS SUFFERINGS AND DEATH.*

1. Were necessary for our salvation.

(912.) Doubtless all things are possible to God; but yet with one limitation, that they must be things consistent with those supreme moral attributes, that truth, that righteousness, that love, stripped of which, God would not be God any more. And keeping all this in view, it is not, I think, too much to affirm, it is not overboldly said, that there was no other way but this of the Incarnation of the Son of God, followed as that was by His life of obedience, His death of propitiation, His resurrection in power, His ascension in glory, whereby men could be saved. What should we think of a king, some of whose people were in bitter bondage in a foreign land, if he, knowing that he might have them back by simply sending for them, or at most by paying a ransom of silver and gold, chose instead of this, and when this was free to him, to send his own son to serve that bitter bondage in their stead, to endure all outrages, indignities, wrongs, even death itself in obtaining their release? Would their wisdom or love shine out gloriously here? Could he reasonably demand the boundless gratitude of the ransomed on the ground of the costly sacrifice which their deliverance entailed, when that deliverance might have been effected at so much easier and cheaper a rate? No, when God chose that costliest means of our deliverance, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, we may be quite sure that at no lower price would our redemption have been possible, that nothing short of this could have satisfied that righteousness of His, which He was bound to maintain; which He could not forego, without shaking to their strong foundation those eternal pillars on which the moral universe reposes; we may be quite sure that no weaker or poorer motives than those in this way presented to man would have ever succeeded in making him holy, and thus capable of blessedness.

—*Trench.*

2. His death was a voluntary sacrifice for us.

(913.) It was the time of a plague. There was no remedy except what might be found by examining the body of one who had died of the disease. It was death to do it. Dr. Guyon said, "I will attempt it. In the name of humanity and religion,

I will examine this body." He did so, took the plague, and died. He put on paper his observations, put them in a vase of vinegar to prevent contagion, and in twelve hours he was gone. A grand sacrifice! Yet the Lord Jesus looked on a plague-smitten world, made a will giving all to His people, came to this plague hospital, the pure for the impure—behold love, sacrifice, rescue!

—*Talmage.*

3. The benefits of His death are inexhaustible.

(914.) The passion of our Lord is like a great river flowing down from a mountain, which is never exhausted. —*Vianney.*

4. The intensity of His sufferings.

(915.) His suffering fell not on Him like a dew or mist, which only wets the surface of the ground, but like a pouring, soaking rain, which descends into the very bowels of it. There was pain enough in every single part to have been spread in lesser proportions over the whole man. Christ suffered only the exquisiteness and heights of pain, without any of those mitigations which God is pleased to temper and allay it with as it befalls other men; like a man who drinks only the spirits of a liquor separated and extracted from the dull inactive body of the liquor itself. All the force and activity, the stings and fierceness of that troublesome thing were, as it were, drained and distilled and abridged into that cup which Christ drank of. There was something sharper than vinegar, and bitterer than gall, which that draught was prepared and made up with. We cannot indeed say, that the sufferings of Christ were long in duration; for to be violent and lasting too is above the methods or measures of nature. But He who lived at that rate, that He might be said to live an age every hour, was able to suffer so too; and to comprise the greatest torments in the shortest space, which yet, by their shortness, lost nothing of their force and keenness; as a penknife is as sharp as a spear, though not so long. That which promotes and adds to the impressions of pain, is the delicate constitution of the faculty aggrieved. And there is no doubt but the very fabric of our Saviour's body was a masterpiece of nature, a thing absolutely and exactly framed, and of that fineness as to have the quickest and most sensible touches of every object; and withal, to have these advanced by the communion of His admirably made body, with His high and vigorous intellectuals. All which made Him drink in pain more deeply, feel every lash, every wound, with so much a closer and a more affecting sense. For it is not to be doubted but a dull fellow can endure the paroxysms of a fever, or the torments of the gout or stone, much better than a man of a quick mind and an exalted fancy; because in one pain beats upon a rock or an anvil, in the other, it prints itself upon wax. One is even born with a kind of lethargy and stupefaction into the world, armed with an iron body and a leaden soul against all the apprehensions of ordinary sorrow, so that there is need of some pain to awaken such an one, and to convince him that he is alive; but our Saviour, who had an understanding too quick to let anything that was intelligible escape it, took in the dolorous afflicting objects in its full dimension. He saw the utmost evil of every one of those strokes, which the guilt of our sins inflicted on Him; and what His eye saw, His heart proportionably felt: for surely they must needs have been inconceivably afflicting, in the actual endurance, which were so dreadful in their very approach, that the horror of them made the man of God's right hand, the man made strong for that very purpose, to start back, and decline the blow, could the avoidance of it have stood with the decrees of Heaven. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me;" which yet was not the voice of cowardice, but of human nature—nature which, by its first and most essential principle, would have saved itself, might it have consisted with the saving of the world.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

5. His sufferings were foreseen by Him.

(916.) As astronomers know when none others think of it, that travelling through the heavens the vast shadow is progressing towards the sun which ere long shall clothe it and hide it, so Christ knew that the great darkness which was to overwhelm Him was approaching. —*Beecher.*

6. How they were endured.

(917.) Observe how imperturbable He is during His crucifixion, talking to the disciple of His mother, fulfilling prophecies, giving good hope to the thief; whereas before His crucifixion He seemed in fear: the weakness of His nature was shown then, and the exceeding greatness of His power here. He teaches us, too, herein, not to turn back because we may feel disturbed at the difficulties before us; for when we are once actually under the trial, all will be light and easy. —*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

7. In what sense the Father willed the death of the Son.

(918.) Again, where He says, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt;" and "if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done;" He signifies by His own will the natural desire for safety, by which His human flesh shrank from the pain of death. But again He speaks of His Father's will, not that the Father willed the death of the Son rather than His life; but that the Father willed that the human race should not be restored, unless man should do some act as great as was that death. And because reason did not require that of Him which no one else could do, therefore the Son says that He willed His own death, since He chose rather to suffer it, than that the human race should not be saved; as though he were to say, "Since Thou willest not that the reconciliation of the world should be accomplished in any other way, I say that Thou in this way willest My Death: let Thy will then be done, *i.e.*, let My death take place, that so the world may be reconciled to Thee."

For we often say that a man wills a thing, because he does not will another thing, which if he did, what he is said to will would not take place: as when we say that a man is willing to put out the candle, when he will not shut the window, through which the wind comes in which puts out the candle. Thus, then, the Father willed the death of the Son, because He willed that the world should only be saved by man doing some act as great as I have just mentioned. And this was to the Son who willed the salvation of men, since no other man was able to do it, the same as if the Father had commanded Him to die; and hence, "as the Father gave Him commandment, even so He did;" and

"the cup which the Father gave Him He drank," being "obedient even unto death."

—*Anselm*, 1093.

8. In what sense He is said to have been exalted on account of having undergone death.

(919.) When the apostle had said, "He humbled Himself. and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," he added this: "wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." Similar to which is what David said: "He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall He lift up His head." This, then, is not so spoken as though He could in no way have attained that exaltation, except by this obedience unto death; and that exaltation was conferred on Him solely as a reward for His obedience. For before He had suffered, He said that, "all things had been delivered to Him of the Father," and "all that the Father had were His." But since He Himself, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, had ordained that He would not but by His death display to the world the greatness of His power: when, therefore, what had been ordained to be done no otherwise than by that death, is done by it, it is not improperly said to be done on account of it.

For if we intend to do a thing, but purpose to do something else first, by which the other may come to pass; when now that which we wished to precede it has been done, if what we intended takes place, it is rightly said to be done *on account of this*, since that which delayed its accomplishment has been done; because it had purposed not to be accomplished, except through the means of the latter. For instance, a river, which I may cross either on horseback, or by boat, I resolve that I will not cross except by boat; and on this account delay crossing, because the boat is not there: when now the boat comes, if I cross, it is rightly said of me, The boat was ready and *therefore* he crossed over. And we speak thus not only when it is by means of that which we resolved should precede it, but even when it is not by means of, but only after that, that we resolve to do anything else. For instance, if a man puts off taking food, because he has not yet that day been to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist; when he has accomplished what he had made up his mind to do first, it is not improperly said to him, take your food now, *because* you have now done that for which you put off taking it. Far less strange a mode of expression is it, when Christ is said to be exalted *on account* of His having undergone death, by means of which, and after which, He had determined to bring about that exaltation. —*Anselm*, 1093.

9. Why He died for us.

(920.) "Why was it?" asked Mrs. N—— of her own heart as she was walking homeward from the communion-table. "Why was it?" she almost unconsciously exclaimed aloud; "oh, I wish somebody *could* tell me." "Could tell you what?" said a pleasant voice behind her, and looking around, she saw her pastor and his wife approaching. "Could tell me," said she, "*Why* the Saviour died for us. I have never heard it answered to my satisfaction. You will say it was because He loved us; but *why* was that love? He certainly did not *need us*, and in our sinful state there was nothing in us to attract His love." "I may suppose, Mrs. N——," said her pastor, "that it would be no loss for you to lose your deformed little babe. You do not *need* the deformed child, and what use is it?" "Oh sir," said Mrs. N——, "I could not part with my poor child. *I do need him*, I need his love. I would, rather die than fail of receiving it." "Well," said her pastor, "does God love His children less than earthly sinful parents do?" "I never looked upon it in that way before," said Mrs. N——. The pastor added, "My own little boy once wandered away, and was lost for one day. He suffered during the day but I do not think he suffered as I did. He had disobeyed, and thus was lost; but I did not feel, while looking for him, that if I failed to find him it would be sad for him, but would make no particular difference to me. I felt that I *must* find him, or I could not live. God loves His children as no earthly parent can. I adore Him for that love for us, but I do not wonder at it, and I have taken more interest in labouring for the conversion of sinners than I did, now that I feel that God does need His children, and that if their souls are lost, not they alone will be losers."

9. With what feelings they should inspire us.

(921.) I was reading, a day or two ago, about a farmer who was found kneeling at a soldier's grave near Nashville. Some one came to him and said: "Why do you pay so much attention to this grave? Was your son buried here?" "No," he said. "During the war, my family were all sick. I knew not how to leave them. I was drafted. One of my neighbours came over and said: 'I will go for you, I have no family.' He went off. He was wounded at Chickamauga. He was carried to the hospital and died. And, sir, I have come a great many miles that I might write over his grave these words: '*He died for me.*'" Christ was our Substitute. He went forth to fight our battles. He died. Oh! that we might write over His grave to-night, each one of us: "*He died for me!*"

—*Talmage.*

XIX. *HIS RESURRECTION.*

(922.) His resurrection was necessary to His being believed in as a Saviour. As Christ by His death paid down a satisfaction for sin, so it was necessary that it should be declared to the world by such arguments as might found a rational belief of it, so that men's unbelief should be rendered inexcusable. But how could the world believe that He fully had satisfied for sin, so long as they saw death, the known wages of sin maintain its full force and power over Him, holding Him like an obnoxious person in durance and captivity? When a man is once imprisoned for debt, none can conclude the debt either paid by him or forgiven to him, but by the release of his person. Who could believe Christ to have been a God and a Saviour while He was hanging upon the tree? A dying, crucified God, a Saviour of the world who could not save Himself, would have been exploded by the universal consent of reason as a horrible paradox and absurdity. Had not the resurrection followed the crucifixion, that scoff of the Jews had stood as an unanswerable argument against Him. "Himself He cannot save; let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him." Otherwise, surely, that which was the lowest instance of human weakness and mortality could be no competent demonstration of a Deity.

To save is the effect of power, and of such a power as prevails to a complete victory. But it is expressly affirmed, "that Christ was crucified through weakness." Death was too hard for His humanity, and bore away the spoils of it for a time. So that, while Christ was in the grave, men might as well have expected that a person hung in chains should come down and head an army, as imagine that a dead body, continuing such, should be able to triumph over sin and death, which so potently triumphs over the living. The discourse of the two disciples going to Emmaus, and expecting no such thing as a resurrection, was, upon that supposition, hugely rational and significant. "We trusted," said they, "that this had been He who should have redeemed Israel;" thereby clearly implying, that upon His death they had let that confidence fall to the ground together with Him. For they could not imagine that a breathless carcass could chase away the Roman eagles, and so recover the Jews from under their subjection; which was the redemption that even the disciples (till they were further enlightened) promised themselves from their Messiah. But the argument would equally, nay, more strongly, hold against a spiritual redemption, supposing His continuance under a state of death, as being a thing in itself much more difficult. For how could such an one break the kingdom of darkness, and set His foot upon "principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places," who Himself fell a sacrifice to the wickedness of mortal men, and remained a captive in the lower parts of the earth, reduced to a condition, not only below men's envy, but below their very feet?

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(923.) The death of Christ must have been the most overwhelming disaster to His disciples of which we can form any conception.

What if men were to be told that to-night the sun would be extinguished, by a decree of God that had gone forth, and that was irreversible? Who can conceive the consternation that would prevail? How men would gather! And as the sun began to reel towards the west, and show signs of irregularity, what terror would begin to come upon the boldest faces! And if, flaming with ominous flashes, the sun should go down at last, and seem to have fallen into a gulf of annihilation, what outcry would fill the now unilluminated night! And when men, having watched the east till the morning hour, saw that with it came no morning light, and that the day was undistinguishable from the night, they would begin with universal wail to proclaim their sorrow. The fields would droop; houses would be as sepulchres; business would hush in the street; the banker would forget his bank, the miser his money, the mechanic his tools, and seekers of pleasure their places of resort; the sail would hang at rest in the harbour; there would be no light; all business must perish; nothing could grow; nothing could blossom; there could be no colour in the flower, none in the sky, none in pictures, and none in the living human face; life itself would be dead while yet alive; and the world would be buried. Men would begin to see that that subtle fluid which they had scarcely thought of in its regular abundance, in fact, carried in it all the conditions of human life, and mastered all things.

Just so was it with the disciples. Not a whit less amazing and overwhelming to them was the departure of the Light of the world, in which they had put their whole life, and after whose departure they felt that though they had life, they had nothing for it to do.

But what if after three hopeless, helpless days, when men had become almost rigid with despair, some watcher should cry out in the street, "I see light dawning in the east!" and the gray twilight should begin to creep toward light? What wild tidings would spread! How the sleepers would spring up out of horrid dreams! What shouts of joy would rend the air from throngs of men, as the light flamed forth and stretched up! What tears of gratitude would fill every eye! And as the sun rose gloriously above the horizon, parents and children would lock themselves in embrace; friends would greet friends; and the whole city would be intoxicated with gladness, and would burst into every extravagant gratulation: And would not a new epoch begin? In the calendar would be placed the glorious Resurrection of the Sun.

—*Beecher.*

(924.) I do not know where I get that feeling; but as I read this connected history, it seems to me as though the crucifixion was like one of those summer thunder-storms that we have, in which all the heavens appear to be full of darkness, and conflict, and turmoil. The terrible thunder-cracks that roll through the darkness; the great striving winds that now tug at the trees which groan under their hands, and that now beat on the house; the hissing rain; all the wild commotion of the elements—these fill the soul full of imaginations and strange terrors. And yet we sleep (I used to, as a child), and wake, and sleep; and when the morning comes, there is not a cloud in the air. It is as if the heavens were one vast bowl, or goblet, filled with the wine of life; and the sun seems steeping the very heavens. Not a leaf moves except when a drop of water falls from it and changes its equipoise. And all the birds sing, and all voices seem jubilant, and all the earth seems refreshed and more beautiful. And so it affects me when I read of the tumult of the crucifixion on Calvary, and the after quiet.

For then, there are the scenes of the garden—the ministration of angels; the sweet surprise of the different groups that came to the sepulchre. It is all tranquil. It is all joyful. Previous to that event there had been tumult, from the time of Christ's appearance on the earth; but when once He has passed the portals of the tomb; when once He has come forth from the sepulchre, it is all serene; it is all sweet. It is as it should be. Now we can see it. The Saviour has risen; and all the signs and tokens of His presence are gladness and radiance and peace. —*Beecher.*

(925.) His resurrection is a pledge, not merely an illustration, of the resurrection of mankind. He is the first fruits, as represented in Scripture; they are the harvest. He is the forerunner: they are the company for which He goes forth to make preparation. A forerunner is an absurdity if no one is to come after. If a man should go into a city, as it was customary to do in ancient times, crying, "Make ready! prepare!" if he should rush up to the hostelry and call out for every provision of chamber, and fuel, and raiment, and food, and he should be the only one that was to come, how preposterous

it would be! There can be no forerunner except where there is a company to follow him, for whom he goes forward to prepare. Now Christ is the forerunner, and the race is following after Him.

—*Beecher.*

XX. *HIS ASCENSION.*

(926.) "Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." As when Roman heroes returned from blood-red fields, and the senate awarded them a triumph, they rode in their chariot drawn by milk-white steeds through the thronging streets of the capitol, so did Jesus Christ when He led captivity captive receive a triumph at His Father's hands. The triumphal chariot bore Him through the streets of glory, while all the inhabitants thereof with loud acclaim saluted Him as Conqueror.

"Crown Him! crown Him!
Crowns become the victor's brow!"

It was the wont of the Roman conqueror as he rode along to distribute large quantities of money which were scattered among the admiring crowd. So our glorified Lord scattered gifts among men, yea to the rebellious also He gave those gifts that the Lord God might dwell among them; in this manner, then, to grace the triumph of Jesus, the Spirit of God was liberally poured out upon the Church below.

—*Spurgeon.*

XXI. *THE SAVIOUR OF ALL MEN.*

(927.) Our Lord is the Saviour of all men, for that He hath rendered all men *salvabiles*, capable of salvation; and *salvandos*, designed to salvation, for that He hath removed all obstacles peremptorily debarring men from access to salvation, and hath procured competent furtherances to their attainment of it. He hath performed whatever on His part is necessary or fit in order to salvation, antecedently to the acceptance and compliance with those reasonable conditions, which by God's wisdom are required toward the instating men into a full and immediate right to salvation, or to a complete and actual fruition thereof. He made the way to happiness plain and passable; levelling the insuperable cliffs, and filling up the chasms, and rectifying the obliquities, and smoothing the asperities thereof, as the prophet foretold; so that all men, who would, might conveniently walk therein. He set the doors of paradise wide open, so that who pleased might enter in; all the bonds and restraints under which men lay, He so far loosed, that any man might be free, who would concur to his own liberty and enlargement. All the protection and encouragement which were needful toward obtaining salvation, He afforded and exhibited to every one that would embrace and make use of them. In respect to which performances He might be truly called a *Saviour*, although all men do not in effect become saved. For the estimation and denomination of performances are to be grounded upon their own nature and design, not upon events depending upon the contingent and arbitrary behaviour of men. As he that freely offers a rich boon is no less to be accounted a benefactor, and liberal, although his gift be refused, than if it were accepted; as he that opens the prison is to be styled a deliverer, although the captive will not go forth; as he that ministers an effectual remedy, although the patient will not use it, deserves the honour and thanks due to a physician; so is our Lord in regard to what He hath performed for men, and offered to them (being sufficient to prevent their misery, and promote their happiness), to be thankfully acknowledged their Saviour, although not all men, yea although not one man, should receive the designed benefit. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

XXII. *HIS READINESS TO RECEIVE SINNERS.*

(928.) He does not exclude the greatest sinners when they come to Him, but on the contrary He gives them His first attention; as a surgeon who has been called to a field of battle to dress the wounded always first goes to the most desperate cases. —*Naudin.*

(929.) I find a great many persons who attempt to come to the Lord Jesus Christ as a person would go to a king that had given out invitations for a grand levee, and expected every one who came to wear a court dress. While all the rich that had silks, and satins, and money in profusion, were getting ready and going, others would be staying at home because they had only homespun garments, or were in tatters, and had no means of better clothing themselves.

Suppose you should desire to go to the levee of the king—or the *president*, if you like that word better—but should hesitate because you had not better clothing: and suppose he should send out word, "Come without stopping for better clothing;" and suppose you should still hesitate, feeling that there must be some preparation necessary; and suppose he should send out again, saying to every one: "Make known your want, and I will supply it; I will send you the very garments you need; I will send you money with which to pay your expenses: only let me know what you want, and you shall have it—provision for your journey; the necessary funds for travelling; a convoy to guide and protect you; and a ticket of entrance; and finally you shall receive a hearty welcome. Only come, and all these incidental matters shall be provided for." If such a thing should take place in secular affairs, you would be in no doubt as to what course to pursue. And it ought to be more easy and more glorious in a spiritual than in a worldly sense.

Here is one who says: "I had no advantages in my early life. I was brought up among people that swore, and stole, and drank, and did everything that was wicked; and I but just escaped the clutches of destruction. I formed many bad habits which cling to me now. And yet, when I look upon the life of Christians, I say, 'It is good.' I would give all the world to be as they are, and I strive to become like them; but I do not seem to make any progress. If I only had God to help me, I think I could make some headway."

The Lord Jesus Christ is just exactly what such a person needs—a Friend; and not one who will forgive him when he has repented, but one who will help him to repent. He is not one who will reward him only when he has perfected his righteousness. He is a schoolmaster who says: "You cannot be what

you desire to be till you go to school; and I have opened a school for just such as you; and if you will come to this school I will teach you that which you need to know." He is not like a physician who should stand saying to the man that is sick, "Come to my office when you get well." He is one who, when you say to Him, "Come and see my case—I am sick," says, "It is my nature and my mission to do that." He declared that He came to heal the sick and not the whole. —*Beecher.*

XXIII. *A WAY OF ACCESS TO HIM THAT IS ALWAYS OPEN.*

(930.) In one of the coal-pits of the north, while a considerable number of the miners were down below, the top of the pit fell in, and the shaft was completely blocked up. Those who were in the mine gathered to a spot where the last remains of air could be breathed. There they sat and sang and prayed after the lights had gone out because the air was unable to support the flame. They were in total darkness, but a gleam of hope cheered them when one of them said he had heard that there was a connection between that pit and an old pit which had been worked years ago. He said it was a long passage through which a man might get by crawling all the way, lying flat upon the ground; he would go and see if it were passable. The passage was very long, but they crept through it, and at last they came out to light at the bottom of the other shaft, and their lives were saved.

If my present way of access to Christ as a saint is blocked up by doubts and fears, if I cannot go straight up the shaft and see the light of my Father's face, there is an old working, the old-fashioned way by which sinners have gone of old, by which poor thieves go, by which harlots go. I will creep along it, lowly and humbly; I will go flat upon the ground. I will humble myself till I see my Lord, and cry, "Father, I am not worthy to be called Thy son, make me as one of Thy hired servants, so long as I may but dwell in Thy house." In our very worst case of despondency we may still come to Jesus as sinners. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Call this to mind and you may have hope. —*Spurgeon.*

XXIV. *HIS GRACE.*

1. Our need of it.

(931.) The believer is like the ship; it is not enough that he hath the sails of grace implanted, but he must have the wind of the Spirit filling his sails, otherwise he cannot make way towards the heavenly port. The believer is like a branch, that hath nothing of its own but what it receives from the root, even as itself doth so spring from the root: he is like the moon which, as appeareth from the eclipse, hath no light of itself, but increaseth, and cometh to full, as it receiveth from the sun. Let none think that believers have no further use for Christ after their first believing and receiving of Him; nay, as Christ is the author, so He is the finisher of faith. —*Erskine*, 1685-1752.

(932.) This concurrent testimony of many witnesses confirms me in what I think the Scriptures plainly teach, that the soil of human nature—though many spots are certainly better weeded, planted, and manured than others—is everywhere the same, universally bad, and of itself only capable of producing noxious weeds and nourishing venomous creatures. We often see the effects of culture, skill, and expense will make a garden where all was desert before. When Jesus, the good Husbandman, encloses a soil, and separates it from the waste of the world, to make it a residence for Himself, a change presently takes place; it is planted and watered from above, and visited with beams infinitely more cheering and fertilising than those of the material sun. But its natural propensity to bring forth weeds still continues; and one half of His dispensations may be compared to a company of weeders, whom He sends forth into His garden to pluck up all which He has not planted with His own hand, and which, if left to grow, would quickly overpower and overtop the rest. But, alas! the ground is so impregnated with evil seeds, and they shoot in such quick succession, that, if this weeding work were not constantly repeated, all former labour would be lost. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!* hence arises the necessity of daily crosses and disappointments, daily changes of frame, and such multiplied convictions that we are nothing, and can do nothing of ourselves; all are needful, and barely sufficient to prevent our hearts from being overrun with pride, self-dependence, and security. —*Newton*, 1725-1807.

(933.) If any of you who are unconverted doubt your need of the help of Christ to curb your sins, just try for a few days to do it alone. They will give you work of it! You will say you never were so bad before. You never *were* so universally in rebellion. While your will goes with your selfish or evil desires there is no conflict—or none that makes much stir and dust. I do not know that water would ever make any noise if it were allowed to flow unobstructed; but put rocks in its way, let logs stick up in the current, dam it up, or in any way obstruct it, and then see—such a noise, such a commotion, such a determined overflowing as it makes; and it *will* get out somewhere. So with yourselves—as long as your heart is let to flow undisturbedly hell-ward, there may be but little trouble; you may hardly be conscious that you are a rebel at all; but lay on the bands, mark out the bounds, hold in the lines—and what then? Why, then you will see how desperate is your case, and will soon discover that there is none but the Son of God that can help you. —*Beecher.*

2. Its fulness and sufficiency.

(934.) Though there be abundance of sin and guiltiness in us, yet there is abundance of grace and mercy in Christ to remove it. Be not discouraged; though thy sins abound, His grace superabounds much more. If a beggar hear of a common dole to be given at such a place, at such a time, it affects him, and invites him to go; but when he sees many coming from it with arms full, laps full, baskets full, this gives him wings to make all haste unto it. If a sick man hear of a physician famous for healing and curing of all diseases, it stirs him up to go and try; but if he meet with hundreds coming from him, and telling him, "I have been there, and I thank God I am made whole," this puts life into him, and causes him to hasten to him. Thus it is: the Lord Jesus has provided a common dole of grace and salvation for every poor soul that stands in need of it, only He will have men come and receive it; they shall have it for carrying away. He is that soul-saving

Physician; the blind, lame, deaf, and dumb, be the disease what it will, it's all one: if Christ be the Physician, all shall be made whole.

—*Bayne*, 1617.

(935.) God hath laid up in Christ a rich and full treasure of grace to supply thy wants continually, "*It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.*" Fulness, all fulness, all fulness dwelling; not the fulness of a land flood, up and down; not the fulness of a vessel to serve his own turn only, but of a fountain that lends its streams to others without lessening its own store.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(936.) Christ is goodness itself; a good, suitable unto all our wants. If you be poor, He is rich; if you be foolish, He is wise; if you be out of the way, "I am the way," saith He: if you want a director in the way, "I am the truth;" if you be in the dark, "I am the light;" a suitable good and an universal good. As all the sweetnesses that are in the flowers of the field and in the garden are brought in by the bees into the hive, and are there embodied in one hive; so all the attributes of God and the sweetness of them all are hived in Christ, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. And He is an obtainable good, called the Rose of Sharon—the rose, not of the garden, but of the field, that every one may come at. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(937.) There is enough in Jesus Christ for to serve us all. If two, or six, or twenty men be athirst, and they go to drink out of a bottle, while one is drinking, the other envies, because he thinks there will not be enough for him too; but if a hundred be athirst, and go to the river, while one is drinking, the other envies not, because there is enough to serve them all. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(938.) When we find that Christ hath by His Spirit begun to make us know God, and love Him, and delight in Him, and praise Him, it is the easier to make us believe that He will perfect His work in us. He that promises to convey me safely to the antipodes, may easily be believed when he hath brought me past the greatest difficulties of the voyage. He that will teach me to sing artificially, hath merited credit when he hath taught me the gradual tones, the scale of music, the sol-fa-ing, the clefs, the quantity, the moods, the rules of time, &c. He that causeth me to love God on earth, may be believed if he promise me that I shall love Him more in heaven. And he that causeth me to desire heaven above earth, before I see it, may be believed when he promiseth, that it shall be my great delight when I am there. It is God's work to love them that love Him, and to reward the obedient; and I must needs believe that God will do His work, and will never fail the just expectations of any creature. All my doubt is whether I shall do my part and whether I shall be a prepared subject for that felicity. And he that resolveth this, resolveth all: he that will make me fit for heaven, hath overcome the greatest difficulty of my belief, and I should the more easily believe that he will do the rest, and that I shall surely come to heaven when I am fit for it. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(939.) Reader, stand awhile at the well-head with the poor woman of Samaria, admiring the infinite dimensions of those waters of life that are fountained up in Jesus Christ, "of whose fulness we all receive, even grace for grace."

The saints may be brimful of the Holy Spirit, as Stephen was, but it is according to measure, a vessel fulness; but Christ above or without measure, a spring fulness, which is not only repletive, but diffusive, unsearchable, unmeasurable.

The great ocean is too little to shadow out the overflowings of His fulness; for take away a drop or two from thence, it presently suffers a diminution: but though this Fountain of salvation should shed abroad His love upon all the world of the elect, as the waters cover the sea, yet it is ever full, running over. There is not the less light or heat in the Sun of Righteousness, though He daily ariseth with healing in His wings unto them that fear His name from east to west: "He is yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same." This is no hyperbole, but the language of Canaan. "*Nec Christus nec cœlum patitur Hyperbolum.*"—(*Luther.*)

—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(940.) On the deck of a foundering vessel stood a negro slave—the last man on board. He was about to step into the life-boat at her last trip. She was already loaded almost to the gunwale; to the water's edge. Observed to bear in his arms what seemed a heavy bundle, the boat's crew, who had difficulty to keep her afloat in such a roaring sea, refused to receive him unless he came unencumbered, and alone. He pressed to his bosom what he carried in his arms, and seemed loath to part with it. They insisted. He had his choice—either to leap in and leave that behind him, or throw it in and stay to perish. He opened its folds; and there, warmly wrapt round, lay two children whom their father, his master, had committed to his care. He kissed them; bade the sailors carry his affectionate farewell to his master, and tell how he had faithfully fulfilled his charge; and then, lowering the children into the boat which pushed off, the dark man stood alone on that sinking deck—and bravely went down with the foundering ship. Such arms slavery binds; such kind hearts it crushes! A noble and touching example that of the love that seeketh not her own! yet it shows how the means of salvation may be inadequate to the occasion. So no poor sinner need perish, nor lose eternal life. There is room for all in Christ. Our cry to the perishing, Come to Jesus, Come; "yet there is room." —*Guthrie.*

(941.) Who can now despair of Thy mercy, O God, that sees the tears of a Manasseh accepted? I remember an old lady who would not travel by railway, because she thought that some of the bridges were in bad repair, especially the Saltash bridge near her own house. Over that bridge she could not be persuaded to pass, for fear her weight should break it down, although hundreds of tons weight were carried over it every day. At such folly everybody can smile. But when I hear a man say, "I have committed so much sin, that God cannot pardon it," I think his folly is far greater. Look at this huge train that went over that bridge, behold Manasseh laden with ponderous crimes! Mark what a train of sin there was behind him! Then look at the bridge, and see whether it starts by reason of the loaded team of sins which is rolling over it. Ah, no, it bears it up, and so would it bear the weight if all the sins that men have done should roll across its arches. Christ is "able to

save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." —*Spurgeon.*

3. Its freeness.

(942.) If you say, "I do not know why He should save me; I am not worthy to be saved," that is a fact; you are not. If you say, "I do not think I have a right to look to Him for salvation; I have not done anything that should give me a claim on Him for so great a blessing," that is true; you have not. It is not because you deserve divine mercies that you have a right to expect them.

I take a dozen beggar boys out of the street, and they say, "I do not know why you should like me; I am unlovely, and there is nothing attractive about me." That is so. And I take you that you may become lovely. "But I am filthy and ragged." Yes, you are; and I take you that you may be washed and clothed. "But I am stupid and ignorant." So you are; and I take you to educate you. "But I am full of all manner of wickedness." I know that; and it is because you are so wicked that I am determined, with God's help, to rescue you from the devil. I take you because you are such unmitigated urchins, to give you a better chance in the world.

Now, Christ does not take us because we are so pure and sweet, and virtuous and lovely. He takes us because He cannot bear to see a soul that is destined to immortality less than high and noble; and because He means to make us what He would have us to be, He sends us to school. "They that are well," He tells us, "need not a physician; but they that are sick." If you are sick, and will accept Him for your physician, He will cure you.

—*Beecher.*

(943.) "I come very often," said the Pitcher one day to the Spring, which it again approached to be filled with its pure water. "I hope I do not come too frequently; but I soon get emptied, and as often need to be replenished."

"You are but one of a great many that come with the same errand," answered the flowing Spring.

"It is very generous of you to give unto all that come," said the Pitcher, "and that, like myself, apply so frequently."

"I never refuse any, and send none empty away," replied the Spring. "And, however large the number that I take, I am not at all impoverished. I flow in order to supply the wants of the thirsting; and 'whosoever will, let him come.'"

Believers need to make constant application to the Lord Jesus Christ for spiritual supplies. The grace received yesterday will not meet the wants of the present day. The Christian says, like the Psalmist, "All my springs are in Thee." And the reply of the Saviour is, "Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

Grace is free to all that will. Whosoever thirsts may come to the fulness which is in Christ Jesus. To this end the Gospel issues its invitations unto poor sinners, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isa. lv. 1). —*Bowden.*

4. Is inexhaustible.

(944.) It is said that a Spanish ambassador, coming to see that so much cried-up Treasury of St. Mark, in Venice, fell a-groping at the bottom of the chests, to see whether they had any bottom; and being asked the reason why he did so, answered, "In this, among other things, my master's treasure differs from yours: in that his hath no bottom as I find yours to have!"—alluding to the mines in Mexico, Peru, and other parts of the western India. So it may be said, and Scripture, history, and experience do abundantly testify, that men's coffers and mints may be exhausted, but the riches that are to be found in Christ Jesus have no bottom: millions of thousands feed upon Him, and He feels it not; He is ever giving, yet His purse is never empty; always bestowing Himself, yet never wanting to any that faithfully seek Him.

—*De Carbonensis*, 1579.

5. Is always to be trusted in.

(945.) When once we trust in God, He takes charge of our souls, that we may trust Him to the end.

Ah! if I were starting from Europe, and a friend should come to me and say, "My only child, my daughter, is going to America, and she is alone on the ship; will you take charge of her during the voyage?" I should be sensibly touched by his confidence. And aside from my attachment to the child (if I had known her and loved her), and my regard for her parents, do you suppose I would suffer my oversight of her to intermit, though I might be in need of rest and sleep, and though I might be sick and require attention myself? Would I not, night and day, carry that charge upon my mind, to see that her wants were all supplied, and that no accident befell her? And could I live if, by any fault of mine, she walked too near the perilous edge and fell overboard, and was whelmed in the tide and lost? How could I ever look my friend in the face again?

Now when God has put His children in the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He may carry them across this perilous voyage of life, and land them safe in heaven; and when Christ has promised to present them pure and spotless before the throne, do you suppose He, under whose feet is all power, will fail to fulfil His promise, and to perform what He has undertaken? If there were nothing but ourselves we might fear; but as long as we have the amplitude, the fidelity, the tenderness, and the love of Christ, we have that which is more than a match for our sin. —*Beecher.*

XXV. *HIS LOVE.*

1. Why He loves us.

(946.) It is necessary for me to believe that Jesus Christ loves me. But if you tell me that He loves me because I am so good, it is a lie. I am not good. Yet He loves me. If you tell me it is because I am going to be so good, it is false. That cannot be it. Why does He love me?

Oh, tell me, if you can, why it is that the mother loves such a little thing as she does? Look at it. It does not know how to look at anything. It sprawls its little mouth. It straggles its little hands here and there. It is a hardly shapen little piece of flesh. But oh, how the mother loves it! It is covered with kisses, that cannot kiss again. It is pressed to her bosom, that does not know even how to touch her bosom voluntarily. It is the mere possibility of something in the future; but at present, what is it? It is apparently one of the most insignificant of creatures; and yet what a tide

of love goes out toward it! Oh, what brightness is in the mother's eye! Oh, what gentleness! Is there anything in this world that brings out the beauty of womanhood so much as the spectacle of a great heart pouring itself out on that little something? It is the richness of her own soul that is loving it. It is her nature. Love is there by constitution. It pours itself out on the helpless child. And is that all? Not only does it love but it teaches the child to be lovely. The child's nursery is the mother's heart. The cradle in which every virtue and grace is rocked early is a mother's love. She makes the child lovely by loving, by waiting, and by training. I am as a lump of clay. What can the clay do of itself? Put it upon the potter's wheel, and set it in swift revolution, and lay upon it a skilful hand, and see how the rude clay begins to take on form. See how it begins to show the most exquisite lines of the old vases. See how, by the touch of the moulding hand, it is brought to something that it is not of itself.

My God is a God who loves out of His own nature, and not on conditions. It is not needful that I should be beautiful in order that He shall love me. It is not needful that I should be patient in order that He shall love me. He loves me because of Himself. We are saved by grace. We are redeemed by goodness. Our salvation does not depend upon what we are, but upon what God is.

—*Beecher.*

(947.) He loves us because of what He has done for us. If you would kindle within you love for any man, make sacrifices for him. In the life of Captain Marryat, we are told how when he first went to sea as a midshipman he suffered intolerable persecutions from an older midshipman named Cobbett. While their ship was in the harbour of Malta, this youth fell overboard, and was rescued by Marryat at the risk of his own life. The benefit that he had thus conferred upon his persecutor entirely changed his feelings towards him. Writing to his mother an account of his exploit, he concluded it by saying: "From that moment I have loved the fellow as I never loved friend before. All my hate is forgotten; I have saved his life." So Christ loves us, not because of what we have done, but in spite of what we have done, and because of what He suffered on our behalf. —*R. A. Bertram.*

2. Its wonderful manifestations.

(948) Christ has obliged us with two of the highest instances of His love to us imaginable:

First, That He died for us. The love of life is naturally the greatest, and therefore that love that so far masters this, as to induce a man to lay it down, must needs be transcendent and supernatural. For life is the first thing that nature desires, and the last that it is willing to part with. But how poor and low, and in what a pitiful shallow channel does the love of the world commonly run! Let us come and desire such an one to speak a favourable word or two for us to a potent friend, and how much of coyness and excuse and shyness shall we find! the man is unwilling to spend his breath in speaking, much less in dying for his friend. Come to another, and ask him upon the stock of a long acquaintance and a professed kindness, to borrow but a little money of him, and how quickly does he fly to his shifts, pleading poverty, debts, and great occasions, and anything, rather than open his own bowels to refresh those of his poor neighbour! The man will not bleed in his purse, much less otherwise, to rescue his friend from prison, from disgrace, and perhaps a great disaster.

But now how incomparably full and strong must the love of Christ needs have been, that could make Him sacrifice even life itself for the good of mankind, and not only die, but die with all the heightening circumstances of pain and ignominy; that is in such a manner, that death was the least part of the suffering! Let us but fix our thoughts upon Christ, hanging, bleeding, and at length dying upon the cross, and we shall read His love to man there, in larger and more visible characters than the superscription that the Jews put over His head in so many languages. All which, and many more, were not sufficient to have fully expressed and set forth so incredibly great an affection. Every thorn was a pencil to represent, and every groan a trumpet to proclaim, how great a love He was then showing to mankind.

And now surely our love must needs be very cold, if all the blood that ran in our Saviour's veins cannot warm it; for all that was shed for us, and shed for that very purpose, that it might prevent the shedding of ours. Our obnoxiousness to the curse of the law for sin had exposed us to all the extremity of misery, and made death as due to us, as wages to the workman. And the divine justice (we may be sure) would never have been behindhand to pay us our due. The dreadful retribution was certain and unavoidable; and therefore, since Christ could not prevent, He was pleased at last to divert the blow, and to turn it upon Himself; to take the cup of God's fury out of our hands, and to drink off the very dregs of it. The greatest love that men usually bear one another is but show and ceremony, compliment, and a mere appearance, in comparison of this. This was such a love as Solomon says, is "strong as death;" and to express it yet higher, such an one as was stronger than the very desires of life.

Secondly, The other transcendent instance of Christ's love to mankind was, that He did not only die for us, but that He died for us while we were enemies, and (in the phrase of Scripture) enmity itself against Him. It is possible indeed that some natures of a nobler mould and make than the generality of the world, may arise to such an heroic degree of love, as to induce one friend to die for another. For the apostle says, that "for a good man one would even dare to die." And we may read in heathen story of the noble contention of two friends, which of them should have the pleasure and honour of dying in the other's stead, and writing the inward love of his heart in the dearest blood that did enliven it.

Yet still the love of Christ to mankind runs in another and a higher strain: for admit that one man had died for another, yet still it has been for his friend, that is, for something, if not of equal, yet at least of next esteem to life itself, in the common judgment of all. Human love will indeed sometimes act highly and generously, but still it is upon a suitable object, upon something that is amiable; and if there be either no fuel, or that which is unsuitable, the flame will certainly go out.

But the love of Christ does not find, but make us lovely. It "saw us in our blood" (as the prophet speaks), wallowing in all the filth and impurities of

our natural corruption, and then it said unto us, Live. Christ then laid down His life for us, when we had forfeited our own to Him. Which strange action was, as if a prince should give himself a ransom for that traitor that would have murdered him; and sovereignty itself lie down upon the block to rescue the neck of a rebel from the stroke of justice. This was the method and way that Christ took in what He suffered for us; a method that reason might at first persuade us to be against nature, and that religion assures us to be above it.
—*South*, 1633-1716.

(949.) In the French revolution, a young man was condemned to the guillotine, and shut up in one of the prisons. He was greatly loved by many, but there was one who loved him more than all put together. How know we this? It was his own father, and the love he bore his son was proved in this way: when the lists were called, the father, whose name was exactly the same as the son's, answered to the name, and the father rode in the gloomy tumbril out to the place of execution, and his head rolled beneath the axe instead of his son's, a victim to mighty love. See here an image of the love of Christ to sinners; for thus Jesus died for the ungodly. —*Spurgeon.*

3. Its emblems.

(950.) What beautiful emblems of Christ's love are the two grandest objects of nature, sapphire sea and sapphire sky; the boundless extent of heaven's blue field cannot be measured even by the astronomer; so the length and breadth, and height and depth of the love of Christ surpass all knowledge. We know something of what is nearest us of the sky, the human side of it, as it were. That part which lies immediately above our earth is familiar to us, from the offices of beauty and usefulness which it serves; the firmament in this respect shows forth the handiwork of God in ministering continually to our wants. But the profound abysses of blue beyond, the eternal, unchangeable heavens that declare God's glory, and that seemingly have no relation to man, are utterly incomprehensible to us; the very stars themselves only give us light to show the infinity of space in which they are scattered. So the love of Christ in its human aspect, as displayed in the work and blessings of redemption, and in offices of care and kindness to us, is so far comprehensible, for otherwise we could not build our trust upon it, and St. Paul would not speak of *knowing* it; but its infinite fulness, its divine perfection, its relation to the universe, is utterly beyond our knowledge, and eternity itself, though spent in acquiring larger and brighter views of it, will fail to exhaust the wondrous theme. The boundless blue sky of Christ's love bends over us, comprehends our little life within it, as the horizon embraces the landscape; wherever we move, we are within that blue circular tent, but we can never touch its edges; it folds about with equal serenity and adaptability the lofty mountain and the lowly vale, the foaming torrent and the placid lake; the bold, rugged, aspiring nature, and the quiet retiring disposition, the man of action, and the man of thought, the impetuous Peter and the loving John; it softens the sharp extremes of things, and connects the highest and lowest by its subtile, invisible bonds, and yet stretches far aloft beyond the reach of sight or sense into the fathomless abyss of infinity. Or, to take the sea as the comparison, the sea touches the shore along one narrow line, and all the beauty and fertility of that shore are owing to its life-giving dews and rains; but it stretches away from the shore, beyond the horizon, into regions which man's eye has never seen, and the further it recedes the deeper and the bluer its waters become. And so the love of Christ touches us along the whole line of our life, imparts all the beauty and fruitfulness to that life, but it stretches away from the point of contact into the unsearchable riches of Christ, the measureless fulness of the Godhead, that ocean of inconceivable, incommunicable love which no plummet can sound, or eye of angel or saint ever scan; and the love that we cannot comprehend, that is beyond our reach, is as much love as that whose blessed influences and effects we feel. —*Macmillan.*

XXVI. *HIS TENDER MERCY.*

(951.) "A bruised reed He will not break." Simple, but expressive emblem! The most fragile thing in nature is the shivering reed by the river side. The Eastern shepherd tending his flock by the streams where these reeds grow, appears to have used them for his rustic pipe. When one of them was bruised or broken, he never made the attempt to mend it. By inserting it among the others he would make his instrument discordant, and accordingly he threw it aside as worthless. Not so the Great Shepherd. When a human soul is bruised and mutilated by sin, He casts it not away. That bruised reed "He will not break." He repairs it for its place in the heavenly instrument, and makes it once more to show forth His praise.
—*Macduff.*

XXVII. *HIS SYMPATHY WITH HIS PEOPLE.*

(952.) "If," says Augustine, "a man should come up to embrace thee, to kiss and honour thee upward, and beneath with a pair of shoes beaten full of nails tread upon thy bare foot; the head shall despise the honour done unto it, and for the foot that smarteth, say, Why treadest thou upon me? So when feigned gospellers honour Christ our Head, sitting in heaven, and oppress His members on earth, the Head shall speak for the feet that smart, and say, Why treadest thou on me?" Paul had a zeal toward God, but he did tread upon Christ's feet on earth, for whom the Head crieth forth of heaven, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Although Christ sitteth on the right hand of His Father, yet lieth He on earth; He suffereth all calamities here on earth, He is many times evil entreated here on earth. —*Bernard Gilpin.*

(953.) We must not make too much of sympathy, as mere feeling. We do in things spiritual as we do with hot-house plants. The feeble exotic, beautiful to look at, but useless, has costly sums spent on it. The hardy oak, a nation's strength, is permitted to grow, scarcely observed, in the fence and copses. We prize feeling and praise its possessor. But feeling is only a sickly exotic in itself—a passive quality having in it nothing moral, no temptation and no victory. A man is no more a good man for having feeling, than he is for having a delicate ear for music, or a far-seeing optic nerve. The Son of man had feeling—He could be "touched." The tear would start from His eyes at the sight of human sorrow. But that sympathy was no exotic in His

soul, beautiful to look at, too delicate for use. Feeling with Him led to this, "He went about doing good." Sympathy with Him was this, "Grace to help in time of need." —*Robertson.*

(954.) We look upon an ant-hill, and see all the business activities, the fears, the little wars, the takings and losings, of one side and another, and hardly think of the actors. They are scarcely more to us than the rolling sands which they disturb. We see these mimic strifes almost without a thought. And many suppose that God looks down upon this greater ant-hill, and beholds the thousand conflicts of human experience, with just as little thought and care. "No," says the apostle, "our God is not one that is indifferent to, and without sympathy for, the actual experiences of men. We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,"—with human weakness and with human want—"but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." —*Beecher.*

(955.) In us, so far as our knowledge extends, sympathy is the most exquisite and perfect expression of love. It signifies such an interest, such a peculiar affection, that the person sympathising receives another's experience as a part of his own; whether it be joy or sorrow, he is so intimately united to another that he feels with him; that whatever feeling, pleasant or painful, trembles on another's heart, trembles upon his.

We can imagine a being to be helpful in various degrees without being sympathetic; as when a man, acting from a cold sense of duty, helps another with a sort of police helpfulness, or from considerations of general benevolence, without being greatly moved himself. It is possible for a truly benevolent man to be entirely serene (as a physician, who bends over a patient to whom he is giving great pain, may be kind and gentle), and yet not experience in himself any correspondence of feeling, and not to be, to any considerable degree, in sympathy with that patient.

But there are relationships in which men are affected by another's experience, when they come nearer than mere duty or ordinary benevolence would draw them, as when persons are connected together by bonds of personal affection. When a child falls, it hurts the mother a great deal more than it hurts the child, though nothing touches her except the sound of its fall. We often suffer more on account of others' troubles than they themselves do in those troubles, for both love and sorrow take their measure as much from the capacity of the nature that experiences them as from the power of the externally exciting cause. How much a great nature loves does not depend wholly upon how much there is to love, but upon how much there is to love with. In like manner, how much one suffers with or for another, does not depend altogether upon how much that other is suffering, but upon how much that nature which sympathises has with which to suffer.

Now the teaching here—and it only corroborates what is abundantly taught elsewhere in the New Testament—the teaching here, in respect to our Saviour, is that He sympathises with us as His children. He feels with us, so that our experiences throw their waves upon the shore of His soul. He carries us so near to His heart that all our feelings, which are of any moment, produce their effects, in some degree, in His bosom.

It seems very strange that the Maker of all the earth should permit Himself to be a participant in all the petty experiences that belong to any human life. No man would have dared to conceive such an idea of God, and to have believed any such thing as that, if it had not been revealed in unequivocal terms; for men would have said, "It is beneath any true idea of the majesty of God to suppose that He bends His bosom to all the rippling waves of human hearts, and feels again what they are feeling in their lower courses."

A great mountain lifts itself up with perpendicular face over against some quiet valley; and when summer thunders with great storms the cliff echoes the thunder, and rolls it forth a second time with majesty increased; and we think that, to be sublime, storms should awaken mountain echoes, and that then cause and effect are worthy of each other. But so, too, oriole, or a song-sparrow, singing before it, hears its own little song sung back again. A little child, lost, and crying in the valley, hears the great cliff weeping just as it weeps; and, in sooth, the mountain repeats whatever is sounded, from the sublimest notes of the tempest to the sweetest bird-whisper or child-weeping; and it is just as easy to do the little as the great, and more beautiful. Now God is our Rock, and from His heart is reflected every experience, every feeling of joy or grief, that any human soul utters or knows. —*Beecher.*

(956.) The sympathy of Christ includes our sin. He is sorry for us, and sympathises with us on account of our sin. Calvary, mountain of blessings, is testimony that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." No trumpet will ever speak as the death of Christ speaks in evidence of our woes and sorrows to affect the sympathetic heart of God, and make Him sorry for us. Living, He gave Himself for us; dying, He gave Himself for us; living again, He lives to intercede for us; and the further we can remove this idea from all our hearts, and the nearer we can bring it home to our consciousness of guilt, the more nearly shall we come to the feelings of Christ toward those who are sinful. Let me, in this connection, read a verse or two preceding our text:—"The Word of God," that is, God's mind—"is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of our soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

What a tremendous expression of God's insight into, His familiarity with, and the universality of His knowledge of, every throb and fluctuation of the wickedness of the human soul! It is anatomised, dissected, laid open, and God looks upon it, and He sees the whole of it perfectly. And it is in view of this knowledge of God of the intensity and the interiorness of our moral unworth and sinfulness that we have this exhortation: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

A man goes to his physician, and says to him, "I have, sir, very great suffering; I have very sharp pains that shoot through my breast; I have very acute pains in my spine; and my head seems to have abandoned all its uses." The physician interrogates him, and says to him, "What has been the course of your life?" The man is ashamed to tell; he says, "Well, sir, I have been exposed to dampness in various ways, and my impression is that I am troubled with neuralgia." The physician proceeds to prescribe for him on the supposition that his difficulty is neuralgia; but as he gets no better, but a good deal worse, he says to himself, "I do not believe my physician understands my case. I do not believe the medicine he is giving me is doing me any good." But he has withheld the truth from his physician. He has not let him into the secret of his trouble. At length he goes to another physician, and says, "Can you do me any good?" This physician knows so much that he don't know anything; and after putting a few pompous questions to the man concerning his case, he says, "Yes, I can cure you," and accordingly he gives him a few remedies. But they afford him no relief. After a few weeks he says to himself, "I do not believe this physician understands my case either." And by and by, after suffering nights and suffering days, his strength becomes much reduced, and there is a prospect of a speedy termination of all his earthly hopes and expectations, when he says to himself, "What a fool I am for lying, and hiding the real cause of my difficulty!" He now goes to his physician again, and hangs down his head—he ought to have hung it down before—and explains the cause of his disease, which he had been so long concealing. The physician says, "Why did you not tell me of this before? Since you have given this explanation, your difficulty is perfectly plain to me. It is very late, but I think I know now just where to put the remedy. Now I will undertake your case, and I can cure you." It is a word of relief to him that he has told the physician all he knows about his difficulty.

Now this is the foundation of the comfort of this passage. The apostle says, "Here is this God, with clear, unblemished eye, which no darkness can shroud, from which no man's thought can be hid, which can penetrate into the deepest recesses of man's being. There is no imagination of the mind or aspiration of the heart which He does not know. The soul and body are open and naked to His gaze, and He knows perfectly whatever takes place in connection with either. Now, then, let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need." God sees every thought and motive on our part, and He knows what we need in order to obtain mercy, and find grace, and live, and, knowing all this, He says to us, "Now come, now come." —*Beecher.*

(957.) During the last sad days of the great Rebellion a lady had occasion to see President Lincoln, to prefer a request of great importance to herself, and to one that she loved better than herself. The importance of her errand made her nervous; but the fact that she must plead her case with the President himself made her more so. She had never seen him; but from a distance she had learned, as we all had, greatly to honour and respect him. In speaking of the interview afterward, she said that, as she entered the room where he sat alone, she trembled greatly; but when she looked into his face, as he rose to greet her, she forgot the President in the sight of the man. She saw that he was a kind and gentle man; and, though she could not forget that on his word hung life and death, she could tell her story freely to one who could feel for her, who, in spite of all his cares, could be, and was interested in her and her trouble. Is there not a lesson here? When we go to Jesus with our troubles and our wants, do we realise that He is a loving, gentle-hearted man? When we think of the last great day, do we remember, as we should, or get the comfort to our hearts that there is in the truth, that we are to stand before the judgment bar of Christ—that we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities?

XXVIII. *HIS COMPASSION FOR THE TEMPTED.*

(958.) You have children. Then you will easily feel a plain illustration. A child, three or four years of age we will say, while playing incautiously at a little distance from home, is suddenly seized and carried away by a gipsy. Poor thing! how terrified, how distressed must it be! Methinks I hear its cries. The sight and violence of the stranger, the recollection of its dear parents, the loss of its pleasing home, the dread and uncertainty of what is yet to befall it. Is it not a wonder that it does not die in agonies? But see, help is at hand! the gipsy is pursued, and the child recovered. Now, my dear madam, if this were your child, how would you receive it? Perhaps, when the first transports of your joy for its safety would permit you, you might gently chide it for leaving your door. But would you disinherit it? Would you disown it? Would you deliver it up again to the gipsy with your own hands, because it had suffered a violence which it could not withstand, which it abhorred, and to which its will never consented? And yet what is the tenderness of a mother, of ten thousand mothers, to that which our compassionate Saviour bears to every poor soul that has been enabled to flee to Him for salvation! Let us be far from charging that to Him, of which we think we are utterly incapable ourselves. Take courage, resist the devil and he will flee from you. If he were to tempt you to anything criminal, you would start at the thought, and renounce it with abhorrence. Do the same when he tempts you to question the Lord's compassion and goodness. But there he imposes upon us with a show of humility, and persuades us that we do well to oppose our unworthiness as a sufficient exception to the many express promises of the Word. It is said, "the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin: that all manner of sin shall be forgiven for His sake; that whosoever cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast him out; and that He is able to save to the uttermost." Believe His Word, and Satan shall be found a liar. If the child had deliberately gone away with the gipsy, had preferred that wretched way of life, and had refused to return, though frequently and tenderly invited home; perhaps a parent's love might, in time, be too weak to plead for the pardon of such continued obstinacy. But, indeed, in this manner we have all dealt with the

Lord; and yet, whenever we are willing to return, He is willing to receive us with open arms, and without an upbraiding word (Luke xv. 20, 22). Though our sins have been deep-dyed like scarlet and crimson, enormous as mountains, and countless as the sands, the sum total is only this, sin has abounded, but where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

XXIX. *HIS CARE FOR THE WEAK.*

(959.) Heathenism was always exalting the top of society, the great men, and taking no thought for the masses below them. Christianity says, "The great and the strong can take care of themselves," and so seeks to elevate the lowest and poorest. Christ never warned us against not respecting a king's crown; but His words were, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." As in the family, it is not the son of twenty-one years, but the babe, whom the mother rocks to sleep in the cradle; so, in Christ's family of earth, it is not the full-grown and the mature for whom He most tenderly provides; it is the weak, and those on whom the world's law tramples, that He takes tenderly up with His strong arm, and rocks in the cradle of His love and care. —*Beecher.*

(960.) He came not in the spirit of Elias, but with meekness and gentle insinuations, mild as the breath of heaven, not willing to disturb the softest stalk of a violet.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(961.) The other day the children were learning the Twenty-third Psalm, and we were talking together about the Good Shepherd, and how He takes care of the sheep and the little lambs. Impetuous Mamy, eager to speak her one thought, said rapidly:

"He feeds them, and drives away the lions and the bears."

"Yes," said Tiny thoughtfully, "and He carries them up hill."

"He carries them up hill!"

The words went to my heart with a strength and sweetness the little speaker did not dream of. Often, often since, their music has thrilled through my tired soul like an echo of the angel's song.

XXX. *HIS DISINTERESTEDNESS.*

(962.) Do you ever find, among all the persons whom Christ miraculously cured, a single one whom He retained to be afterwards near Him as His disciple, His attendant, His votary? . . . Where now is your worldly friend who will behave himself towards you in this fashion? So far from it, no sooner has he done you any service, however trifling, than he immediately lays a claim upon you for your daily attendance upon him. He requires you to be henceforth always at his elbow, and to be giving him continually every possible proof of your gratitude, of your devoted and even slavish attachment to his person. —*Segneri.*

XXXI. *PRECIOUS TO THEM THAT BELIEVE.*

(963.) To see Jesus clearly with the eye of faith, is to see the deep opening a way from Egypt's to freedom's shore; is to see the water gush, full and sparkling from the desert rock; is to see the serpent gleaming on its pole over a dying camp; is to see the life-boat coming when our bark is thumping on the bank, or ground on rocks by foaming breakers; is to see a pardon when the noose is round our neck, and our foot is on the drop. No sight in the wide world like Jesus Christ, with forgiveness on His lips, and a crown in His blessed hand! This is worth labouring for; praying for; living for; suffering for; dying for. You remember how the prophet's servant climbed the steeps of Carmel. Three years, and never cloud had dappled the burning sky—three long years, and never a dewdrop had glistened on the grass, or wet the lips of a dying flower; but the cloud came at last. No bigger than a man's hand, it rose from the sea; it spread; and as he saw the first lightnings flash, and heard the first thunders roll, how did he forget all his toils! and would have climbed the hill, not seven, but seventy times seven times, to hail that welcome sight!

It is so with sinners so soon as their eyes are gladdened with a believing sight of Christ; when they have got Christ; and with Him peace. Be it that you have to climb the hill of prayer, not seven, but seven thousand times, such a sight shall more than reward all your toil. —*Guthrie.*

XXXII. *THE EVER FAITHFUL FRIEND.*

(964.) Extremity distinguisheth friends. Worldly pleasures, like physicians, give us over, when once we lie a dying; and yet the deathbed had most need of comforts; Christ Jesus standeth by His in the pangs of death, and after death at the bar of judgment; not leaving them either in their bed or grave. I will use them, therefore, to my best advantage; not trust them. But for Thee, O my Lord, which in mercy and truth canst not fail me, whom I have found ever faithful and present in all extremities, kill me, yet will I trust in Thee!

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

XXXIII. *HOW WE CAN SERVE HIM.*

(965.) Dear brethren, do you know that you could not do anything that would touch my heart so much as that which you should do to my child? You might put a fortune upon my shoulders and I should be grateful; but he who helps my child to begin his life aright burdens me with gratitude a thousand times more. If my child were in peril, and you should succour him in a distant city, and the tidings should come home to me, I could not find words to thank you for what you did for him. I should be grateful if you did it for me, but not so much as if you did it for my child, because my child is himself and myself too; and my feelings for him are more than my feelings for myself. What you do for my child is the deepest and truest service that you can render me. And how do you think it is in the bosom of your God and your Saviour? If you take up in your arms the despoiled, and the outcast, and the lost; if you wash them in your tears; if you are to them, in your small way, what Christ has been to you; if you call them, and bring them back again from wrong courses; and if you are permitted to stand in His presence in the last day, and say to Him, "Here

am I, and these," what will be the joy which you shall experience? What will be that gladness, what will be that love, which will roll forth from the soul of Jesus to any one of you that watches with Him on earth, and watches with Him in behalf of His little ones? —*Beecher.*

XXXIV. *HIS EYE OUR STIMULUS.*

(966.) There is a touching fact related in a history of a Highland chief, of the noble house of M'Gregor, who fell wounded by two balls at the battle of Prestonpans. Seeing their chief fall, the clan wavered, and gave the enemy an advantage. The old chieftain, beholding the effect of his disaster, raised himself up on his elbow, while the blood gushed in streams from his wounds, and cried aloud, "I am not dead, my children; I am looking at you to see you do your duty." These words revived the sinking courage of his brave Highlanders. There was a charm in the fact that they still fought under the eye of their chief. It roused them to put forth their mightiest energies, and they did all that human strength could do to turn and stem the dreadful tide of battle.

And is there not a charm to you, O believer, in the fact that you contend in the battle-field of life under the eye of your Saviour? Wherever you are, however you are oppressed by foes, however exhausted by the stern strife with evil, the eye of Christ is fixed most lovingly upon you.

—*D. Wise.*

XXXV. *THE POWER OF HIS REPROOF.*

(967.) It is innocence which enables eloquence to reprove with power; and guilt attacked flies before the face of him who has none. And therefore, as every rebuke of vice comes, or should come from the preacher's mouth, like a dart or arrow thrown by some mighty hand, which does execution proportionally to the force or impulse it received from that which threw it; so our Saviour's matchless virtue, free from the least tincture of anything immoral, armed every one of His reproofs with a piercing edge, and an irresistible force; so that truth, in that respect, never came naked out of His mouth, but either clothed with thunder, or wrapped up in all the powers of persuasion; still His person animated and gave life and vigour to His expression; all His commands being but the transcript of His own life, and His sermons a living paraphrase upon His practice.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

XXXVI. *CHRIST AND THE SOUL.*

1. He is the Rest and Stay of the Soul.

(968.) There is no agent that takes any rest or contentment but in its proper object. If a man had all the musical raptures and melodious harmony in the whole world before him, he could not hear it with his eyes, because it is the proper object of the ear: if never so triumphant shows or courtly masks, he could not see them with his ears, because they are the proper object of the eye. So it is with the soul of man. If it were possible that all the treasures, pleasures, honours, preferments, and delights which the world doth affect were presented and tendered to the soul, yet would they not afford unto it any true satisfaction, because they be not the proper object and centre of the soul. It is the Lord only, or as a good martyr said once, "None but Christ—none but Christ can compass the soul about with true content and comfort."

—*Evans.*

(969.) The needle's point in the seaman's compass never stands still, but quivers and shakes till it comes right against the North Pole. The wise men of the East never stood still till they were right against the star which appeared unto them, and the star itself never stood still till it came right against that other Star which shined more brightly in the manger than the sun did in the firmament; and Noah's dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot all the while she was fluttering over the flood, till she returned to the ark with an olive branch in her mouth. So the heart of every true Christian can find no rest till Christ put forth His hand and receive her to Himself. —*Clark*, 1599–1682.

(970.) The hearts of believers are like the needle troubled by the loadstone, which cannot rest until it comes to the point whereunto, by a secret virtue, it is directed: for being once touched by the love of Christ, receiving therein an impression of sweet ineffable virtue, they will ever be in motion and restless until they come unto Him, and behold His glory. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(971.) There are some plants which grow right up, erect, in their own sturdy self-sufficiency; and there are some feeble ones which take hold with their hands, and clasp and climb. The soul of man is like these last. Even in his best estate he was not meant to grow insulated and stand alone. He is not strong enough for that. He has not within himself resources sufficient to fill himself. He is not fit to be his own all-in-all. The make of his mind is an outgoing, exploring, petitionary make. The soul of man is a clasping, clinging soul, seeking to something over which it can spread itself, and by means of which it can support itself. And just as, in a neglected garden, you may see the poor creepers making shift to sustain themselves as best they can; one convolvulus twisting round another, and both draggling on the ground; a clematis leaning on the door, which will by and by open and let the whole mass fall down; a vine or a passion-flower wreathing round a prop which all the while chafes and cuts it; so in this fallen world it is mournful to see the efforts which human souls are making to get some sufficient object to lean upon and twine around. One clasps a glittering prop, and it scathes him. The love of money blasts his soul, and it hangs round its self-chosen stay a blighted, withered thing. Another spreads himself more amply over a broad surface of creature-comfort, a snug dwelling, a well-furnished library, and a pleasant neighbourhood, with the command of everything which heart can wish or fortune buy; but death opens the door, and, with nothing but vacancy to lean upon, he falls over on the other side a helpless and dejected being. And a still greater number, groping about along the ground, cleave to one another, and intertwine their tendrils mutually, and by forming friendships and congenial intimacies and close relations, try to satisfy their leaning, loving nature in this way. But it answers little in the end. The make of man's soul is upward, and one climber cannot lift another off the ground. And the growth of man's soul is luxuriant, and that

growth must be stifled, checked, and scanty, if he have no larger space over which to diffuse his aspirations, his affections, and his efforts, than the surface of a fellow-creature's soul. But, weedy as this world-garden is, the Tree of Life still grows in the midst of it, erect in His own omnipotent self-sufficiency, and inviting every weary, straggling soul to lay hold of His everlasting strength, and expatiate upwards along the infinite ramifications of His endless excellences and all-inviting love.

God has formed the soul of man of a leaning, dependent make; and for the healthy growth and joyful development of that soul it is essential that he should have some object far higher and nobler than himself to dispread his desires and delights upon. That object is revealed in the Gospel. That object is Immanuel. His divinity is the Almighty prop, able to sustain the adhering soul so that it shall never perish nor come into condemnation; the omnipotent support which bears the clinging spirit loftily and securely, so that the whirling temptations which vex it cannot rend it from the Tree of Life, and that the muddy plash, which soils and beats into the earth its sprawling neighbours, cannot tarnish the verdant serenity and limpid glories of its flowering head. And just as His Divine strength is the omnipotent prop of the adhering soul, so His Divine resources and His human sympathy make Him the all-sufficient object over which each emotion and each desire of regenerate humanity may boundlessly diffuse itself. And however delicate your feelings, however eager your affections, and however multitudinous the necessities of your intricate nature, there is that in this heavenly Friend which meets them every one. There are in His unimaginable compassions, and in His benignant fellow-feelings, holds sufficient for every craving tendril and eager clasper of the human heart to fix upon and wreathe around.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

2. How He is appropriated by the soul.

(972.) My conception of Christ is, that He is *mine:* not mine in any sense which appropriates Him to me alone; but mine as really and truly as though I were the only human being in the universe. My father was absolutely mine, although my next younger brother could say the same thing, and though every brother and sister could say the same thing. I had the whole of him, and each of my brothers and sisters had the whole of him. And I have the whole of my God. The God of all the heaven, and the God of the whole earth, and of time, and of physical law and its sequence, and of all invisible laws and their sequences—He is my God. —*Beecher.*

3. How He dwells in the soul.

(973.) This matter is likened, in the Bible, to hospitality. "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." God comes to men's souls; He comes to the soul-house of men; He enters there; He holds communion with them. It is as if a benefactor entered into a dwelling to bring joy, treasure, relief —whatever gift he might please to bestow. Christ comes to me, transforming all that is visible and all that is invisible in me. I do not believe that God is a person who sits in one place as a man's body does. I stand here in my body; but that is not me. My thoughts are running quickly to and fro. They stretch from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. I am where my thoughts are, and where my affections are. I am conscious that my inner manhood spreads abroad, and is already superior to time and space. And my God is not a person in such a sense that He is fixed. Everywhere the affluent mind of God pervades the universe. He enters into my mind. He touches the springs of life and being in me. And it is the quality of the Divine indwelling to develop in men their superior nature—not their animal; to give authority and power to their faculties—love, and hope, and faith, and conscience, and the moral sense; to set them free from the dominion of the appetites and passions. I believe there is such a thing as an indwelling God. In other words, I believe there is such a thing as the direct sympathetic action of the Divine mind on certain parts of our mind.

Let a little child be in the room with a slate making figures, and let that child, if it be musically inclined, hear the mother sing in a low tone, and its thoughts begin to sing the tune that the mother is singing,—involuntarily. Let the child sit musing, and let the mother begin to tell some interesting story, and she does not need to say to the child, "Now, listen!" It will listen in spite of itself. If you sigh in the presence of another man, he will be likely to sigh too. If you sing, he will feel a desire to sing. If you reason, he will think reason. If you laugh, he will smile. If you cry, the shadow falls on him. You reflect your mood on those who are round about you. And God's mind has power upon the minds of those who are in communion with Him. If the heart be open, and the moral nature be sensitive, God acts upon the thought and feeling, so that you are guided by Him. And I fain would believe that there is a loving Christ who dwells in me, and takes care of all the conditions that affect me, and fills me with a Divine stimulus and influence.

—*Beecher.*

4. How He manifests Himself to the soul.

(974.) Since God is everywhere, in what sacred and peculiar sense is He present to the believing heart? "Lord, how is it that Thou dost manifest Thyself to us, as Thou dost not unto the world?" The principle on which He does so is illustrated by some of the common facts of life. A man is present to his friend, as he is not to a stranger, though he may be at the same moment speaking to both. The light which floods the landscape with a deluge of beauty is present to him who sees it, as it is not to the blind man walking at his side. Music, though it may ripple round the deafened ear, is only present to him who hears it. The discourse of the naturalist on his experiments, of the scholar on his books, of the mathematician who is talking with raptures on the beauties of a theorem, will bring things into the presence of initiated listeners, which are still remote from the minds of those in the very same company who have no sympathy with the theme. So, "two women may be grinding at a mill;" "two men may be in the field;" one a believer, the other an unbeliever; and although the Great Spirit is near to them both, there is a sense in which He is present to the one as He is not to the other; for, in the case of the believer, the causes of estrangement have been taken away, a new relation exists, a new life has been born

and God is present as a Friend, whose love has been accepted, and whose conversation is understood with all the intelligence of a kindred nature.

—*Stanford.*

(975.) I have received a letter from a lady who some time ago came to me with reference to her religious feelings. She writes of the benefit that she has derived, and the great happiness that she has experienced; and then she propounds the question: "How shall I be able to continue the consciousness of Christ's presence with me?" She avers that at times she has had great joy, and that she has now an abiding faith, which is the fountain of life to her; and she asks: "How shall the intermittent periods be shortened? How shall I have a continued sense of the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

As our Master promised that He and His Father would come to His disciples, and abide with them, this inquiry is a legitimate one; but the first step toward a practical solution of it is, to inquire how far one may live under the dominion of any feeling—for I bear in mind that our senses have no relation to this matter. It is a question of the exercise of our reason and imagination—such an exercise of them as is styled, in the Word of God, *faith*, or the realisation of an invisible presence or truth. And the question arises, first, How far is it possible for the human mind to live in that state continuously? When it is said that a person is always conscious of the presence of Christ, what is the meaning, the scope, and the power of that word *always?* Does it mean every hour? Does it mean every half-hour? Does it mean every quarter of an hour? Does it mean every period of five minutes? Does it mean every minute? Does it mean every second? Manifestly not.

Let us take some of the most undoubted experiences. We will take, for instance, the experience of a mother's love for her child, which I suppose is as vivid and continuous as any affection. Would you say that there is not a moment of the day in which the mother does not think of the child? It may be that, when it is an infant in her hands, its physical wants may demand her attention every moment: but let the child be two or three years old, and competent to run hither and thither, and take some care of itself, and may there not be times when the mother, especially if it devolves upon her to do the work of the household, will be thinking of how to provide for the child its food or its raiment, and of other family duties? Is not maternal love, which is the most nearly continuous of any feeling, an intermittent feeling? Is it not one that comes and goes? Is it not one that, under ordinary circumstances, passes out of the mind and comes back again many and many a time in a single day, although the object of it is present all the time?

There was formerly, at the lower end of New York City, looking out on the Bay, a revolving light; and I used to stand on Brooklyn Heights and watch it, to see the different colours come and go. There was first a red light; then that would go away, and a white light would appear; and then that would pass out of sight, and a dimmer side would come round.

It is very much so with a mother's affection. And there is no feeling in the world that ever was continuous, or that ever will be, unless the person who has it is insane. Physicians will tell you that when your child has any feeling on which its mind dwells continually, it is in a morbid condition. Prolonged feeling is a sign of mania. The law of healthful feeling is one that demands change. The mind is multiform. It is subject to many feelings. One comes, and subsides; then a third comes and takes its place, and subsides; and so on. Thus feelings act and intermit. And as this is the case in our daily experience of affection towards those that are with us and can minister the knowledge of their presence through our senses; so, much more is it the case with our daily experience of affection toward any being that is invisible. As, where a child or a dear friend is in a distant land, there may be many hours, and even days, when that child or friend is absent from your apprehension; so, much more, where our approach to God, or Christ, or the invisible Spirit, is rather through the mediation of duties and acts than by direct thought, the Divine Being is likely to be absent from our thought.

My first reply, then, to the question, "How shall I maintain the conscious presence of Christ with me all the time?" is this: There is no such thing, literally, as that. You may maintain such a sense of Christ as shall diffuse an influence through the heart all day long, acting as the most vivid earthly affections do; but the most vivid earthly affections, according to the law of the mind, are alternative, and not unintermitting. —*Beecher.*

XXXVII. *THE COMPLETENESS OF HIS LIFE.*

(976.) How few can say at death that they have finished their work? Indeed, no one in human nature ever could say that but Jesus. The emblem of every life may well be, in one aspect of it at least, a broken pillar. The historian dies leaving a volume half ready for the press; the novelist lays down the pen in the midst of his tale; the statesman quits the senate with his work only half done. Thus each man's life is a fragment, and he is cut off like a bird shot in the middle of its flight, or a lark brought down in the middle of its song. But Christ's work was all done. Everything He had planned He had performed. He had filled fully the whole programme which He had made out for Himself at the beginning, and having left nothing unperformed, He yielded up the ghost.

XXXVIII. *HIS SUPERIORITY TO ALL OTHER TEACHERS.*

(977.) Go to your natural religion. Lay before her Mahomet and his disciples arrayed in armour and in blood, riding in triumph over the thousands and tens of thousands who fell by his victorious sword. Show her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirements. Show her the prophet's chambers, his concubines and wives. Let her see his adultery, and hear him allege revelation and his Divine commission to justify his lust and oppression. When she is tired with this prospect, then show her the blessed Jesus *humble and meek*, doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and the perverse. Let her see Him in His most retired privacies; let her follow Him to the Mount, and hear His devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to His table

to view His poor fare and hear His heavenly discourse. Let her see Him injured, but not provoked. Let her attend Him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which He endureth the scoffs and reproaches of His enemies. Lead her to His cross, and let her view Him in the agony of death, and hear His last prayer for His persecutors, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!* When natural religion has viewed both, ask, "Which is the prophet of God?" But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene through the eye of the centurion who attended at the cross; by him she spake and said, "*Truly this man was the Son of God.*" —*Sherlock*, 1641–1707.

(978.) Jesus of Nazareth is worthy to be the perpetual text of all preaching, the perpetual theme of all religionists, and the perpetual object of devout studentship. The same can be said of no other man that ever lived, no matter what was the extent of his genius, the order of his talents, or the fashion of their exercise. Plato is not the constant theme of philosophy, for there has been and are other philosophers that divide with him the honours. Aristotle is not the sole representative of logic, for there have been and are logicians that stand his peer. Napoleon does not monopolise the admiration of those that study the art of war, for there have been, and perhaps there are now, other military chieftains whose achievements are of so high an order that they command the admiration of all military men. And so in whatever sphere we find the great representative men of the world, we find that no one has been or is great enough to monopolise opinion and command universal homage. Whether you look at philosophy, poetry, music, science, art, or religion, you find that however great any actor has been, there have been other actors, both before and after, that divided fame with him, and had a common share in the applause and the remembrance of men. Only in respect to Jesus of Nazareth can it be said that one man had all, and was all, that one in his order could have and be. As a religionist, as a religious teacher,—teaching in the twofold method of example and instruction both,—Jesus was so opulent in gifts, so remarkable in manner and method, so magnificent in every class of equipment demanded by His mission, that He represented and represents all there was and all there is to be represented to the devout attention of mankind.

As the sun in summer fills the whole realm of Nature, flooding the world from pole to pole with luminance, so He filled the realm in which He moved, so that between its either pole there was at no point lack of radiance. And this is admitted by all. The world—or that portion of it that has knowledge of Him—whose thought is intelligent enough to apprehend Him, whose every heart is pure enough and sensitive enough to appreciate Him, gives by its universal suffrage pre-eminence to His name. There were wise men before He was born; and His highest eulogy is found in the fact that they were only wise enough to have visions and dreams of His coming. They were as a hill whose fame in the neighbourhood is, that from its top the residents of the hamlet can see the earliest signs of the morning. The world acknowledges their fame because it perceives that from the summit of their teaching it was enabled to catch the first glimpse of His rising. The fame of the old prophets and seers, of the far-seeing men of the olden time, is that they foretold His advent. There have been wise men since He lived on the earth; but their wisdom is acknowledged, not in the fact that they were wise enough to add anything to His teaching, but wise in apprehending the meaning of His teaching; apt in its explanation and powerful in its enforcement. The great men of the Church to-day are great because they can do this. They are great because they can catch the line of His thought, explain it, enforce it. And in this only are they great. Without Him they could do nothing; without Him they would be nothing. They are reflectors—polished surfaces—placed at such an angle that they can take of the beams poured down upon them from the great luminary over their heads, and send, in showers and glances, the radiance thus borrowed horizontally over the world. —*Murray.*

XXXIX. *THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPHS OF HIS KINGDOM.*

(979.) The Scriptures give us to expect that the earth itself, as well as its redeemed inhabitants, shall at a future period be purified, and reunited to the whole empire of God. We are taught to pray, and consequently to hope, that, when "the kingdom of God" shall universally prevail, "His will shall be done on earth as it is now in heaven;" but if so, earth itself must become, as it were, a part of heaven.

That we may form a clear and comprehensive view of our Lord's words, and of this part of the subject, be it observed that the Scriptures sometimes distinguish between the kingdom of God and that of Christ. Though the object of both be the triumph of truth and righteousness, yet the mode of administration is different. The one is natural, the other delegated: the latter is in subserviency to the former, and shall be finally succeeded by it. Christ is represented as acting in our world by delegation: as if a king had commissioned his son to go and reduce a certain rebellious province, and restore it to his dominion. The period allotted for this work extends from the time of the revelation of the promised seed to the day of judgment. The operations are progressive. If it had seemed good in His sight, He could have overturned the power of Satan in a short period; but His wisdom saw fit to accomplish it by degrees. Like the commander of an invading army, He first takes possession of one post, then of another, then of a third, and so on, till by and by the whole country falls into His hands. And as the progress of a conqueror would be more rapid after a few of the strongest fortresses had surrendered (inasmuch as things would then approach fast to a crisis, to a breaking up, as it were, of the powers of the enemy), so it has been with the kingdom of Christ, and such will be its progress before the end of time. In the early ages of the world but little was done. At one time true religion appears to have existed only in a few families. Afterwards it assumed a national appearance. After this it was addressed to all nations. And before the close of time all nations shall be subjected to the obedience of Christ. This shall be the "breaking up" of Satan's empire. Now, as on the conquest of a rebellious province, the delegated authority of the conqueror would cease, and the natural government of the empire resume its original form, so Christ is represented as "deliver-

ing up the kingdom to His Father, that God may be all in all." This is the ultimatum of the Messiah's kingdom; and this appears to be the ultimate object for which He taught His disciples to pray: but as the final end involves the preceding gradations which lead on to its accomplishment, in directing them to pray for the coming of God's kingdom, He directed them to pray for the present prevalence of His own.

As on the conquest of a rebellious province some would be pardoned, and others punished; as every vestige of rebellion would be effaced, and law, peace, and order flow in their ancient channels; such a period might with propriety be termed "a restitution of all things." Such will be the event of the last judgment, which is described as the concluding exercise of the delegated authority of Christ.

And as on the conquest of a rebellious province, and the restitution of peace and order, that province, instead of being any longer separate from the rest of the empire, would become a component part of it, and the king's will would be done in it as it had been done without interruption in the loyal part of his territories; such is the representation given with respect to our world, and the holy parts of God's dominions. A period will arrive when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is now done in heaven. This, however, will never be the case while any vestige of moral evil remains. It must be after the general conflagration; which, though it will destroy every kind of evil, root and branch, that now prevails upon the face of the earth, and will terminate the generations of Adam, who have possessed it, yet will not so destroy the earth itself but that it shall survive its fiery trial, and, as I apprehend, become the everlasting abode of righteousness—a part of the holy empire of God. This was to be the mark on which the disciples were to keep their eye in all their prayers: but as, in desiring a perfect conformity to Christ in their own souls, they would necessarily desire the present progress of purity in the use of all the appointed means; so in praying that God's will might be perfectly done on earth, even as it is done in heaven, they would pray for the progressive prevalence of righteousness in the world, as that by which it should be accomplished.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

XL. *HIS SECOND COMING.*

(980.) Meditate of Christ's coming to judgment. Surely thou wilt not easily sleep while this trumpet, that shall call all mankind to judgment, shall sound in thy ear. The reason why men sleep so soundly in security is, because they either do not believe this, or at least do not think of it seriously, so as to expect it. The servant that looks for his master will be loth to be found in bed when he comes; no, he sits up to open the door for him when he knocks. Christ hath told us He will come, but not when, that we might never put off our clothes, or put out the candle; "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour the Lord doth come."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1677.

(981.) I have thought on it many a time, as a small emblem of that day, when I have seen a prevailing army drawing towards the towns and castles of the enemy. Oh! with what glad hearts do all the poor prisoners within hear the news and behold their approach! How do they run up to their prison windows, and thence behold their friends with joy! How glad are they at the roaring report of that cannon which is the enemy's terror! How do they clap each other on the back, and cry, "Deliverance! deliverance!" While, in the meantime, the late insulting, scorning, cruel enemies begin to speak them fair, and beg their favour; but all in vain, for they are not at the disposal of prisoners, but of the general. Their fair usage may make their conditions somewhat the more easy, but yet they are used as enemies still.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(982.) This great event is constantly represented in the New Testament as near, and the view is natural and true. Never does the meeting with a beloved friend come so close to us as when we have just parted from him. Love makes the tears of farewells sparkle into welcomes; and if we could only retain the same impression of Christ's loss, His return would be as nigh. It is moreover in the New Testament the great event which towers above every other. The heaven that gives back Christ gives back all we have loved and lost, solves all doubts, and ends all sorrows. His coming looks in upon the whole life of His Church, as a lofty mountain peak looks in upon every little valley and sequestered home around its base, and belongs to them all alike. Every generation lies under the shadow of it, for whatever is transcendently great is constantly near, and in moments of high conviction it absorbs petty interests and annihilates intervals. —*Ker.*

XLI. *HIS GLORY.*

1. It is now inconceivable by us.

(983.) Any view of Christ which the greatest preacher in the highest flights of genius ever set before his audience, must be feeble compared with the reality. Paint and canvas cannot give the hues of a rainbow, or the beams of the sun—unless by representations so poor as in many instances to excite contempt, and in all astonishment, that any artist could attempt what so far exceeds the powers of cold, dull paint. No more can words describe the Saviour's glory. Nay, what is the most glowing and ecstatic view that the highest faith of a soul, hovering on the borders of another world, ever obtained of Christ, compared to the reality? It is like the sun changed by a frosty fog-bank into a dull, red, copper ball—shorn of the splendour that no mortal's eyes can look on. —*Guthrie.*

2. The future disclosures of it that await us.

(984.) We know from the testimony and observation of multitudes, that there are those who, by faith, walk in a more intimate realisation of the Lord Jesus Christ in them than they do by sight of the bodily forms round about them.

Nevertheless, there is to be a disclosure far above this, and far more glorious than this. We are to see Christ *as He is*. That intimates that we see Him now as we imagine Him to be. We see Him now by our illustrations and figures, by our analogies and hints; but the day is coming when we shall see Him as He is. All these little sketches will be filled up and outmeasured. The dim points of light which give glory now will be like twinkling stars,

and the thing itself will be like the sun in the morning. The whole heaven will be full of Christ —beautiful as He is, and fruitful as He is, in all joy and peace. There is to be a disclosure, compared with which the disclosures of this world will be as twilight compared to mid-day. —*Beecher.*

XLII. *HIS DELIVERANCE OF THE KINGDOM TO THE FATHER.*

(985.) No one ever seems to have had so grand and magnificent a sense of the final outcome of God's moral government over this world as the Apostle Paul. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Who can give an interpretation of that? He that dare, let him do it; but not I. I should as soon think of setting a mouse at surveying the chain of the Andes, and making a typographical report, as to take this magnificent vision of the consummation of God's mediatorial government in the universe, including this world, and what others we know not, and undertake, without experience, and without anything else but the blazonry of these grand figures, to give any precise idea of what it was—only this: that after a campaign, magnificently planned and nobly conducted, the general comes back to his king, and having defeated everything in the field, and having subdued all the provinces, and holding in his hands the keys of the cities, lays them at his king's feet, and then takes his place near by his seat. That is the figure. So, when the vast work of God on earth and in heaven shall have been done, in the far and grand future, Christ shall come back, and shall lay before God the tokens of universal victory, and God shall be all and in all. Whether it shall be by the resumption of the Son, or whether by some coequality, or some other steps, no man knows, and no man need try to know. Sufficient it is, that it shall be a scene of unequalled grandeur and glory.
—*Beecher.*

CHRISTIAN, THE.

I. *CAN A MAN KNOW THAT HE IS A CHRISTIAN?* *

(986.) A good man may be in such a temptation, that he shall not be able to see the lifting up of his own hand in prayer. Sometimes it is so with him, that he cannot read his own graces, nor see them. Though the fish lie playing upon the water, and you may see them in a fair sunshine, yet in a storm, or night, ye see them not, though they be in the pond or river still. So here—Though when the light of God's countenance doth shine upon the soul, he is then able to see his own graces; yet if it be a storm, or the night of temptation, he cannot see them—Why? not because they are not in his heart and life as before, but because he is in the dark. —*Bridges*, 1600–1670.

(987.) The evidences of a man's Christianity (if he *is* a Christian) are not so difficult and serious a matter as men think. Why, any one who has sense sufficient to judge whether he is a good citizen or not, or whether he is the affectionate son of his own parents, can tell whether he is a child of God. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." "Ah!" you sigh, "but I don't always keep them." Well, ask that little child how he knows that he loves his parents; he will answer you, "Because I love to do what they want me to do." "Why, my dear child, you are always doing what they *don't* want you to do. You can't prove your love to them by that rule." The poor child hangs its head, and says, "I don't know as I can." He cannot answer you. You ask again, "My child, how do you *know* that you love your parents?" "Why, why I *do* love to please them better than anything else in the world." "Ah! but I have just shown you that you do not always try to please them; how can you say that *this* is your proof of love to them?" The child is silenced; but in his little heart he knows that in spite of his disobedience he does desire to do his parents' will; and that he *does* love them, whether he perfectly obeys them or not. He thinks, perhaps, "I am a poor child, a hard child to manage; I give them a great deal of trouble, but I love them; I am their own child after all. They would never give me up; and nothing on earth could take me from them."

Faith is the life of a child, and that is why the Saviour declares, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." When, therefore, you examine yourself by the rule of obedience, and find that you are not perfect there, see if it is your greatest desire to honour Christ by keeping His commandments, and if you are trying to do so, and if it is the grief and pain of your life that you fail as you do. If you wish, more than anything else, to be His, if you yearn to have Him for your Friend, if you feel that *you must and will belong to Him or to nobody*, you need no more remarkable "witness." If you were not His before, you are so now; so enjoy Him afresh—*'tis sweet making love again.* —*Beecher.*

(988.) Suppose one of the sheep in a fold were to go to the shepherd, and say, "I think I'm your sheep, because you get six pounds of wool off me;" and another should say, "And I think I'm your sheep, because you get four pounds of wool from me;" and a third, "I hope I am your sheep, but I don't know, for you only get three pounds of wool from me; and sometimes it is but two." Finally, suppose one poor scraggy fellow comes who don't know whether he is a sheep or a goat, and makes his complaint; the shepherd would say, "I know who are the best sheep, and who are the worst. I wish you could all give me ten pounds of wool; but whether you give me ten pounds or one, you are all mine. I bought you, and paid for you, and you are all in my fold, and you every one belong to me." It is not how much a sheep brings his owner which proves him his. The proof that the sheep belongs to the shepherd is, that the shepherd bought him and takes care of him.
—*Beecher.*

* See *Adoption, Assurance.*

(989.) He that is endeavouring to keep the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has an intelligent understanding of what those commandments are, is a Christian.

What makes a man a husbandman? A man buys a piece of ground in the country. It is rocky, and a great deal given to weeds, eminently fertile in Canada thistles. There is on it an old run-down barn full of rats and mice, and all sorts of vermin; and a dilapidated, tenantless house. The man goes on to his place, and lives in this miserable house, and has the rheumatism and all manner of complaints, and never ploughs a furrow, nor sows a seed, nor eradicates a weed. He crawls out of his rickety, leaky shanty every morning, and walks round, and looks over his rocky, thorny, thistley farm, that is run down and good for nothing, and brings forth only vicious weeds; and he says, "I am a husbandman." I say that he is not. He owns twenty acres of dirt, and rocks, and weeds, but he is no husbandman.

Take another man. He has made a poor selection of land. He has a cold, clayey soil, full of springs, and poorly drained. As it slopes to the north, the sun does not strike it till the latest part of the day. He plants a few things, and works hard to cultivate them, but they do not come to much. Every spring he puts in some potatoes, but he gets out only about as many as he puts in. He raises a little grass and grain, but it takes all his time to raise a little. He has no capital, and he makes no headway. And yet, I declare that that man is a husbandman. He is a very poor one, to be sure; but he is trying to be a good one. According to the soil he has, and the strength he has, he does very well. He has but one talent, and the Lord will require of him only according to that one talent.

Another man has a rather better slope to the south, and his soil is warm in spots, though in other spots it is cold. It is rocky, and on the whole, rather poor. There is a patch of four or five acres that he bestows his labour upon. This patch is the garden of the farm, and is kept in a very good condition. But the rest of the land is uncultivated. His fences are neglected, and he loses some of his crops on account of his negligence. Nevertheless there are spots on his farm that produce well. He is therefore a better husbandman than the first or second man: and yet, he is a very imperfect one. He cultivates only a portion of his land. He does not subdue it all, and see that it is secured from waste.

Another man has a piece of ground very much like that of the man last mentioned; but he has more ingenuity, he is more thorough, and he raises more crops. The annual product of his farm is twice as great. He is a better husbandman.

Another man is in advance of all these. He is a very good farmer. He is getting rich. His soil is excellent, he tills it well, and he has heavy crops.

Another man is fairly fat. He literally rolls in abundance. He tickles the ground, and it laughs, and yields bountifully. He does not know where to put his crops. He is a jolly old farmer. He has enough to take care of himself, and all that depend upon him. His bounty overflows, and all his labours are blessed by it. He is more a husbandman than all the rest that I have named.

And yet the feeble, broken-down man, who really tries to raise a crop, but cannot on account of his poverty and weakness, is a husbandman, although he is a very poor one.

Now I take it that this figure of husbandry, which is the Lord's figure, may be fitly applied to Christians.

That man who begins life under disadvantages of disposition and of early training can make a certain fight. It will be a feeble fight; but it will be a fight. He meets with discouragements on every hand, and he sees others going ahead of him, and he is conscious of his imperfections and failures, and he says, "I am a poor Christian, I am making but little headway; but I am making a fight, though it is a feeble fight." He is making a very feeble fight; and yet, very likely he will stand in the last day higher than many of you who make a better one. The Lord will say, "It is required of him according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not."

Another man has a better disposition, and had a better early training. Though he has some infelicities of disposition and some bad habits, yet some of the graces were natural to him. He cultivates parts of his disposition, and other parts he neglects. On the whole, he is in the Lord's husbandry. He is better than the other man, but is not very good.

Another man has his whole nature broken up, and under some sort of cultivation. Every part of it is bearing harvests—is yielding spiritual fruit to the glory of God. He is a better Christian, but he is no more really a Christian than that man who is endeavouring under less favourable circumstances to live Christianly.

So to some men you may say, almost from their birth, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." It takes but a little—only a step, as it were—to bring them into the holy precincts. Others have to travel a great while before they get into the Celestial City. Much depends upon the differences of organisations and variations of condition. The thing which we are to look at, therefore, in ourselves, is not so much "Am I or am I not a Christian?" as it is, "Being a Christian, and endeavouring to do the will of God, at what point am I standing? Am I really attempting to subdue my whole nature to the law of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be as sweet, as meek, as gentle, and as fruit-bearing in love as my Master, and to be one with Him?" —*Beecher.*

II. *HIS CALLING.*

All Christians are called, 1. To be saints.

(990.) We are apt to form mistaken notions of God's saints. We are apt to think of them as if they were beings of a different order from ourselves, raised above the level of human infirmity. And from this mistaken notion flows great practical mischief. Not to speak of the manifold evils of saint worship, which may be supposed to have passed away at the Reformation (though the tendency to it is always alive in the human heart), a wrong estimate of saintliness discourages us for the pursuit of it, as seeming to put it entirely out of our reach.

This wrong estimate comes chiefly from our considering them as creatures of the past, not mixed up with the affairs and troubles of life. Whatever we look at from a distance is beautiful by the per-

spective. It is so in bodily sight. A country which was dull, tame, or harsh, when it lay immediately around us, borrows soft and mellow tints from the atmosphere as we recede from it; the blue distance conceals its plain features. It is so with the mental retrospect, which we call memory. Memory has a notorious trick of dropping or smoothing over disagreeables. The days of our childhood, which had their rubs, and their tears, and their faults, like all other days, seem to us always beautiful and innocent in virtue of this trick of memory. The same law of the mind operates to throw round the saints a false and an imaginary lustre. We imagine that no man is or can be a saint who is mixed up in the daily intercourse of society, who is fighting hand to hand with us in the battle of life. Why not? What one sound reason can be assigned why there should not be nowadays men as zealous, as devoted, as simple-minded as the Apostles and saints of the primitive Church?
—*Goulburn.*

2. To serve God.

(991.) What is a servant? Is he one who spends his existence in raptures, in reveries, or in the contemplation of his own emotional life? Is he one who wastes all his days in mere sorrow over his master's frowns, or mere joy at the thought of his master's smiles? Is he the steward who leaves his accounts in confusion, the porter who forsakes his watch, or the workman who sits down in the midst of his unfinished work to indulge in dreamy meditation on his own ecstacies or agonies or apathies? Such, with some, seems to be the perfect standard of a Christian; but is it the true ideal of a servant? Judged by the laws of common sense, service is a practical, not a sentimental thing; it consists in *doing*, not in *feeling;* and it is a solemn thought for us all, especially for those who have been taught that the mere experience of happy or sorrowful feeling is the sum of all religion—that none are seen in the courts of heaven but servants—that is, those who are engaged in obedient activity. There, as the Lord's Prayer has taught us, the will of God is done. His servants do it perfectly, because they love Him perfectly. It is in the very essence of love to labour. It never can be still, never can be useless, never can contain itself, never can spare itself, never cease to spend itself for the object to which it is devoted. —*Stanford.*

3. To adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

(992.) Believers are earnestly enjoined in Scripture to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour by a walk and conversation becoming the Gospel. But how? it may be asked. There are some things so perfect in themselves that they are injured, not improved, by any touch of man. Who can give a purer whiteness to the lily, or gild the burnished gold, or make more lustrous the sparkling diamond? We cannot improve upon nature; we cannot adorn it in the sense of making it more perfect; but we can explain it, we can make use of it for spiritual imagery, we can exhibit it in new lights, and display it in a thousand ways before unknown; so that in the exquisite setting of the poet's verse, it may shine with even more than its native charm. And in the same way we can deal with the doctrine of God our Saviour. We cannot improve the Gospel of Christ. It is all perfect—all complete—wanting nothing. God said again and again regarding Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" and He Himself, looking back from the cross upon the whole course of His obedience and suffering, said with His dying breath, "It is finished;" indicating not merely the completion of His work, but also its perfection. It is so exquisitely fair and proportioned, that it stands in need of no embellishment; it is marred and destroyed in its nature and effect by any additions that man may make to it. But though we cannot improve the doctrine of our Saviour, we can make its power upon our own heart and life visible; we can explain and manifest it to others with such illustration and enforcement as may be in our power; and crown it with the history of what by it God has done for our soul. We are to clothe the spiritual life of the Gospel—the precepts, the examples, the atoning death, the justifying righteousness of Christ, with an outward conduct becoming its purity and dignity. We are to embody the spiritualities of the unseen life in forms of daily life and conversation, such as will worthily represent their glory and grace. A beautiful character impresses itself upon the very features of the body, so that, looking upon the lines of the countenance, we can read the soul within, and are attracted to admire and love it; and thus should the life of faith within—the reflex loveliness of Christ's character in the soul—exhibit itself in the homely garb of our outward everyday life; in order that those who cannot see the seal of the Spirit—the inward evidence of the doctrine of Christ, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it—may see its outward luminous sign in a living epistle, known and read of all men. Every Christian's life should be like the opal, exhibiting its pure transparency, the beautiful hues of grace; or like a prism, refracting the clear bright light of heaven into a seven-coloured spectrum of honesty, truthfulness, purity, kindliness, meekness, heavenliness, usefulness. —*Macmillan.*

4. To be fruitful in all good works.

(993.) Look where you will in God's Book, you shall never find any lively member of God's Church compared to any but a fruitful tree—to the fruitful vine, the fat olive, the seasonable sapling planted by the rivers of waters. The goodly cedars, strong elms, fast-growing willows, sappy sycamores, and all the rest of the fruitless trees of the earth—*i.e.*, all fashionable and barren professors whatsoever—may shoot up in height, spread far, show fair, but what are they good for? They may be fit for the forest, the ditches, the hedgerows of the world; not for the soil of God's Israel. That is a place for none but vines, for trees of righteousness, fruitful trees (John xv. 5, 8). —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(994.) If herbs watered do still continue dry, we justly say they are dead: so, likewise, we cannot avow or assure ourselves to be Christians, watered with the Spirit of Christ, so long as, instead of bearing fruit by amendment of life, we continue dry and withered. —*Cawdray*, 1598-1664.

(995.) The soul that has the life and the love of Christ in it cannot help producing fruit. It does so, not by an outward arbitrary law, but by the sweet inward vital law of life and growth. And therefore it is that the free, unconstrained outpourings of the heart in a godly life—the natural, spontaneous, practical responses of the love of believers to the love of

Christ—are more frequently in the New Testament called fruits than works. "Let my beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits." Fruitfulness is the peculiar distinction and glory of Christ's disciples. It is the result towards which all their efforts tend—the ultimate and highest object of their existence. They are united to Christ, quickened by His Spirit, enjoy all the means and privileges of grace, the dew of Divine love, the sunshine of Divine righteousness, the showers and breezes of Divine mercy, in order that they may bring forth fruit; and that more and more abundantly. Nay, the husbandman does not hesitate to dig about them and prune them by His afflictive dispensations, in order that on the branches which formerly yielded only leaves may cluster thickly and heavily the peaceable fruits of righteousness. A barren Christian is a contradiction in terms and anomaly in the spiritual vineyard. Wherever there is life it must go on and on growing from one stage to another; not resting at any one point of attainment, but advancing until it has covered every branch and twig with fruit. Fruitfulness is a necessity of its nature, without which it must become dwarfed and stunted—must wither and die; An indication of its growing perfection, for there is no plant perfect until it has brought forth all the fruit it can. Faith without works is dead; as the blossom that has become abortive and forms no fruit fades and falls off the tree. There cannot be a worse sign of a vine than when all its sap is expended in the production of leaves and shoots, and of a Christian than when all his grace evaporates in words, and all his faith in profession. Fruitfulness is the great object for which the vine is cultivated; and if it comes short of this the graces and beauties of its foliage will not be regarded as a compensation—it will be rooted out and destroyed; and so diligence in adding to his faith, knowledge, patience, temperance, brotherly kindness, and charity, is the great object for which the Christian is planted in the house of the Lord—rooted in the love of Christ; and if he fails of accomplishing this purpose of his existence, the mere form of godliness will not atone for it, or prevent the dread sentence going forth, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" "Every branch *in Me* (that is, in Christ, not by a real and vital union, but by a visible and professional union, by an external alliance with His Church, and by the use of His ordinances) that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . . I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." —*Macmillan.*

5. To make constant progress in holiness.

(996.) The life of believers, after conversion, is an active life: none of them can say, Now I have no more ado, having received Christ; I may walk at random, and live as I list; no, by no means: after Israel were come through the Red Sea, they had a wilderness to walk through; and so it is with every believer, while here in this world: but though he hath a journey to go, yet he hath the greatest encouragement to walk forward; for he is in Christ, in whom he hath all fulness.

—*Erskine*, 1685-1752.

(997.) The purity of the Christian is not an evanishing, but a permanent purity. All the religion that many have is evanishing and superficial; it comes and goes like a flash of lightning. True purity is constant, it continues and grows; for, "He that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." The righteous holdeth on his way, like a vessel sailing towards such a port, though it meets with many blasts to drive it hither and thither, and sometimes very far back; yet it goes on again, and makes out the harbour designed: so, though the believer may meet with blasts of temptation and corruption, that may set him far back; yet he holds on his way, God in Christ is the centre of rest to which he moves; yea, he hath taken up his rest in Him, and there he resolves to stay for ever: he hath chosen God in Christ for his portion, and he is determined to abide by his choice.

—*Erskine*, 1685-1752.

6. To be like Christ.

(998.) We are not, saith Austen, to be like Christ in working miracles, but in a holy life. A Christian should be both a loadstone and a diamond: a loadstone, in drawing others to Christ; a diamond, casting a sparkling lustre of holiness in his life. Oh let us be so just in our dealings, so true in our promises, so devout in our worship, so unblameable in our lives, that we may be the walking pictures of Christ. Thus as Christ was made in our likeness, let us labour to be made in His likeness.

—*Watson*, 1696.

III. *THE CHRISTIAN AND CHRIST.*

1. His union with Christ.

(999.) What a wonderful mystery is this, that believers should be united to, and made one with God, as the Father and the Son are one? Not in respect of partaking of His essential and incommunicable properties, which creatures are incapable of, but in respect of reality and truth: believers are as really united to Christ, as the branches of a tree are unto the root. As the stock and the graft are really joined together, and are one within the other, and made one body, so are believers really united to God, God dwelling in them and they in God, and are made one spirit with Him through Christ. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. And again, by one spirit are we united, &c. —*Austen*, 1656.

(1000.) The graft and stock of the fruit-tree are so joined together as that they are the one within the other, and so made one entire body; the graft is within the stock in respect of its substance (the stock encloseth some part of it). And the stock is within the graft, by its sap and moisture giving nourishment to it, whereby it thrives and brings forth good fruits: so they being joined, and one within the other, are made one body or substance.

This similitude shadows out unto us, that believers, by ingrafting into Christ, do live in Him, and He in them, and are thereby made one with Him.

—*Austen*, 1656.

2. His life is hid with Christ in God.

(1001.) As a man, standing upon the sea-shore, sees a great heap of waters, one wave riding on the back of another, and hears, too (especially if it be in stormy weather), the loud roarings thereof, but all this while, though he see the waters, he doth not see the infinite riches that lie buried in the bottom

thereof: so it is that wicked men see the want, but not the wealth of God's people—their conflicts, but not their comforts. They easily take notice of the troubles that usually attend upon the bodies of the children of God, but they cannot possibly discover the rejoicings of the spirit that are in their souls; neither indeed can they, for they are spiritually discerned. —*Needler*, 1655.

(1002.) Standing by the telegraphic wires, one may often hear the mystic wailing and sighing of the winds among them, like the strains of an Æolian harp, but one knows nothing of the message which is flashing along them. Joyous may be the inner language of those wires, swift as the lightning, far-reaching and full of meaning, but a stranger intermeddles not therewith. Fit emblem of the believer's inner life; men hear our notes of outward sorrow, wrung from us by external circumstances, but the message of celestial peace, the divine communings with a better land, the swift heart-throbs of heaven-born desire, they cannot perceive: the carnal see but the outer manhood, but the life hidden with Christ in God, flesh and blood cannot discern.
—*Spurgeon.*

3. His love for Christ.

(1003.) There is a ruling passion in every mind. When they were probing among his shattered ribs for the fatal bullet, the French veteran exclaimed, "A little deeper, and you will find the emperor." The deepest affection in a believing soul is the love of its Saviour. Deeper than the love of home, of kindred, of rest and recreation, of life, is the love of Jesus. And so, when other spells have lost their magic, when no name of old endearment, no voice of onwaiting tenderness, can disperse the lethargy of dissolution, the name that is above every name, pronounced by one who knows it, will kindle its last animation in the eye of death.
—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(1004.) Love to Christ is an abiding motive. It is neither a fancy, nor a sentiment, nor an evanescent emotion. It is a principle—calm, steady, undecaying. It was once a problem in mechanics to find a pendulum which should be equally long in all weathers—which should make the same number of vibrations in the summer's heat and in the winter's cold. They have now found it out. By a process of compensations they make the rod lengthen one way as much as it contracts another, so that the centre of motion is always the same: the pendulum swings the same number of beats in a day of January as in a day of June; and the index travels over the dial-plate with the same uniformity, whether the heat try to lengthen, or the cold to shorten, the regulating power. Now the moving power in some men's minds is sadly susceptible of surrounding influences. It is not principle, but feeling, which forms their pendulum-rod; and according as this very variable material is affected, their index creeps or gallops, they are swift or slow in the work given them to do. But principle is like the compensation-rod, which neither lengthens in the languid heat, nor shortens in the brisker cold, but does the same work day by day, whether the ice-winds whistle or the simoon glows. Of all principles, a high-principled affection to the Saviour is the steadiest and most secure. Other incentives to action are apt to alter or lose their influence altogether. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

4. His dependence on Christ.

(1.) *Its comprehensiveness.*

(1005.) *All* the sap and nourishment that the branches of a tree have, they receive it from the root. This shadows out unto us, that our life, growth, strength, and all our spiritual acts, are from Christ. He is the root and stock of every believer, and all spiritual life is from Him; not only the principles of grace, but also the workings of grace. As at first we were stark in sins and trespasses until He gave us life, so being quickened we cannot grow nor act but by influences from Him. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to *think* anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." A good thought is the least and lowest act of grace, and yet that we cannot do of ourselves; good thoughts and desires are as buds or blossoms upon a tree, which show themselves before the fruits; now if trees cannot bud of themselves, how much less can they bring forth fruits? —*Austen*, 1656.

(2.) *Its continuity.*

(1006.) The Christian's way to heaven is something like that in our nation (called the *Washes*), where the sands (by reason of the seas daily overflowing) do so alter that the traveller who passed them safely a month ago, cannot without great danger venture again, except he hath his guide with him; where then he found firm land, possibly a little after coming he may meet with a devouring quick-sand. Truly thus the Christian who gets over a duty at one time with some facility, his way smooth and plain before him, at another time may find a temptation in the same duty enough to set him, if he had not help from heaven to carry him safe out of the danger. O Christian, it is not safe for thee to venture one step without thy stay, thy hand of faith leaning on thy beloved's arm: trust to thy own legs and thou fallest; use thy legs, but trust to His arm, and thou art safe.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1007.) "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure." He makes the heart new, and having made it fit for heavenly motion, setting every wheel (as it were) in its right place, then He winds it up by His actuating grace, and sets it on going, the thoughts to stir, the will to move, and make towards the holy object presented; yet here the chariot is set, and cannot ascend the hill of action, till God puts His shoulder to the wheel. "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." God is at the bottom of the ladder, and at the top also, the author and finisher: yea, helping and lifting the soul at every round, in his ascent to any holy action. Well, now the Christian is set on work, how long will he keep close to it? Alas, poor soul, no longer than he is held up by the same hand that empowered him at first. He hath soon wrought out the strength received, and therefore to maintain the tenor of a holy course, there must be renewing strength from Heaven every moment; which David knew, and therefore when his heart was in as holy a frame as ever he felt it, and his people by their free-will-offering declared the same, yet even then he prays that God would "keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of His people, and establish their hearts to Him." He adored the mercy that made them willing, and then he implores His further grace to strengthen them, and tie a knot

that these precious pearls newly strung on their hearts, might not slip off. The Christian, when fullest of divine communications, is but a glass without a foot; he cannot stand, or hold what he hath received any longer, than God holds him in His strong hand. Therefore Christ when bound for heaven, and ready to take His leave of His children, bespeaks His Father's care of them in His absence, "Father, keep them," as if He had said, "they must not be left alone, they are poor shiftless children, that can neither stand nor go without help." —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1008.) A mariner who puts forth to sea, losing sight of land, beholds nothing but a waste of waters around him. The night comes on, and clouds and darkness gather in upon him. And the channel through which he is passing may be a narrow and dangerous one. But still he has an infallible guide on board; he has his chart and his compass to consult with. So the Christian pursuing his course has darkness shrouding his path-way, and storms and tempests threatening his progress: but he, too, has an infaliible guide, the Holy Spirit within him, and tracts of light opened upon him in the Scriptures. The mariner, whilst he furnishes his ship with everything likely to be useful in the voyage, masts and sails, rudder and compass, trusts to the winds of heaven to give effect to his preparations, to give, as it were, energy and life to the vessel he navigates: because he knows that without the wind his preparations are useless; so, without due preparation, the most favourable gale would blow in vain for him. He regulates the sail as the wind requires, and holds to the rudder, never loses sight of the compass, and watchfully keeps the narrow way to which it confines him by night and by day. So the wise Christian, after all due preparation on his own part for his voyage, looks up as one continually dependent on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the one source of all his spiritual life and motion. He is careful to watch the least breathing of the Spirit upon his soul, that he may not quench it, but yield himself up to its full impression. And adding to this his faith all diligence and watchfulness, he is wafted onwards in safety, amidst the storms and wrecks around him in an evil world.
—*Salter.*

(1009.) The young convert may be compared to a child whom his father is leading over a rugged and uneven path. After proceeding for some time without much difficulty, he forgets that it has been owing to his father's assistance—begins to think that he may now venture to walk by himself, and consequently falls. Humbled and dejected, he then feels his own weakness, and clings to his father for support. Soon, however, elated with his progress, he again forgets the kind hand which sustains him, fancies he needs no more assistance, and again falls. This process is repeated a thousand times in the course of the Christian's experience, till he learns at length that his own strength is perfect weakness, and that he must depend solely on his heavenly Father. —*Salter.*

(3.) *Is the ground and source of his safety.*

(1010.) This way of God's dealing with His saints, adds to the fulness and stability of their strength. Were the stock in our own hands, we should soon prove broken merchants. God knows we are but leaking vessels; when fullest, we could not hold it long; and therefore to make all sure, he sets us under the streamings forth of His strength, and a leaking vessel under a cock gets what it loseth. Thus we have our leakage supplied continually. This was the provision God made for Israel in the wilderness; "He clave the rock, and the rock followed them." They had not only a draught at present, but it ran in a stream after them; so that you hear no more of their complaints for water; "This rock was Christ." Every believer hath Christ at his back, following him with strength as he goes, for every condition and trial. One flower with a root is worth many in a posie, which, though sweet, yet do not grow, but wither as we wear them in our bosoms. God's strength, as the root, keeps our grace lively, without which, though as orient as Adam's was, it would die.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1011.) A kite soaring on high is in a situation quite foreign to its nature; as much as the soul of man is, when raised above this lower world to high and heavenly pursuits. A person at a distance sees not how it is kept in its exalted situation: he sees not the wind that blows it, nor the hand that holds it, nor the string by whose instrumentality it is held. But all of these powers are necessary to its preservation in that preternatural state. If the wind were to sink it would fall. It has nothing whatever in itself to uphold itself: it has the same tendency to gravitate to the earth that it ever had, and if left for a moment to itself, it would fall. Thus it is with the soul of every true believer. It has been raised by the Spirit of God to a new, a preternatural, a heavenly state; and in that state it is upheld by an invisible and Almighty hand, through the medium of faith. And upheld it shall be, but not by any power in itself. If left for a moment, it would fall as much as ever. Its whole strength is in God alone; and its whole security is in the unchangeableness of His nature, and in the efficacy of His grace. In a word, "it is kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. —*Salter.*

(1012.) Up the side of a trellis climbed a slender plant. It seemed as though sensible that its support must be in holding fast thereunto. Sometimes the rough winds tore away its little tendrils, so that its head was bent low towards the earth; but again it succeeded to catch hold: ay, and those very trials served to strengthen its future grasp, by causing it to entwine the more closely and firmly about its stay. So it grew up, because the root was deep in the ground. Nestling among its green leaves it bore flowers lovely to the eye, fragrant to the smell, and sweet to the taste as the honey drop. And when again the rude winds came, it proved equal to the emergency. Weak in itself, it was able to withstand the conflict; because of the firm support it received from the trellis, unto which it clung with stronger arms of holding trust.

How often feeble faith is buffeted by fears and spiritual foes! But, its holdfast is still on the Saviour, whilst its language is ever—

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.

"All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."
—*Bowden.*

(4.) *Takes away all reason for pride.*

(1013.) Had God given His saints a stock of grace to have set up with, and left them to the improvement of it, He had been *magnified* indeed, because it was more than God did owe the creature; but He had not been *omnified* as now, when not only the Christian's first strength to close with Christ is from God, but he is beholden still to God for the exercise of that strength, in every action of his Christian course. As a child that travels in his father's company, all is paid for, but his father carries the purse, not himself; so the Christian's shot is discharged in every condition; but he cannot say, This I did, or that I suffered; but God wrought all in me, and for me. The very comb of pride is cut here; no room for any self-exalting thoughts. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1014.) Doth the Christian's strength lie in God, not in himself? This may for ever keep the Christian humble, when most enlarged in duty, most assisted in his Christian course. Remember, Christian, when thou hast thy best suit on, who made it, who paid for it. Thy grace, thy comfort, is neither the work of thy own hands, nor the price of thy own desert; be not for shame proud of another's cost. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5.) *Its absoluteness does not destroy his moral agency.*

(1015.) "If all grace be from Christ in regard of fresh assistance too, why is it said that we repent, believe, obey: for if all grace, in regard of the very work, be from Christ; if Jesus Christ do work all our works, why is it not rather said, that Christ repents, believes, obeys?"

I answer, No. You know the persons that are responsible: if I owe a man a thousand pounds, and have never a penny to pay it; and another man comes and tends me the money, and goes along with me to the creditor, the bond is taken up, and discharge made; he is not said to have paid the money, but I am said to pay the money that am responsible. So, now, you are responsible: and therefore, though ye have all strength from Christ to do it, yet you are said to repent, and believe, and obey. The devil is not said to commit adultery, and commit murder, yet by his instigation it is done. The sun works with the tree, when the tree brings forth fruit; and yet it is not said that the sun brings forth fruit: because the sun works as an universal cause, and the tree as a particular cause. So now, though Jesus Christ does work in all our workings, yet He is not said to repent, or believe, or to obey: because He works as an universal cause, and you work as a particular cause. Only behold here the mirror of grace: all is of Christ, and yet all is ours; all is ours in denomination, and all is Christ's in operation; all is ours in regard of encouragement, and all is Christ's in regard of glory; all is ours in regard of reward, and all is Christ's in regard of honour. Here is grace! Here is the mystery of grace! but still all, whatsoever grace a man hath, he hath it from Jesus Christ. —*Bridge*, 1600–1679.

(6.) *Evinces the hopeless condition of the mere moralist.*

(1016.) Is the Christian's strength in the Lord, not in himself? Surely then the Christless person must needs be a poor impotent creature, void of all strength and ability of doing anything of itself towards its own salvation. If the ship launched, rigged, and with her sails spread, cannot stir till the wind come fair and fills them, much less can the timber, that lies in the carpenter's yard, hew and frame itself into a ship. If the living tree cannot grow except the root communicates its sap, much less can a dead rotten stake in the hedge, which hath no root, live of its own accord. In a word, if a Christian, that hath his spiritual life of grace, cannot exercise this life without strength from above, then surely, one void of this new life, dead in sins and trespasses, can never be able to beget this in himself, or concur to the production of it. The state of unregeneracy is a state of impotency: "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). And as Christ found the lump of mankind covered with the ruins of their lapsed estate (no more able to raise themselves from under the weight of God's wrath which lay upon them, than one buried under the rubbish of a fallen house, is to free himself of that weight without help), so the Spirit finds sinners in as helpless a condition, as unable to repent, or believe on Christ for salvation, as they were of themselves to purchase it. Confounded, therefore, for ever be the language of those sons of pride who cry up the powers of nature, as if man, with his own brick and slime of natural abilities, were able to rear such a building, whose top may reach heaven itself. "It is not of him that willeth or runneth, but God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16).

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

5. In what spirit he approaches Christ.

(1017.) Once I went to Jesus, like a coxcomb, and gave myself fine airs, fancying if He was something, so was I; if He had merit, so had I. And I used Him as a healthy man will use a walking-staff, lean an ounce upon it or vapour with it in the air. But now He is my whole crutch, no foot can stir a step without Him. He is my all, as He ought to be, if He will become my Saviour; and He bids me *cast*, not *some*, but *all my care upon Him*.

My heart can have no rest unless it leans upon Him *wholly*, and then it feels His peace. But I am apt to leave my resting-place, and when I ramble from it, my heart will quickly brew up mischief. Some evil temper now begins to boil, or some care would fain perplex me, or some idol wants to please, or some deadness or some lightness creeps upon my spirit, and communion with my Saviour is withdrawn. When these thorns stick in my flesh, I do not try, as heretofore, to pick them out with my own needle, but carry all complaints to Jesus, casting every care upon Him. His office is to save, and mine to look for help.

If evil tempers rise, I go to Him as some demoniac; if deadness creeps upon me, I go a paralytic; if dissipation comes, I go a lunatic; if darkness clouds my peace, I go a Bartimeus; and when I pray, I always go a leper, crying, as Isaiah did, *Unclean! Unclean!*

—*Berridge*, 1716–1793.

IV. *SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN.*

1. He has his supreme delight in God.

(1018.) It is observable that, in the courts of

kings, children and ruder people are much taken with pictures and rich shows, and feed their fancies with the sight of rich hangings and fine things; but the grave statesman passeth by such things as not worthy taking notice of—his business is with the king. Thus it is that, in this world, most men stay in the outer rooms, and admire the low things of the world, and look upon them as pieces of much excellence; but the spiritually-minded man looketh over all these things that are here below—his business is with God. Let them dote upon the world that are in love with it: whom hath he in heaven but God? and there is none upon earth that he desireth besides Him.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

2. The glory of God is his constant aim.

(1019.) A man that goes to sea designs some certain port, whether he guides his course; in this way he meets, it may be, with storms that drive him out of his course, and sometimes directly backwards; but his design still holds, and in the pursuit thereof he applies his skill and industry to recover all his losses. So is it with a soul under the conduct of grace. Its fixed design is to live unto God, but in its course it meets with cross winds of temptations and various artifices of sin. These drive him backwards sometimes, but where grace has the rule, it will weather all these oppositions; it will "restore the soul," bring it again into order, recover it from the confusions and evil frames that it was drawn into.

—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(1020.) An habitual intending God as our end, depending on His support, and subjection to His government, will carry on the soul in a sincere and constant course of godliness, though the actual most observed thoughts of the soul be fewer in number about God, than about the means that lead unto Him, and the occurrences in our way. The soul of man is very active and comprehensive, and can think of several things at once; and when it is once clear and resolved in any case, it can act according to that knowledge and resolution, without any present sensible thought; nay, while its actual, most observed thoughts are upon something else. A musician that hath an habitual skill, can keep tune and time while he is thinking of some other matter. A weaver can cast his shuttle right, and work truly, while he is thinking or talking of other things. A man can eat and drink with discretion, while he talks of other things. Some men can dictate to two or three scribes at once, upon divers subjects. A traveller can keep on his way, though he seldom thinks distinctly of his journey's end, but be thinking or discoursing most of the way upon other matters; for before he undertook his journey he thought both of the end and way, and resolved then which way to go, and that he would go through all both fair and foul, and not turn back till he saw the place. And this habitual understanding and resolution may be secretly and unobservedly active, so as to keep a man from erring, and from turning back, though at the same time the traveller's most sensible thoughts and his discourse may be upon something else. When a man is once resolved of his end, and hath laid his design, he is past deliberating of that, and therefore hath less use of his thoughts about it; but is readier to lay them out upon the means, which may be still uncertain, or may require his frequent deliberation. We have usually more thoughts and speeches by the way about our company, or our horses, or inns, or other accommodations, or the fairness or foulness of the way, or other such occurrences, than we have about the place we are going to: and yet this secret intention of our end will bring us thither.

So when a soul hath cast up his accounts, and hath renounced a worldly, sensual felicity, and hath fixed his hopes and resolutions upon heaven, and is resolved to cast himself upon Christ, and take God for his only portion, this secret, habitual resolution will do much to keep him constant in the way, though his thoughts and talk be frequently on other things: yea, when we are thinking of the creature, and feel no actual thought of God, it is yet God more than the creature that we think of; for we did beforehand look on the creature as God's work, representing Him unto the world, and as His talents, which we must employ for Him, and as every creature is related to Him: and this estimation of the creature is still habitually (and in some secret, less-perceived act) most prevalent in the soul.

Though I am not always sensibly thinking of the king when I use his coin, or obey his laws, &c., yet it is only as his coin still that I use it, and as his laws that I obey them. Weak habits cannot do their work without great carefulness of thoughts; but perfect habits will act a man with little thoughtfulness, as coming near the natural way of operation. And, indeed, the imperfection of our habitual godliness doth make our serious thoughts and vigilancy and industry to be th emore necessary to us. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1021.) *Objection.* "But a man cannot be always thinking on God, and therefore not always intending Him as our end, and therefore cannot do all for Him."

Answer, 1. If sin disable us, that is no excuse. 2. A man may habitually intend an end, which he doth not actually think of. Yea, he may have an actual intention, which yet he doth not observe, because of other more sensible thoughts that are upon his mind. And yet his aforesaid intention may be still effectual to cause him to use the means as means.

For example, a man that hath a journey to go, is not always at the end of it, by an actual observed intention in every step of his way; but perhaps may be much of the way taken up with thoughts and discourse of other things, and yet he doth truly intend his journey's end, in every step of the way, and use every step as a means to that end. And so it is with a true Christian in the work of God, and the way to heaven. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1022.) The believer's purpose to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever, is an habitual, constant purpose. Whatever winds may drive him from the thing he purposes; yet, no wind can drive him from his purpose when once it is wrought of God in his heart. He may be drawn to sin; but he can never be drawn to a purpose of living in sin; nay, if some strong corruptions prevail against him, and lead him captive, yet he can confidently appeal to Heaven it was against his purpose, and against his prayers, and against his tears, and against his hope, that such an iniquity prevailed against him.

It is with him as it is with a mariner that sets out for such a distant haven, with a full purpose to sail straight to it; but, against his purpose, he is carried to this port and that port, which he never designed; yet still his purpose remains, and he never rests till he come to the place he designed.
—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(1023.) The sun-flower has no set days for following the sun and drinking in his radiance; neither has it any set days for exhaling its own perfume. It swings its censer of incense in the still air all summer long. So with the Christian. His heart is a true sun-flower, following the Great Spiritual Luminary from dawn to eventide, drooping its head in sadness when the night shadows fall, and ready to expand the folded blossom again, at the summons of the morning. He does not give God the Sabbath merely, and closes his leaves and petals to holy influences all the week. He seeks to begin it, carry it on, and end it under the consciousness of the Divine favour. —*Macduff.*

3. He is fruitful and useful.

(1024.) The grateful soul of a healthy Christian is not a desert that drinks of the dews of heaven, and produces no verdure in return, but every cloud seems to drop upon it fatness and fertility; so that each season of spiritual enjoyment is followed by some instance of grace, and zeal for the glory of his Redeemer. His piety is such, that like the rose he breathes forth sweetness of his very nature; not the sickliness of a fulsome profession, but the healthy perfume of a tree the Lord has planted, and is nurturing to His own glory. —*Salter.*

(1025.) Can any of us be said to be bringing forth much fruit? Not if compared with Him; not if compared with His requirements; not if compared with His example; but much if compared with ourselves and our past history—much, because it is continually getting more, our past successes being only the starting points for future success—ever increasing and progressive results. If a tree which has stood in utter barrenness since first the husbandman planted it in the soil suddenly puts forth fruit; although it may be little compared with his wishes, and compared with the fruit of the other trees in the garden, yet that scanty produce is *much* when compared with its own unfruitful past; and so when a soul which has long been standing as a cumberer of the ground suddenly brings forth fruit unto holiness, that fruit may be little compared with the Master's requirements and desires—little compared with the abundant returns which other and saintlier spirits yield, yet it is much when compared with its profitless past, and it contains the pledge of more and more, in an increasing ratio, through the coming years. —*J. W. Boulding.*

4. He resembles Christ.

(1026.) If we examine a growing vine very minutely and attentively, we shall be struck with the remarkable resemblance which exists between all its parts They all seem to be framed after the same pattern, and to be mere repetitions of each other. Even in the minor part of the tree—the leaf, the flower, the fruit, the seed, we find the same wonderful general likeness. This mutual correspondence, however, exists in a perfect state only when the tree is fully and fairly developed. It is modified by a great variety of circumstances, natural and artificial. When the tree is placed in a thick crowded plantation, pressed by others on every side, and prevented from assuming its natural form and proportions; when it grows in poor and unsuitable soil; when it has not free access to the air and light of heaven, it will not exhibit this feature of mutual resemblance between all its parts so distinctly. Some parts will be stunted, others overgrown, and the harmony and order of the whole will be deranged, but the typical correspondence will still, to some extent, be retained. Applying this quality of the vine and its branches to Christ and His people, we find that the same remarkable resemblance exists between them also. Each Christian bears at every stage of growth some likeness to Christ, to whom he is united by a living faith. In the indistinct—the unformed lines, sketched in the character of the weakest believer, there are some traces of what will be hereafter a full portrait of the altogether lovely One, though as yet rude and comparatively unattractive. The vital change which he has undergone is complete in nothing, but it has begun in all the parts of his nature. The leaven of regeneration is sending its transforming power, silently and slowly perhaps, but surely, throughout his whole being. The image in which he was created, and to which he is redeemed, is more and more restored in the soul. Yes! each believer is a type or miniature more or less true and perfect of the Divine original; and all believers have a general family likeness; they have features of resemblance to each other and to Christ which cannot be mistaken or concealed, and which prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, their common origin and mutual relationship. They are not, like the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream, composed of the most heterogeneous materials; its head of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet part of iron and part of clay. They are like the vine and its branches, whose every part is typical of the whole. —*Macmillan.*

(1027.) The character of Christ, as He lived upon earth, is like a perfect many-sided crystal. Whichever way you look at it, it is without flaw. Whichever way you turn it, some new beauty of colour is reflected from the rays of light shining through it. The character of the Christian is like a crystal too, but a small one, full of cracks and flaws, which break up and disfigure the brilliant gleams reflected from the sunlight. The Christian must be like Christ, or he is nothing, but it is a likeness with a vast distance between—the likeness of an infant to the strong man; the likeness of a feeble sapling to the full-grown giant oak.
—*Hooper.*

(1028.) You are to accept as a Christian every one whose life and disposition are Christ-like, no matter how heretical the denomination may be to which he belongs. Wherever you find faith, and righteousness, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost, you are to look upon them as the stamped coin of Christ's kingdom, and as a legal tender from God to you. —*H. W. Beecher.*

5. He has his "conversation in heaven."

(1029.) The eyes of the world see no farther than this life, as mine see no farther than this wall when

the church door is shut. The eyes of the Christian see deep into eternity. —*Vianney.*

(1030.) "Let your conversation"—your daily life—"be"—where? "in heaven." To meet this requirement is distinctly set forth as the mark of the truly regenerate soul. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit"—who have the spiritual mind, who are born of God—they "mind heavenly things;" they live in their mind in heaven. It is not so hard as to be unreasonable; it is clearly what is required of us, and it is not unreasonable.

Just consider for a moment. Suppose that there were somewhere a land beyond the seas to which we were destined to emigrate, we know not how soon; it may be next year, it may be this year, it may be next week, it may be to-morrow. It is a fairer land than this, a sunnier clime, peopled by a purer, holier, happier race than surrounds us here. If we were destined—we know not how soon—for emigration to that land, should we not be thinking about it often and much? Should we not be living in the anticipation of it? Should we not be feeling already that it was *our* land; that it was our home? Would not our thoughts and our hopes be there as in our home?

—*David Thomas*, B.A., 1811–1875.

V. *SOME OF HIS DUTIES.*

1. He should be single in his aim.

(1031.) When Christians have two aims they are like two rivers which flow near the city of Geneva, the Arve and the Rhone. The Rhone comes flowing along a beautiful blue—a blue which painters give to Italian skies, and to the rivers of Switzerland. It is no exaggeration, they are as blue as they are painted. The Arve comes down from the glacier, a chalky, dirty white. I stood sometime ago at the place these two rivers join. It was not long before the Arve had quenched the Rhone; all that beautiful blue had fled away and nothing but white was seen. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." If your life be made up of two streams, worldliness running in like the Arve, and you hope to have spirituality running in like the blue Rhone, you will soon be mistaken.

—*Spurgeon.*

2. He should be blameless in his life.

(1032.) The eclipses of the sun are seldom without witnesses. If you take yourselves to be the light of the Church, you may well expect that men's eyes should be upon you. If other men may sin without observation, so cannot you.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1033.) In the opening verse of chapter vii. (Eccles. vii. 1.) Solomon had emphatically said that a good name is better than precious ointment. It may have been this very comparison which afterwards suggested the striking and most important thought to which expression is given, in the outset of the passage at present before us (*i.e.*, Eccles x. 1). The very sweetness of a precious ointment—the very exquisiteness and delicacy of its odour—exposes it to be the more easily injured. It may be so tainted by the corruption of even a dead fly, as to have its perfumes spoiled. By so seemingly trifling a cause, may all the cost and skill bestowed on it by the apothecary be rendered of no avail. And how true a picture does this illustration exhibit, of the fatal injury which a little folly is sure to inflict upon the good name of the man who is held in reputation for wisdom and honour. Indiscretions that would never be noticed in men of inferior character, are ruinous to him. Nor is it difficult to understand how this result should arise. On a soiled garment, even a fresh stain makes no very conspicuous mark; but a spot catches the eye at once on a snow-white robe.

—*Buchanan.*

3. He should make the Word of God the rule of his life.

(1034.) Be sure to keep thy eye on the right rule thou art to walk by. Every calling hath a rule to go by, peculiar to itself, which requires some study to get an insight into, without which a man will but bungle in his work. No calling hath such a sure rule and perfect law to go by as the Christians; therefore in earthly professions and worldly callings, men vary in their way and method, though of the same trade, because there is no such perfect rule, but another may super-add to it. But the Christian hath one standing rule, the Word of God, "*able to make the man of God perfect;*" now he that would excel in the power of holiness must study this. The physician consults with his *Galen;* the lawyer with his *Littleton;* and the philosopher with his *Aristotle;* the masters of these arts. How much more should the Christian with the Word, so as to be determined by that, and drawn by that, more than by a whole team of arguments from men? —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. He must be crucified to, and separate from, the world.

(1035.) Our crucifying of or to the world, requireth not any secession from the world, nor a withdrawing ourselves from the society of men, nor the casting away the property of the necessaries which we possess. It is an easier thing to throw away our Master's talents, than faithfully to improve them. The Papists glory in the holiness of their Church, because they have many among them that have vowed never to marry, and have no property, and have separated themselves into a monastical society; a high commendation to their Church, when men must be sainted with them, if they will do no mischief, though they make themselves useless to the rest of the world. The servant that hid his talent in a napkin was condemned by Christ as wicked and slothful; and shall he be commended by us for being extraordinarily devout? Will you reward that servant that will lock up himself in his chamber, or hide his head in a hole, when he should be busy at your work? Or will you reward that soldier that will withdraw from the army into a corner, when he should be fighting? The world swarms on every side with multitudes of ignorant and impenitent sinners, whose miserable condition crieth loud for some relief, to all that are any way able to relieve them. And these religious monks make haste from among them, and leave them to themselves to sink or swim, and they think this cruelty to be the top of piety. Unworthy is that man to live on the earth, that liveth only to himself, and communicateth not the gifts of God to others. And yet do these idle,

unprofitable drones esteem their course the life of perfection. When we must charge through the thickest of our enemies, and bear all the unthankful requitals of the world, and undergo their scorns and persecutions, these wary soldiers can look to their slain, and get out of the reach of such encounters; and when they have done, imagine that they have got the victory. To live to ourselves, were it never so spiritually, is far unlike the life of a Christian; a good man is a common good, and compassionate to the miserable, and desirous to bring others to the participation of his felicity. To withdraw from the world to do God service, is to get out of the vineyard or shop that we may do our Master's work. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1036.) If we are crucified to the world, our delight in it is crucified. It seemeth not to us a matter of such worth, as to be fit for our delight. Children are glad of toys, which a wise man hath no pleasure in. To have too sweet contentful thoughts in the creature, and to apprehend it as our good, and to be rejoiced in it, is a sign that so far we are not crucified to it. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1037.) A man that is dead to the world will not hate or be much displeased with those that hinder him from the riches, or honours, or pleasures of the world. He makes no great matter of it, and taketh it for no great hurt or loss. And therefore rather than study revenge, he can patiently bear it, when they have taken away his coat, if they take away his cloak also. He doth not swell with malice against them that stand in the way of his advancement, or hinder his rising or riches in the world. He will not envy the precedency of others, or seek the disgrace or ruin of them that keep him low. No more than a wise man will hate or seek to be revenged of him that would hinder him from climbing up to the top of a steeple, or that will take a stone or a bush of thorns out of his way.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1038.) When we are crucified to the world, our expectations of good from the world are crucified. Before we looked for much from it, we thought if we had this pleasure, or that honour; if we had such lands, buildings, friends, or provision, then we were well, or at least much better than now we are! Oh, how good did we think that these were for us! And therefore we still lived in hope of more. But when we are crucified to the world, we give up these hopes. We see then that we are deceived. We did but hope for nourishment from a stone. The breasts are dry which we thought would have refreshed and satisfied us. When we see that the world is an empty thing, a mask, a picture, a dream, a shadow, we turn away from it, and look no more after it, but look for content in something else. As a child that seeth a painted apple may be eager of it till he try that it is savourless, and then he careth for it no more. Or if a beautiful crab deceive him, when he hath set his teeth in it, he casteth it away; so when a Christian findeth the folly of his former expectations, and tasteth the vexations of the creature which he was so greedy of, and withal is acquainted by a lively faith, where he may be better, away go all his expectations from the world; and he promiseth himself no more content or satisfaction in it.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1039.) A person defending believers associating with worldly society said believers are called to be the salt of the earth. Yes, said M. d'Alet, and yet if salt be cast into the ocean from which it was originally drawn, it will melt away and vanish entirely.

(1040.) A fisherman informs us that the trout always exhibits the colour of the water in which it lives. In like manner professed believers reflect faithfully the quality of the influences under which they live. He that is immersed in the stagnant waters of questionable indulgences and of a life fashioned by the prevailing customs around him, will in faded tints betray the unfavourable, shameful conditions under which he is working out the problem of life.

(1041.) As Christians are to think of living for awhile in the world, it is not unreasonable for them to be affected with its occurrences and changes. Some plead for a kind of abstracted and sublimated devotion, which the circumstances they are placed in by their Creator render equally impracticable and absurd. They are never to notice the affairs of government, or the measures of administration; war, or peace; liberty, or slavery; plenty, or scarcity; all is to be equally indifferent to them: they are to leave these carnal and worldly things to others. But have they not bodies? Have they not families? Is religion founded on the ruins of humanity? When a man becomes a Christian, does he cease to be a member of civil society? Allowing that he be not the owner of the ship, but only a passenger in it, has he nothing to awaken his concern in the voyage? If he be only a traveller towards a better country, is he to be told, that because he is at an inn which he is soon to leave, it should not excite any emotion in him, whether it be invaded by robbers, or consumed by flames before the morning? "In the peace thereof ye shall have peace;" and are not Christians to "provide things honest in the sight of all men?" Are they to detach themselves while here from the interests of their fellow-creatures; or to "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep?" Is not religion variously affected by public transactions? Can a Christian, for instance, be indifferent to the cause of freedom, even on a pious principle? Does not civil liberty necessarily include religious? and is it not necessary to the exertions of ministers and the spreading of the gospel? —*Jay.*

5. He must make an open profession of religion.

(1042.) Sometime ago when in a mine, looking through its dark corridors, I every now and then saw the glimmer of a moving lamp, and I could track it all through the mine. The reason was that the miner carried it on his hat,—it was a part of himself, and it showed where he went. I said,—Would that in this dark world every miner of the Master carried his lamp to show where he walks.
—*Cuyler.*

6. He must not fear to be singular.

(1043.) He is unworthy of heaven that will not live well without company, nor do good but by example, nor move a step before his neighbours. Cowards stand still looking who should go first; and they are mere jades that will not go except the way be

led them. He was a brave and bold Israelite that first did set his foot into the channel of the sea, leading the rest all along that moist and uncouth walk: he is a soldier of courage that first mounts the breach. —*Adams*, 1654.

(1044.) Conscious that it is only sovereign grace which makes them differ from others, none are less likely to make a parade of their good works than God's people. Indeed, I have known some of these run into the opposite extreme—forgetting that the light which flashes over the sea from lighthouse-towers, on rugged headland or sunken rock, is not kindled to be hid, but seen. A candle, as our Lord says, is set on a candlestick, not under a bushel, that it may light the house; and, however singular our conduct may appear to the world, or whatever occasion it may afford scoffers to sneer, the Christian should never allow himself to be deterred from obeying his Master's behests, following in his Leader's steps, and so making His light to shine that, not he, but His Father in heaven, may be glorified. —*Guthrie.*

7. He must not be afraid of ridicule.

(1045.) Religion is no ignominious, disgraceful thing. Satan labours to cast all the odium and reproach upon it that he can; that it is devout frenzy, folly in grain; "As for this sect, we know that it is everywhere spoken against." But wise men measure things by the end; what is the end of a religious life? It ends in a kingdom. Would a prince regard the flightings of a few frantics when he is going to be crowned? You who are beginners, bind their reproaches as a crown about your head, despise their censures as much as their praise; a kingdom is a-coming. —*Watson*, 1696.

8. He must not be daunted by the difficulties of the Christian life.

(1046.) There was never a good thing easily come by. The heathen man could say, "God sells knowledge for sweat;" and so He doth honour for jeopardy. Never any man hath got either wealth or learning with ease. Therefore the greatest good must needs be most difficult. How shall I hope to get Christ if I take no pains for Him? And if, in all other things, the difficulty of obtaining whets the mind so much the more to seek, why should it in this alone daunt me? I will not care what I do, what I suffer, so I may win Christ. If men can endure such cutting, such lancing, and searing of their bodies, to protract a miserable life yet awhile longer, what pain should I refuse for eternity?
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

9. He should be interested in the diffusion of the Gospel.

(1047.) A Christian ought to rejoice when he hears of the Gospel's spread, and he ought to grieve when he hears of obstructions to its progress. In other words, if we are Christians, we shall have the same interest in the Gospel that a politician has in the politics and progress of the party he belongs to. If you watch a politician, he says, I move under a certain banner; I am associated with an existing or a deposed prime minister, and I rejoice that such a one has been elected there, and such a one rejected here. In short, a thorough politician is full of his party. He opens the paper the first thing in the morning, in order to see what his party has gained or lost. His whole heart is in the party. Let us borrow a leaf from his book; let our chief thoughts and affections be in that cause which knows no party, and seeks no partisanship. —*Cumming.*

10. He must reflect the Divine character.

(1048.) Believers are mirrors to reflect the glory of God. A mirror, if placed opposite to a luminous object, will reflect its rays, and show distinctly its image. Such is the Christian man under the Gospel. Looking steadily to God, and beholding Him face to face, there is nothing to shut out the rays of His glory, like beams of light, from shining upon them. And now they reflect His light in the imitation of His perfections, and become as so many mirrors, where His image, which they have contemplated in the Gospel, shines forth to the glory of their God.
—*Salter.*

11. He must seek to diffuse happiness around him.

(1049.) Go into the worst street in New York, where filth and vice and corruption abound, and where there is the crying of children, and the barking of dogs, and the quarrelling of men and women, and let a band of music come in at one end and march through, playing as they march, and the sound of the music will put an end to the crying and barking and quarrelling, and all will stand for the moment intent; and when the band has swept out, and the music has died away on the air, they will take a new breath, and will have to start new quarrels. They cannot weld the old ones on to the new ones.

Now, Christian men ought to carry themselves so that their presence shall be like that of a band of music. They ought to be so full of Christian graces, so full of the Holy Ghost, so full of all that makes manhood beautiful, and that irradiates life with hope and cheer, so full of sweetness, and patience, and temperance, and forbearance, so full of the spirit of honouring each other, and preferring one another, and bearing each the other's burdens, so full of godliness, that all the city shall stand still and hear these musicians of God play. And when they go away, the impression which they leave behind them should be such that all who have seen them and heard them sing shall long to see them and hear them sing again. Oh, if Christian men were only keyed to the command, *Thou shalt love God with all thy heart and mind and soul, and thy fellow-men as thyself;* if every man loved every other man as a mother loves her babe to whom she gives days and nights, her whole time, her strength, her very life; if every man loved his neighbour as himself; if love *abounded* in every man, according to the idea of the apostle, what a different conception there would be of Christian life! —*Beecher.*

(1050.) Blessed is every man who carries himself as the mignonette carries itself, homely and small, but with more fragrance than it can keep, filling the air with sweetness, and rejoicing every man who passes by. A Christian man, though he be humble and inconspicuous, like the mignonette, should be full of the fragrance of love, and gentleness, and peace. Or, if he be more aspiring, let him be as the honeysuckle, that never climbs so high that it forgets to blossom, and never blossoms so high that it cannot send down fragrance in showers to the low-lying creatures beneath it. Whether you be high or low, let there be enough of the influence of God shed

abroad in your heart for you and for those round about you. So shall you be children of your Father which is in heaven. —*Beecher.*

12. He must live in a state of constant preparedness for death.

(1051.) A Christian must stand in a posture to receive every message which God shall send. He must be so prepared, as to be like one who is called to set off on a sudden journey, and has nothing to do but to set out at a moment's notice; or like a merchant who has goods to send abroad, and has them all packed up and in readiness for the first vessel that is to sail. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(1052.) We should always stand "with our lamps burning, and our loins girt." A Christian should always be as a ship that has taken in its lading, and is prepared and furnished with all manner of tackling, ready to sail, only expecting the good winds to carry him out of the haven. So should we be ready to set sail for the ocean of eternity, and stand at heaven's gate, be in a perpetual exercise of faith and love, and be fittingly prepared to meet our Saviour. —*Salter.*

VI. *HIS DISCOURAGEMENTS.*

(1053.) The state of the most advanced Christians is often very unsatisfactory. The affections that, true as the needle to the pole, should point steadily to heaven, go wheeling about like a weather vane that shifts with shifting winds. Sinful thoughts and bad desires spring up, thick as weeds in showery weather — faster than we can cut them down; and every attempt to keep the heart pure, holy, heavenly, ends in miserable failure—extorting the question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" It is disheartening! We go into our gardens, and see the flowers growing into beauty by sunny day and silent night; week by week of autumn the fields around us assume a more golden tint, ripening for the harvest; and year by year, childhood in our homes rises into youth, and youth into bearded manhood;—but our poor souls seem standing still. There is no appreciable progress; and we begin to ask, Are we never to grow fit for heaven? Is our hope of it but a pious dream, a beautiful delusion? Daily called to contend with temptation, the battle often goes against us; in these passions, and tempers, and old habits, the sons of Zeruiah are too strong for us. Not that we do not fight. That startling cry, The Philistines are on thee, Samson! rouses us; we make some little fight; but too often resisting only to be conquered, we are ready to give up the struggle—saying, It is useless; and like Saul in Gilboa's battle, throw away sword and shield. We would; but that, cheered by a voice from above, and sustained by hope in God's grace and mercy, we can turn to our souls to say, Why art thou cast down, my soul; why is my spirit disquieted within me?—rise; resume thy arms; renew the combat; never surrender! "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." —*Guthrie.*

VII. *HIS IMPERFECTIONS.*

(1054.) How often do we see a tree well covered with the early shoots and young leaves, but yet with many of last year's dead leaves still hanging on to the branches, intermixed with the latest and best of the summer growth, as if to remind one that even this tree, fresh in the glory of its summer clothing, was but a little while ago unsightly with dead and useless leaves. Nor will the tree rid itself of these till the full tide of sap has filled the branches with full-grown verdure, when the old leaves will drop to the earth, and no longer be cumbersome.

The Christian, like the tree, bears fresh leaves of a new heart, and even the good fruit of a godly life, and seems at first to be all but faultless; but how often, on nearer view, do evil ways, bad habits, and wicked passions, come to view and disfigure the beauty of the Christian man or woman, so that companions are reminded of the late winter of an unrenewed life, of the remainders of evil old leaves not yet all stripped off or blown away by the breath of the Divine chastisement. Nor will the Christian stand in perfect clothing, and without any evil thing, till the Divine influence has permeated every part of the soul, and driven from it the remaining traces of the old Adam. —*Austen*, 1656.

(1055.) The present is a mixed condition during which the believer feels like a sick man under his recovery, thankful for his deliverance and life; the fears of death have passed away, the poison of disease no longer rages within him; disease has no longer its fatal grasp on its victim, he has shaken it off, but he is very much enfeebled by it—he finds himself still a very weak creature; alas! he is feeling the sad remains of sin, his former complaint, so that he "cannot do the things that he would;" he cannot work as he would, nor enjoy himself as he would; he must still be attentive to the prescriptions of his Heavenly Physician, and must wait the day of perfect restoration.

—*Salter.*

(1056.) How truly may it be said to the most experienced, aged, honoured Christian, as the Lord said to Joshua, "Thou art old and well-stricken in years, and yet there is much land to be possessed." Sin still has more or less power over you, and it should have none; your corruptions are wounded, dying of mortal wounds, but they are not yet dead; your affections are set on heaven, yet how much are they still entangled with earthly things; your heart, like the needle of a sailor's compass to the Pole, points to Christ, but how easily is it disturbed, how tremblingly and unsteadily does it often point to Him; your spirit has wings, but how short are its flights, and how often, like a half-fledged eaglet, has it to seek the nest, and come back to rest on the Rock of Ages; your soul is a garden in which, when north and south winds blow to call out its spices, Christ delights to walk, but with many a beautiful flower how many vile weeds are there—ready to spring up, and ill to keep down—requiring constant care and watching.

—*Guthrie.*

VIII. *HIS CORRUPTIONS.*

(1057.) In material fruit trees the sour nature of the wild plants that are grafted upon does still continue in the stock, or root, and is not taken away by ingrafting, it is only restrained and kept under by the graft. The nature of the graft is predominant in the tree, and overrules in bringing forth fruits according to its own kind (although with some small degree of the sour nature of the stock mixed with it), and the two natures of the graft and stock continue mixed together as long as the tree lives.

This is another similitude of the state of mystical fruit trees, and shadows forth unto us this proposition: *That corrupt nature abides in believers as long as they live, and is but in part subdued by grace.*

We find by experience that after a plant is engrafted, both the graft and the stock will shoot forth, and if the graft grow vigorously and strongly, then the shoots of the stock are but weak, but if the shoots of the stock break out strongly, then the graft grows but weakly, therefore, the husbandman takes pains often to cut off the shoots that grow upon the stock, so that the graft may grow the better.

This is another similitude of the state of mystical fruit trees, and shadows forth unto us this proposition: *That while the spiritual part in us acts and grows strongly, the fleshly part acts but weakly; so also, if the flesh be strong, the spirit is weak.*

This should teach us often to take notice of the actings of our spirits, whether the stock or the graft bud the faster. If we were watchful daily, and took pains with our spirits to keep them up in a spiritual frame in communion with God, then (by degrees) the shoots and growths of the spiritual part would become strong, and the shoots of the flesh weak and feeble. Oh, that this were well weighed and practised by Christians! it is the very life, spirit, and power of godliness, thus to walk with God, in communion with Him: hereby we are enabled to do, and suffer all things for God, and to resist, and keep under the flesh and all enemies; this is the life of our life, and heaven upon earth. —*Austen*, 1656.

(1058.) When Venice was in the hands of the Austrians, those alien tyrants swarmed in every quarter; but the Venetians hated them to the last degree, and showed their enmity upon all occasions. When the Austrian officers sat down at any of the tables in the square of St. Mark, where the Venetians delight on summer evenings to eat their ices and drink their coffee, the company would immediately rise and retire, showing by their withdrawal that they abhorred their oppressors. After this fashion will every true Christian treat his inbred sins; he will not be happy under their power, nor tolerate their dominion, nor show them favour. If he cannot expel them, he will not indulge them. —*Spurgeon.*

IX. *HIS CONFLICTS.*

(1059.) A child has all the members of a perfect man; yet are they in a very feeble and imperfect state: and it is by the exercise of his powers that he has those powers strengthened and enlarged. And thus it is with every child of God. He is born a babe, and though every gracious principle exists within him, he is so feeble as scarcely to be able to withstand temptation, or to exercise his powers to any great extent. But, through the remains of sin within him he is led to frequent conflicts with it: by exercise his powers are increased; and by progressive increase, they are perfected. Thus, from "a babe," he grows up to maturer age and stature, and becomes "a young man;" and from "a young man," "a father."

—*Simeon.*

(1060.) The conflicts of the Christian, "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," continue to the end of life, and may be compared to a conflagration which is opposed by engines where the supply of water is scarcely equal to the demand, and not incessantly followed up. Sometimes the fire yields to the well-directed stream, and at other times it breaks forth with renewed fury, and seems to defy the efforts of those who would arrest its progress. —*Salter.*

(1061.) The spirit and the flesh, grace and nature, heavenly and earthly influences, are sometimes so fairly balanced, that like a ship with wind and tide acting on her with equal power, but in opposite directions, the believer makes no progress in the divine life. He loses headway. He does not become worse, but he grows no better; and it is all he can do to hold his own. Sometimes, indeed, he loses ground; falling into old sins. Temptation comes like a roaring sea squall, and finding him asleep at his post drives him backward on his course; and further now from heaven than once he was, he has to pray, Heal my backsliding, renew me graciously, love me freely. For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. —*Guthrie.*

(1062.) The aim of the true Christian is to have his Saviour always before his eyes as a pattern for imitation. His course is beset with difficulties; hindrances and disappointments await him at every turn. In the New Testament the Christian's career is uniformly represented as one of continual struggle. St. Paul compares him to one who contends in the athletic games of the Greeks—to a soldier engaged in grim combat with an unsparing foe. It is, indeed, encouraging to the living wayfaring follower of Christ to read these descriptions of the saint's career in the time of the apostles, because it shows him that the troubles which he is enduring are only the troubles which are incidental to the Christian brotherhood in all time. But, on the other hand, the Scriptural view of the Christian's career is not a little saddening, because it confirms him in the humiliating conviction, which he has been taught by his own experience, that he cannot attain to anything like a state of absolute purity and sinlessness, of perfect obedience to the will of God. The Christian is, in truth, like a traveller who wishes to reach before sunset some high mountain-top. He toils painfully on. He gets to one peak after another. At each eminence he flatters himself that he is close to his journey's end. But no sooner does he pause to look forward once more than he beholds the coveted summit still far off in the distance; and when night sets in he sees the mountain-top still towering high up unreached. So the Christian overcomes one fault after another, one sin after another. He persuades himself at each struggle that, this one evil habit vanquished, he shall have reached that perfection at which he is aiming, and that the remainder of his course will be smooth and easy. But he finds that no sooner is one sin conquered than another springs up. So he passes his whole life, and death finds him still engaged in the struggle. Perfection is, indeed, not for man. Even the strictest followers of George Fox, in their strictest days, although they asserted that perfection was possible, contradicted their own statement by explaining that perfection is progressive. Still, under every disappointment, the perfect Saviour must ever be the model of the imperfect Christian, because he knows that though

he cannot reach the standard set by Christ, yet, by constantly striving towards it, he shall reach a higher degree of holiness and purity than he would have been able to attain had he imitated anything short of perfection. The true painter is never content to copy from other men's pictures. He goes direct to Nature. He knows that he can never catch the living hues of his great model; but he also knows that he should fall immeasurably lower in his heart if he were satisfied to imitate other painters' productions. Let not the Christian despair because he cannot get rid altogether of his sinfulness. We are not meant to get rid altogether of our sinfulness. Earth is not heaven. It is a place of pilgrimage and warfare and struggle.

—*Hooper.*

X. *HIS CONSOLATIONS.*

1. He is sure of all needful things.

(1063.) "Seek first the kingdom of heaven, and these things shall be added unto you." That is, as you need them. He casts them into the other (more grand blessings) as a tradesman would do thread and paper, or a skein of silk, unto a parcel of rich commodities that a customer buys of him.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1064.) Because he is a king's son, he shall have an education suited to his character and prospects. —*Cecil*, 1743–1810.

2. It doth not yet appear what he shall be.

(1065.) Our children that lie in the cradle are ours, and bear in them those lines which shall yet make them to appear, the boy like the father, and the daughter like the mother; and we are God's, growing up, we trust, into the lineaments which shall make us like unto Him. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." —*Beecher.*

3. Where sin abounds, there grace shall much more abound.

(1066.) When the darkness of the night falleth, it covereth the whole world, dimmeth the colour and fashion of all creatures, feareth and discomforteth them, yet is it not of such power as to quench the least light in the world. For the darker the night is, the clearer do the stars shine; yea, the least light of a candle withstandeth the whole night, and giveth light round about in the midst of darkness. A little spark also of a coal cannot the darkness cover, much less is it able to quench it. Now is God the true, everlasting, and heavenly light. Through faith doth God dwell in our hearts, and Christ's disciples are called the lights of the world. Hereout followeth it, that though the prince of spiritual darkness thrust in with his noisome poison and plagues, yet he can neither apprehend nor destroy any faithful man or woman, but shall be smitten back and driven away perforce.

A little vein of water breaketh forth out of the ground sometime scarce a finger big; and when the water is gathered into a ditch or pond, it springeth nevertheless. And though the water become heavy of certain hundredweight, and move about the fountain, yet can it not drive back the fountain, but it driveth the whole weight of the water backward and forward, and springeth still continually, till the ditch be so full that it go over. And if the other water be foul and troubled, it cannot mingle itself among the fresh clear water of the fountain; but the same remaineth pure and fair, till in time it come far from the head spring.

Now is God the only plentiful Fountain of all life, and the faithful are very flowing wells. For Christ saith, "Whoso believeth on Me out of his body, as saith the Scripture, shall flow streams of water of life," which words He spake of the Spirit, that they which believe on Him should receive. Thus no mischance of this world can spoil any faithful man of his comfort and life; forasmuch as God, the Eternal Well-Spring of life, dwelleth and floweth in his heart, and driveth all noisome things far away from it. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(1067.) Being employed in the garden, I was affected to see how much the weeds came on faster than the herbs and plants. Just so do corruptions thrive and grow in my soul. Yet this comforts me—the herbs, most of them, are better rooted than the weeds; they are not so easily pulled up. The good part shall not be taken away, If I am growing on the root Christ, no man shall ever be able to pull me thence—"kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." —*Salter.*

(1068.) In Scotland last year, while steaming up one of the great lochs, close by the shore I saw a great bed of water-lilies near the bank, which were discoloured with dust from the road running just above them; all their beauty was spoiled. As the steamer passed, a great wave rolled over the lilies, entirely submerging them, and I exclaimed, "Oh, they are all broken in pieces!" but as the wave rolled back, the lilies burst again upon my view, riding gracefully upon the waters, radiant with beauty and white as the driven snow. The only effect of the wave had been to wash away the dust and bring them out in their virgin purity. So with the Christian soul sealed by God. It cannot be destroyed, but the dust of sin that covers it will all be washed away, and it will be made fit to stand and live in God's presence.

—*Armitage.*

4. Ultimately he shall be entirely like Christ.

(1069.) "I shall be satisfied," &c. The likeness, "after the image of him that created him," must be restored, that man may be once more "satisfied." At present the believer is like the marble in the hands of the sculptor, but though day by day he may give fresh touches, and work the marble into greater emulation of the original, the resemblance will be far from complete until death. Each fresh degree of likeness is a fresh advance towards satisfaction. It must then be that when every feature is moulded into similitude, when all traces of feebleness and depravity are swept away for ever, the statue breathes, and the picture burns with Deity: it must be that *then* we "shall be filled." We shall look on the descending Mediator, and, as though the ardent gaze drew down celestial fire, we shall seem instantly to pass through the Refiner's furnace, and leaving behind all the dishonour of the grave, and all the dross of corruptible humanity, spring upwards, an ethereal, rapid, glowing thing, Christ's image, extracted by Christ's lustres. —*Melvill*, 1798–1871.

(1070.) An artist delights in his own work, and would not leave one single flaw or defect in it designedly (Phil. i. 6). Oh, then look upon me,

Thou wise Creator! Knowing Thou canst do no less than a human artist, remove these impediments which discredit Thy work. Thou canst bring out of darkness light, and I believe Thy work shall be finished at last, and glorify the name of its Maker (1 Pet. v. 10). —*Salter.*

(1071.) Even in the true beginnings of grace, there is little appearance of coming glory: it is there, all there; but only as the acorn implies the great branches and green leaves. For the root of the matter may be where much natural evil lingers: and even God's grace often leaves, to the last, much that is unamiable, in the case of some who were not amiable from the first: much that is foolish, in the case of very sincere believers who were fools to begin with: much that is bitter, unfair, uncharitable, and even dishonest, in human beings with true zeal for what they honestly think Christ's cause: and how different all these people will need to be when they enter heaven. You cannot suppose a soul in heaven so sulky, that no one would ever speak to it who could help it: but it is unquestionable that there are good Christians in the world, to whom no one would speak if they could help. And even the rare believer who adds the beauty of saintly holiness to a beautiful amiability of nature and to all the graces of the finest culture, will yet sometimes show that the old man is not quite crucified: break out into thoughts, words, doings, that would not do in heaven. But though the best believer is not now holy enough for the home above, you cannot say anything from that, He will be so. "The souls of believers are at their death," if never before, "made perfect in holiness."

And there are many analogies to the great regenerating and sanctifying change. Look at an acrid sloe: does that look like the peach which cultivation can bring it to? Look in the factory at a mass of rotten flax: is that anything like the finest of man's textile fabrics that it may be made into? Look at a mass of rusty iron: is there any promise there of the delicate mechanism of a watch's wheels and springs?

And so, in the penitent soul, bowed down on account of sin, trembling in the presence of God who hates sin, there is little promise of the glorified spirit, perfect in holiness, and desiring no greater happiness than to be for ever with the Lord. In the sharp, white face of the dying believer—or in the mouldering clay, there is little promise of the spiritual body raised incorruptible and immortal. But in the proud self-righteous persecutor of the Church, there was just as little of the great apostle of the Gentiles. In the traitor that profanely denied his Master there was little promise of the fearless St. Peter, who, when his day of martyrdom came, was allowed the choice of the manner of his death; and chose the cruellest he could think of, that he might fare worse than his Lord. In the wretched blasphemer of the African coast there was no appearance of the zealous minister of Christ, John Newton; and in the wild cursing tinker of Bedford no promise that he, in God's good time, should write that most familiar volume, which sets out with a charm so wonderful the progress of the soul in its pilgrimage towards God.

But these are cases which time has cleared up, and that even we now see the end of: and it touches ourselves more nearly, to think that He who in other days saw how much more was to be made than appeared at first, of St. Paul, St. Peter, Newton, Bunyan, and multitudes more, sees yet the first promise of the happy saint in many a soul where the eye of man could make out very little appearance of it now. In the narrow-minded ignorant believer now, we can see no trace of the untrammelled understanding of the spirit set free from prejudice and error; and in the bitter partisan sectary, not entirely careful to speak the truth of those who differ from him, in whom yet is found, though sorely overgrown with misapprehensions and ill-feeling, the root of the matter, we can see little promise of that perfected love, in which he will yet spend eternity with those whom here, Pharisee-like, he held at arm's length, and regarded only as rivals and opponents. But He who knows what is in man, and what the Blessed Spirit can make of man, can discern even now, looking over the harvest-field which is the world, true grace growing under the most unpromising forms; and ripening towards glorious developments never suspected here. —*Boyd.*

XI. *HIS RENEWAL IN THE DIVINE IMAGE.*

(1072.) The restoration of God's image rather resembles the growing likeness to its beautiful original in the canvas of the artist. At first the outline, and slowly the form and features of the human face divine appear, though with some confusion; gradually they rise to more distinctness and precision, and the likeness stands confessed. So the Divine Artist, the Holy Spirit, restores the deformed and misshapen soul, and successively imparts to it every moral beauty and perfection of God; and the soul is once more confessedly like God "in knowledge, in righteousness, and true holiness."
—*Salter.*

XII. *HIS DIGNITY AND WEALTH.*

(1073.) The difference between the egg and the bird, the acorn and the oak, is not near so great as the difference between the kingdom of grace and of glory. And yet a man that had never seen or known the production of such creatures would little believe, if you should show him an acorn, that that would come to be an oak. And it is no marvel if a carnal heart will not believe that the weak, despised graces of the saints do tend to such an inconceivable glory. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1074.) The very relation of a godly man to his everlasting glory is an honour ten thousand times surpassing the honour of all the kingdoms of the world. If you did but know that one of your poor neighbours should certainly be a king, would you not presently honour him, even in his rags? You may know that the saints shall reign with Christ, as sure as if an angel from heaven had told you so, and more; and therefore how should a saint be honoured? If God had but legibly marked out some among you for salvation, and written in their foreheads, "This man shall be saved," would not all the parish reverence that man? Why, a heavenly mind and the love of God, self-denial and holy obedience, are heaven-marks infallible, as true as the Gospel, and written by the same hand as the Gospel was—I mean by the Spirit of God Himself. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1075.) In the present state, the least part of a saint's worth is visible. As the earth is fruitful in plants and flowers, but its riches are in mines of precious metal, and the veins of marble hidden in its bosom, true grace appears in sensible actions, *but its glory is within.* The sincerity of aims, the purity of affection, the impresses of the Spirit on the heart, the interior beauties of holiness, are only seen by God. Besides, such is the humility of eminent saints, that the more they abound in spiritual treasures, the less they show; as the heavenly bodies, when in nearest conjunction with the sun and fullest of light, make the least appearance to our sight. —*Salter.*

1076.) An aged Christian man was on his deathbed, and was happy in the prospect of soon entering into the joy of his Lord. He had a brother who had made the world the great object of his life, and who, of course, was very poor toward God; and with all his worldly shrewdness, was so short-sighted as to have made no provision for the world to come, and had no idea of enjoying an inheritance beyond the grave.

His dying brother had given greater attention to the acquirement of true riches than to the realisation of worldly wealth; and in his infirmities and sickness he required that Christian friends should minister to his necessities, as the holy women ministered of their substance to the Lord.

When his rich brother came to see him, he upbraided him for giving so much attention to the things of God, and giving away so much of his substance for religious purposes, and subjecting himself to poverty, when, if he had followed his advice and example, he might now have been in the enjoyment of plenty, instead of being, as he termed it, a burden to his friends.

With great calmness and earnestness the dying saint replied—waving his wasted hand toward his poor, self-deceived brother: "Quiet! quiet! Whist, whist, Tam! I have a kingdom no begun upon, and an inheritance that I have na yet seen."

Who was the richer of the two brothers?

XIII. *IS THE NOBLEST WORK OF GOD.*

(1077.) Men can admire a statue; it is breathing with life, and the fire of genius has succeeded in imparting almost animation to the figure. You remember that once it was but an unmeaning block of marble, but the sculptor's imagination has succeeded in portraying a man, and the human face divine meets your enraptured eyes. You are filled with rapture and astonishment at the power of genius to call forth such a beautiful creation of art. And have you no eyes to see, nor heart to appreciate, the noble work of God in the new creation of a soul that was dead in trespasses and sins? That man was once a blank in the creation of God; he was spiritually dead, but now he has a soul instinct with the breath of heaven, which lives for its Maker, which hears and obeys His voice, and beats high with the generous sentiments of redeeming love. It is a soul that is restored to its original place in the creation, fulfilling the high purposes of its God, and glowing with ardour to live for His honour and glory. It has not, like the statue, the mock appearance of life; it is not a beautiful illusion of your fancy which vanishes at one effort of your sober reason. It has not its useless and inanimate form to reign and hold its empire only in your imagination. No! look on it, it is the living work of God; it has His own resemblance imparted to it; it is immortal, and destined to run an endless race of glory, to the everlasting praise of the infinite Jehovah—behold it—angels are enamoured with it, and yet you, who can break forth in rapture at that lifeless statue, can see no beauty here; no loveliness to draw forth your love; no admiration of this soul "born of God!"

XIV. *IS LORD OF THE WORLD.*

(1078.) No one is so truly master and lord of this world, as the man to whom the world is crucified in Christ; no one, other things being equal, has so true and exquisite an enjoyment of the beauties of nature and the bounties of Providence as the man who in his heart gives up all for Christ. So long as the soul is satisfied to aspire after any object besides that Divine Being for whom it was created,—so long as its deepest and choicest affections are set upon created and perishable things,—it is like an untuned viol in an orchestra, whose notes make discord with all the tuneful strings around. But when the soul is yielded up to God, and pervaded with His love, its chords vibrate in sweet harmony with the breathing, swelling chorus of nature, providence, and grace. —*L. H. Wiseman.*

XV. *HIS REAL WORTH IS UNAFFECTED BY ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES.*

(1079.) A piece of plate may become battered and scratched, so that its beauty is hopelessly gone, but it loses not its real worth; put it into the scale, and its weight and not its fashion shall be the estimate of its preciousness; throw it into the melting-pot, and its purity will show its actual value. So there are many outward circumstances which may spoil the public repute in which a Christian is held, but his essential preciousness remains unchanged. God values him at as high a rate as ever. His unerring balance and crucible are not guided by appearances. How content may we be to be vile in the sight of men if we are accepted of the Lord! —*Spurgeon.*

XVI. *IS OF ALL MEN THE HAPPIEST.*

(1080.) The gracious person hath a more curious palate, that fits him to taste a further sweetness in, and to draw more pleasure, from any creature enjoyment than an unholy person can do. The fly finds no honey in the same flower from whence the bee goes laden away; nor can an unholy heart taste that sweetness which the saint doth in a creature. He hath indeed a natural fleshly palate, whereby he relisheth the gross carnal pleasure the creature affords, and that he makes his whole meal on; but a gracious heart tastes something more. All Israel drank of the rock, "and that rock was Christ." But did all that tasted the water's natural sweetness taste Christ in it? no, alas, they were but a few holy souls that had a spiritual palate to do this. Sampson's father and mother ate of the honey out of the lion's carcass, as well as Sampson, and maybe liked the taste of it for honey as well as Sampson, yet he took more pleasure sure than they; he tasted the sweetness of God's providence in it, that had

delivered him from that very lion that now affords him this honey. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1779.

(1081.) The Christian has a *fons perennis* within him. He is satisfied from himself. The men of the world borrow all their joy from without. Joy wholly from without is false, precarious, and short. From without it may be gathered, but like gathered flowers, though fair and sweet for a season, it must soon wither and become offensive. Joy from within is like smelling the rose on the tree, it is more sweet and fair, and I must add it is immortal.
—*Salter.*

(1082.) A drowning man, plucked from the jaws of death, is happy with three feet of bare rock beneath him; happier than others with thousands of broad acres. The wrecked, borne shoreward in the life-boat that is making for the land through roaring seas and winter storms, are happier than Egypt's queen when the sun gleamed on her golden galley, and silken sails swelled in the summer breeze, and the world's great conqueror knelt a suitor at her feet. And there is no humble Christian, no lover of Jesus, but is happier with the hope of heaven, with Christ in him "the hope of glory," than the men of the world when their corn and their wine do most abound; and all things go well with them. Though a beggar, the child of God parts not with that hope for all the wisdom and the wealth of Solomon. To get within that blessed door; to have a place, not nearest the king, but on the outside of the circle around the throne; to bear the lowest title among heaven's nobles; to be the weakest child of God's family, the humblest servant in Christ's house, the dimmest, smallest jewel in His crown, the least, and less than the least, of all saints, is a hope that sets the heart a-singing—

"Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

—*Guthrie.*

(1083.) What a glorious prescription, "Rejoice evermore!" Christianity is not a sepulchral thing, a gloomy life, a depressed condition of social existence. It is impossible that it can be so as the world brands it, with such a prescription as this from an apostle's lips, "Rejoice evermore." True, the Christian has his sorrows; but these are not unsweetened. True, the Christian life has its shadows and its showers; but these are not unmingled with bright beams of heavenly light; and the saddest aspects of a Christian's daily life are but the April showers of spring that usher in the approaching bright and beautiful summer—the everlasting and the heavenly sunshine. Christian life is not a penance, as the Romanist thinks it, but a privilege, as God describes it. It is not a reluctant sacrifice wrung from us, but a joyous and free-will offering gladly and gratefully rendered by us. And therefore the light of our life is not a dim, but a bright religious life. The injunction of our apostles is, "Rejoice always;" and the prayer of the apostle's Lord, "That my peace may remain in you;" and again, "That my joy may abide in you, and that your joy may be full." And Peter, catching up the thoughts of his Lord still shining with undiminished lustre on the leaves of memory, answers in his Epistle, "Whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And the apostle Paul, echoing the same grand sentiment, says, "We joy in God. Rejoice; and again I say, Rejoice." This shows us, that of all happy men upon earth the Christian should be happiest. His sorrows come from sin, his griefs spring from evil; his sunshine, his gladness, and his joy are the spontaneous and moral elements of his true Christian and holy life.
—*Cumming.*

(1084.) No man knows half the fulness of his own being until inspired to a Christian life. If you will walk with me in January over the fertile places in the fields, and through the forests, you will see what man is in his natural state. The earth is full of roots, not one of which knows how to live. The trees are full of buds, every one of which is closed and bandaged so that it cannot expand. All things are populous, but all things are curdled, congealed, restrained. Although, in his natural state, man is full of high, godlike powers, yet they are in a condition of bondage and inactivity; and the coming of religion to him is like the coming of spring to the soil and the forests, when all things begin to grow. When a man attains some degree of ripeness in his spiritual nature, he may be likened to the fields and the forests in midsummer; and when he has passed through life under the stimulating influences of religion, he may be likened to plants and trees in autumn, when they yield their fruit in exceeding abundance, and in a state of perfect ripeness. —*Beecher.*

XVII. *THE COMFORT OF SINCERITY.*

(1085.) What we want to be is not to look Christians, or to pretend Christians, or to profess Christians, but to be Christians. You need not then so carefully guard yourself, you need not be on the ceaseless watch what you do. Take an anagram; read it from the right or from the left, or from the top or from the bottom; it reads the same thing. Take a Christian, look at him at one angle, or look at another angle, look at him in any light or in any direction, and he is a Christian still. The great secret of getting rid of a vast amount of trouble and inconvenience, is being a Christian; and when you are a Christian your eye will be single, your body will be full of light, and all influences, sanctified and blessed by the Holy Spirit of God, will be sanctifying, and will bless all that are connected with you.
—*Cumming.*

(1086.) Up to a certain point, being a true Christian is a terrible thing. The advantage lies in carrying it far beyond that point where fruit is to be reaped. As long as the nights are long and the days are short we have the stern certainties of winter; as long as the days are long and the nights are short we have the sweet, precious, genial hours of summer; but when the days and the nights are just about alike, and the equinox comes on, and light and darkness strive for the mastery, that is the time for storms to rage. And so, in Christian experience, so long as the night is longest, you have the peace of darkness; and when the day is longest, you have the peace of light; but when the night and the day are of about the same length, and they strive to see which shall rule, that is the time for storms. The hardest way to live is to be half a Christian and half a sinner. The easiest way to live is to be wholly a sinner or wholly a Christian. Harmonise on one side or the other, if you want

quiet. Take the middle ground, if you want perpetual gales. —*Beecher.*

XVIII. *HIS KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE THINGS.*

(1087.) A faithful man hath three eyes: the first, of sense, common to him with brute creatures; the second, of reason, common to all men; the third, of faith, proper to his profession; whereof each looketh beyond the other; and none of them meddleth with the others' objects. For, neither doth the eye of sense reach to intelligible things and matters of discourse, nor the eye of reason to those things which are supernatural and spiritual; neither doth faith look down to things that may be sensibly seen. If thou discourse to a brute beast of the depths of philosophy never so plainly, he understands not; because they are beyond the view of his eye, which is only of sense: if to a mere carnal man, of divine things; he perceiveth not the things of God, neither indeed can do; because they are spiritually discerned; and, therefore, no wonder if those things seem unlikely, incredible, impossible to him, which the faithful man, having a proportionable means of apprehension, doth as plainly see as his eye doth any sensible thing. Tell a plain countryman that the sun or some higher or lesser star is much bigger than his cart wheel; or, at least so many scores bigger than the whole earth; he laughs thee to scorn, as affecting admiration with a learned untruth. Yet the scholar, by the eye of reason, doth as plainly see and acknowledge this truth, as that his hand is bigger than his pen. What a thick mist, yea what a palpable and more than Egyptian darkness, doth the natural man live in! What a world is there that he doth not see at all! and how little doth he see in this, which is his proper element! There is no bodily thing, but the brute creatures see as well as he; and some of them better. As for his eye of reason, how dim is it in those things which are best fitted to it? What one thing is there in nature which he doth pefectly know? what herb, or flower, or worm that he treads on, is there, whose true essence he knoweth? No not so much as what is in his own bosom; what it is, where it is, or whence it is that gives being to himself. But for those things which concern the best world, he doth not so much as confusedly see them; neither knoweth whether they be. He sees no whit into the great and awful Majesty of God. He discerns Him not in all His creatures filling the world with His infinite and glorious presence. He sees not His wise providence, overruling all things, disposing all casual events, ordering all sinful actions of men to His own glory. He comprehends nothing of the beauty, majesty, power, and mercy of the Saviour of the world, sitting in the Humanity at His Father's right hand. He sees not the unspeakable happiness of the glorified souls of the saints. He sees not the whole heavenly commonwealth of angels; ascending and descending to the school of God's children, waiting upon them at all times invisibly; not excluded by the closeness of prisons nor desolateness of wildernesses; and the multitude of evil spirits, passing and standing by them, to tempt them unto evil; but, like unto the foolish bird when he hath hid his head that he sees nobody, he thinks himself altogether unseen; and then counts himself solitary, when his eye can meet with no companion. It was not without cause, that we call a mere fool a natural: for however worldlings have still thought Christians God's fools, we know them the fools of the world. The deepest philosopher that ever was, saving the reverence of the schools, is but an ignorant sot to the simplest Christian; for the weakest Christian may, by plain information, see somewhat into the greatest mysteries of nature, because he hath the eye of reason common with the best; but the best philosopher by all the demonstrations in the world, can conceive nothing of the mysteries of godliness, because he utterly wants the eye of faith. Though my insight into matters of the world be so shallow that my simplicity moveth pity, or maketh sport unto others, it shall be my contentment and happiness that I see further into better matters. That which I see not is worthless, and deserves little better than contempt; that which I see is unspeakable, inestimable, for comfort, for glory.

—*Hall*, 1514–1656.

XIX. *IS CERTAIN TO COMMAND RESPECT.*

(1088.) There is something in a holy life which wonderfully conciliates the minds of men. At first, indeed, like a strong influx of light, it offends their eyes; and the beholders, unable to bear the effulgence of its beams, turn away from it, or perhaps desire its utter extinction. But when it has shone for a long time before them, and they have had sufficient opportunity to contemplate its worth, they are constrained to acknowledge, that "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour;" and they begin to venerate the character, whose virtues at first were occasions of offence.

—*Simeon.*

XX. *HIS INFLUENCE FOR GOOD.*

(1089.) He who is godly is both a diamond and a loadstone; a diamond for the sparkling of his grace; and a loadstone, for his attractive virtue in drawing others to the love of God's precepts.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(1090.) Experienced Christians have told me that they were not so much convinced by a preacher, or a book, as by a fact: that they marked, and kept their eye on, some humble, upright, pious Christian, living above the world, while greatly tried in it, and demonstrating that he was an overcomer of the world by the principle of grace within him.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(1091.) "Let your light shine." If the sun shines on a dull brick or stone, they reflect none of its beams; there is nothing in them capable of this; nor is there in an ungodly man any natural power of reflecting the light of God. But let the sun shine upon a diamond, and see what rays of sparkling beauty it emits. Just so the Christian, who has the grace of the Spirit; when God shines on his soul, beams of celestial loveliness are reflected by him on the world. —*Salter.*

(1092). There is ever a fresh fragrance flowing from the rose of Sharon, increasing in sweetness: so is it with the Christian, whose heart is filled with love to Christ, because he is of one spirit with Christ. There is a holy atmosphere, as it were, about him. Wherever he goes, he is a blessing. He is like a fragrant flower brought into a room, the refreshing odour of which diffuses itself among all

the company. He is like the sandal tree, which diffuses its fragrance to everything that touches it.
—*Salter.*

(1093.) For the purpose of teaching a truth that should inspire and animate our prayers, God has often wrought out His ends by most unlikely means. There are objects in nature not less astonishing for the smallness of the worker than the greatness of the work. Such are the coral walls around those lovely isles that, carpeted with flowers, clothed with palms, and enjoying an everlasting summer, lie scattered like gems on the bosom of the Pacific. These, with the ocean roaring in its fury before them, and behind them the lagoon lying like a molten mirror broken only by the dash of a sea-bird or the dip of a passing oar, are stupendous ramparts. Compared to them our greatest breakwaters dwindle into insignificance. One of these reefs off the coast of New Holland is a thousand miles in length, and how many hundred feet in depth I know not: yet the masons that build these are creatures so small as to be almost invisible. Such mighty works does God accomplish by instruments so mean! a sight that helps a believer—though he has to say with Nehemiah, "I have a great work to do"—to take heart and hope, and say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." —*Guthrie.*

(1094.) His works often follow a good man in this world.

Let me illustrate this by an example. An extensive tract of country in one of our distant colonies was occupied many years ago by forests, where the traveller found only the scantiest means of subsistence. It was inaccessible to all but the few savages who roamed its gloomy solitudes. It is no longer so. Beautiful and fruit-bearing trees now occupy the forest glades, and, providing abundance of nutritious food, have opened up the country to civilised man, and to its savage tribes the blessed influences of the Gospel. It was thus the change was brought about, as I have read or remember the story. Long years ago there lived there a devout man, one who had left his native land, but not, like many others, the profession of its religion behind. Animated with love to Christ and an eager desire to save souls, he was wont to leave the settlement and penetrate those forests to carry the Gospel to their wandering tribes. Ever aiming at doing good, nor confining himself, as is the habit of some, to one way of doing it, he sought, Christ-like, to benefit the bodies as well as the souls of men. So on leaving home he was accustomed, beside his Bible, to carry a store of the stony seeds of those trees that now bless and beautify the country; and though, exposed to perish of famine or fall by the club of the savage, he might never live to see them blossom, ever and anon, as he emerged into a sunny glade, he planted a seed, leaving it to the care of God, the dews, and showers of rain. And now, though his bones have long mouldered into dust, in trees that bear beauty in their blossoms and life in their fruit, his works, done with prayer to God and from love to man, are still following him on earth. While others, who lived to enrich themselves and accumulate fortunes that have sunk amid the wreck of time, are forgotten, this good man's memory, like these trees, blossoms in perennial beauty. He has his name inscribed, not on a mouldering tombstone amid emblems of decay, but on the ever-living face of nature, and on the hearts of grateful generations that sit under the shadow of his piety and enjoy its fruits.

Even so by labours accomplished in the spiritual field the Christian may live after he is dead. Leaving behind them works which shall continue for ages to preserve their memory and follow them here, many through their good words, though dead, are yet speaking,—through their good works, though dead, are yet working. There is no good work or word, indeed, but contains a germ of immortality, and may produce results God only has a mind to measure. Like the tiny stream, which small and shallow where it leaves its cradle, grows as it goes, till, fed by many tributaries, it at length swells into a river that, sweeping by the lands of many tribes, and bearing the sails of many nations on its bosom like the Amazon or Mississippi, makes its floods felt far out from shore, freshening the briny sea, good words have been spoken, and good works done that have grown from small beginnings into incalculable importance. Living through long periods of the world's history, they carry their blessed influences far beyond the land of their birth, even to the ends of the earth. In proof of this let me adduce two remarkable examples, namely, Sabbath schools, and the British and Foreign Bible Society.
—*Guthrie.*

(1095.) The influence of the Christian on posterity is undying. His kind words, like his good deeds, can never die. He who has grown like a cedar in Lebanon will, like the cedar, long after it is cut down, send forth a sweet fragrance.
—*Pearsall.*

XXI. *HIS RELATION TO THE LAW.*

(1096.) [*On a cancelled bond.*] While this obligation was in force, I was in servitude to my parchment; my bond was double to a payment, to a penalty: now, that is discharged, what is it better than a waste scroll; regarded for nothing, but the witness of its own voidance and nullity?

Nor otherwise is it with the severe law of my Creator. Out of Christ, it stands in full force; and binds me over, either to perfect obedience which I cannot possibly perform, or to exquisite torment and eternal death which I am never able to endure. But now that my Saviour hath fastened it cancelled to His Cross, in respect of the rigour and malediction of it, I look upon it as the moment of my past danger and bondage: I know by it how much was owed by me; how much was paid for me. The direction of it is everlasting: the obligation by it unto death is frustrated. I am free from curse, who never can be free from obedience. O Saviour, take Thou glory, and give me peace.
—*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(1097.) As there is need of no law to compel the body to eat or drink, to digest, to sleep, to go, to stand, to sit, or to do the works of nature, for it is ready to do them of itself when the case so requireth, without respect either of reward or punishment, and may not unjustly be said, as concerning these things, not to be under a law: even so, after the same sort altogether, doth the godly man behave himself concerning the works of godliness. He is

carried to the doing of them by his new nature, which is of the Spirit, albeit there were no law at all, and all, both hope of reward and fear of punishment, were taken away.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

XXII. *HIS SAFETY.*

(1098.) A Christian lives in two worlds at one and the same time—the world of flesh and the world of spirit. It is possible to do both. There are certain dangerous gases, which from their weight fall to the lower part of the place where they are, making it destructive for a dog to enter, but safe for a man who holds his head erect. A Christian, as living in the world of flesh, is constantly passing through these. Let him keep his head erect in the spiritual world, and he is safe. He does this so long as the Son of God is the Fountain whence he draws his inspiration, his motives, encouragement, and strength.

—*George Philip.*

(1099.) A terrific tempest swept along; the force of which rent dwellings, uprooted trees, and spread devastation and ruin on every side. And the roaring sea rose in huge waves, which rolled with angry violence upon the great rocks as though they would hurl them from their foundations. On the foaming billows a little creature was washed about; sometimes upon the crest of the mountain wave, and then far down in the trough of the briny deep. Still it rose from its partial submersion; it was tossed about terribly, but never lost utterly; hidden sometimes, and then re-appearing! Could it not be rent asunder like the great dwellings, or torn to pieces like the great trees, or destroyed with the destruction which cast strongholds into ruins? No, it was so light, so buoyant, that it could not sink into the deep waters; so it lived till the storm was no more, and then floated in a calm and tranquil haven. It was a little cork, which no floods can possibly drown.

Love to God is assailed by every force of sin and temptation; but "many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Grace survives every sorrow; and from the last tempest of death it will arise in its Divine life to repose in the place where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest." —*Bowden.*

XXIII. *AN EXILE.*

(1100.) Here we are like branches torn from their stem; like strangers wandering in a foreign land; like fettered captives in a prison, waiting their deliverance; like children, banished for a time from their paternal inheritance and mansion; in a word, like members separated from their body.

—*Massillon.*

(1101.) The believer, living in this world, resembles the son of a great king whom some sad event tore from his royal parent in his cradle; who knows his parent only by the fame of his virtues; who has always a difficult and often an intercepted correspondence with his parent; whose remittances and favours from his parent are always diminished by the hands through which they come to him. With what transport would such a son meet the moment appointed by his father for his return to his natural state! —*Saurin.*

XXIV. *A PILGRIM.*

(1102.) If men have been termed pilgrims, and life a journey, then we may add that the Christian pilgrimage far surpasses all others in the following important particulars: in the goodness of the road —in the beauty of the prospects—in the excellence of the company—and in the vast superiority of the accommodation provided for the Christian traveller when he has finished his course. —*Colton*, 1832.

XXV. *HIS ASPIRATIONS.*

(1103.) A Christian who is pure is upon earth like a bird that is kept fastened down by a string. Poor little bird! it only waits for the moment when the string is cut to fly away. —*Vianney.*

(1104.) A good Christian ought not to be able to endure himself in this world; he languishes on earth. If a little child were down there in the church, and its mother was in the tribune, it would stretch out its little arms to her and if it could not get up the staircase leading to her, it would ask for help, and would not rest till it was in its mother's arms. —*Vianney.*

XXVI. *THE PRIZE THAT IS SET BEFORE HIM.*

(1105.) What a glorious prize is this set before us—what a glorious incentive for our immortal energies! Life! the only thing worth calling life —the life of God in the soul—a life whose infancy is on earth, and its perfected manhood in heaven. What is there worthy of aspiration in comparison with this? What though other earthly blessings be wanting, if you have this everlasting possession? What though outward things may elude your grasp, and perish in the very using, if you have "the better part" which is indestructible? What would the sculptor care though his packing-case be broken, if the priceless marble group which it contains escape uninjured? What would the mother care though her cradle be burnt in the flaming house, if her living child, her living treasure be spared? What though the thief have escaped with the casket, if the jewel remain? "Let the movables go," says a good man, "the inheritance is ours!" Be indifferent to what the world gives or withholds. Learn that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Life is not, as the world estimates it, composed of wealth, riches, honours, possessions; these are but the accidents of life—the outer shell—the perishable and corroding gilding. But it is the inner wealth of peace with God—the assurance of His love—a pure heart, a peaceful conscience, the humble hope of eternal fellowship and communion with Him above. —*Macduff.*

XXVII. *THE TRIUMPH THAT AWAITS HIM.*

(1106.) When the Olympic combatant had nobly sustained the conflict, and achieved the victory, a thousand joys awaited him, and a thousand honours were heaped upon his head; such as in one short day repaid him for privations, hardships, and toils, numberless and apparently intolerable. The year was called by his name. That name was sounded amidst the clangour of trumpets and the sweeter strains, whether of the warbling flute or of that

living lyre which it was given to the minstrelsy of Greece alone to waken into music. It was inscribed on monuments, and emblazoned in trophies, and entwined with fairest emblems. Henceforth he was the child, not of his family, but of the State. His future patrimony was the common treasure of his rejoicing country. As he advanced within the city of his birth, the very walls were levelled to admit his chariot. The loftiest gates and proudest columns, which told of the glory and the joy of other days, were deemed unworthy to receive him. A new untrodden path was opened, to signalise and to welcome his approach. And thus, preceded by heralds, lighted by torches, and attended by the rush of his applauding fellow citizens, did he make his joyous return to the home of his childhood and the habitation of his fathers. Never, perhaps, amidst the annals of mankind, was a scene more fraught with all that could captivate the senses, or rejoice the heart. Never was a glory more exalted, or a bliss more sweet. But what is this compared with the triumph of the Christian conqueror, when he shall have run not an earthly but a heavenly race; when he shall break from the grasp, not of mortal but infernal antagonists; when he shall have "fought the good fight, and finished his course, and kept the faith, and henceforth there is laid up for him," not a perishable garland, but a deathless crown—"that crown of righteousness that fadeth not away!" What is even this, however dazzling or however rapturous, compared with the glory of that day, when thus "an entrance shall be administered unto him *abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour!" —*M'All.*

XXVIII. *THE WISDOM OF HIS CHOICE.*

(1107.) It is not much that the good man ventures: after this life, if there be no God, he is as well as the bad; but if there be a God, is infinitely better; even as much as unspeakable and eternal happiness is better than extreme and endless misery.
—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(1108.) Indisputably, the firm believers in the gospel have a great advantage over all others,—for this simple reason, that if true, they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life, without subsequent disappointment, since (at the worst of them) "out of nothing nothing can arise," not even sorrow. —*Lord Byron: Letter to J. Shepherd, Pisa, Dec.* 8, 1821.

XXIX. *HIS DEATH.*

(1109.) It is storied of Godfrey, Duke of Bouillon, that when, in that his expedition to the Holy Land, he came within view of Jerusalem, his army, seeing the high turrets, goodly buildings, and fair fronts (though but, as it were, as so many skeletons of far more glorious bodies), being even transported with the joyfulness of such a sight, gave a mighty shout, that the earth was verily thought to ring with the noise thereof. Such is the rejoicing of a godly man in death, when he doth not see the turrets and towers of an earthly, but the spiritual building of a heavenly Jerusalem, and his soul ready to take possession of them. How doth he delight in his dissolution, especially when he sees grace changing into glory, hope into fruition, faith into vision, and love into perfect comprehension! Such and so great are the exultations of his spirit, such mighty workings and shoutings of the heart, as cannot be expressed!
—*Spencer*, 1658.

(1110). It is our happiness, as Christians, that however we may change our place, we shall never change our object. Whatever we lose, we shall not lose that which we esteem "better than life." God has made to us this gracious promise—"I will dwell in them, and walk in them." And though we may endure much affliction, and pass through many deep waters, yet this is our honour and comfort—"The Lord is with us!" And then, what is difficulty?—what is tribulation?—what is death?—Death to a Christian is but an entrance into the city of God! it is but joining a more blessed company, and singing in a more exalted strain than he can do in this world. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(1111.) That death which men dread is to them swallowed up in victory. It is but the passing shadow between faith and sight, hope and full fruition, transient and transparent as the last filmy cloud that veils for a moment the sunrise. The chamber of death is none other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven. Oh, the dying of the Christian is not a fading away; it is an apotheosis, a transfiguration, a bursting into blossom. It is a triumph, and not a sadness. It is like the setting of the sun on a calm summer evening, which makes the western sky ablaze with splendour, and glorifies even the dark clouds that gather round His descent. It is like the changing of the sombre green foliage of summer into the gorgeous brightness of the autumnal trees, investing even the sadness of decay and death with an unearthly beauty. Who, on beholding such a marvellous proof of the transforming and sustaining power of grace, would not exclaim with Balaam's earnestness, and more than Balaam's purpose of attainment: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his"? —*Macmillan.*

XXX. *HIS FUTURE PERFECTNESS AND GLORY.*

(1112.) When we see one in the streets, from every dunghill, gather old pieces of rags and dirty clouts, little would we think that of those old rotten rags, beaten together in the mill, there should be made such pure fine white paper as afterwards we see there is. Thus, the poor despised children of God may be cast out into the world as dung and dross, may be smeared and smutted all over with lying amongst the pots; they may be in tears, perhaps in blood, both broken-hearted and broken-boned; yet, for all this, they are not to despair, for God will make them one day shine in joy, like the bright stars of heaven, and make of them royal, imperial paper, wherein He will write His own name for ever. —*Balcanquel*, 1623.

(1113.) A pure soul is like a fine pearl. As long as it is hidden in the shell at the bottom of the sea, no one thinks of admiring it. But if you bring it into the sunshine, this pearl will shine and attract all eyes. Thus the pure soul, which is hidden from the eyes of the world, will one day shine before the angels in the sunshine of eternity. —*Vianney.*

(1114.) You look on a poor, praying, self-denying believer, but you look not before you on a saint that shall reign with Christ, and judge the world, "when He cometh to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." You see them "sow their seed in tears," but you see it not springing up; nor do you foresee the joyful harvest. You see them following Christ through tribulation, bearing His cross, and despising the shame; but you see them not yet sitting down with Him on their thrones. The *fight* you see, but the *triumph* you see not. You see them tossed at sea, but you know not how sure a pilot they have; nor do you see the riches of their freight. You see sickness or persecution unpinning their corruptible rags, and death undressing them, but you see not the clothes which they are putting on. You see them laid asleep by death; but you see not their awaking; nor the rising of their sun, when "the righteous shall have dominion in the morning." The man that is dead to the world you see; but you see not "the life that is hid with Christ in God," nor their "appearing with Him in glory, when Christ, who is their life, appears." Your unbelieving souls imagine there will be no May or harvest because it is now winter with us. You think the rose and beauteous flowers, which are promised us in that spring, are but delusions, because you know not the virtue of that life that is in the root, nor the powerful influence of that Sun of the believer. You see the dead body, but you see not the soul, alive with Christ, retired into its root. You see the candle put out, and know not whither the flame is gone, and think not how small a touch of the yet living soul will light it again.

—*Salter.*

(1115.) The mind of a natural man is darkened and disturbed by passion, and, except some occasional feelings of terror, gives no indication of the existence of the Deity. It is like the ocean lying under a threatening sky, and ruffled with the wind, which gives no distinct reflection of the lights of the heavens, yet catches and flashes back an occasional gleam, which indicates their existence. When the soul is restored to the favour of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, it is as when God says to the sea, "Peace, be still," and immediately its fury subsides, and its heaving billows begin to rock themselves to rest, while the clouds gradually disperse, and the sun shines out upon it, and its reflections become more distinct and more general, and the whole scene assumes an air of greater cheerfulness. But when the soul shall be for ever delivered from the influence of all agitating passions, and shall be brought into the presence of God, it will be as a calm expanse of water lying under a serene sky, with the sun beaming full upon it, which then gleams and sparkles with a brightness that is overpowering to human vision. Then every feature in the majestic and lovely character of God will have its respondent reflection on the souls of His people: and as the untroubled ocean reflects in succession the various exhibitions of the works of God, presented by a revolving and perpetually changing sky, so their souls will be the subjects of ever-varying affections, excited by a continued succession of new and wonderful displays of the character and attributes of the Deity.

—*Salter.*

(1116.) In the little tiny seed we can but ill descry the beauteous or stately tree which is to spring from it. Had we never known the beauties of a full-blown rose, we could not foretell from looking on the bud the future splendour of the flower, nor trace the blaze of a meridian day in a morning sky. So when we consider the soul in her feeble state, disfigured and defaced, and with but little of heaven's comeliness upon it—we could never anticipate, from its close alliance with a perishing body, that "this corruptible shall put on incorruption," and the soul shine forth in all the glories of the divine image. —*Salter.*

(1117.) "The night is far spent and the day is at hand." How beautifully this figure describes the Christian's earthly experience. The night of his natural condition is past, the day of his glorification is at hand. At present, his experience partakes of a commingling of the elements of the past night, and of the elements of the coming day. But there is an increasing ascendency of the light of the day over the darkness of the night. And this transition from night to day is produced, not by the introduction of darkness into light, but of light into darkness. The glorious light of the gospel shines into our hearts, and gives us foreglimpses of heaven. The coming day shall have no night. Let us awake and await the coming of day. "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

(1118.) We know not what shall be. As yet the veil is over us. We can only catch a faint gleam of the splendour of the inheritance of the sons of God. We are like men standing outside some mighty temple, seeing now and then the glory streaming through its gorgeous windows, and hearing faintly the music rolling through its gorgeous dome. But soon the veil shall be lifted, and we shall "know even as we are known."

(1119.) When gold was first discovered in California, they used to saw timber in New England, and frame it into buildings ready to be put up, and stow them into the hold of ships, and carry a whole village in one ship, to be put up in that new region. And suppose a man, on hearing that there was a whole village in the hold of a ship, had gone down to see what a village looked like? When he gets where it is, all that he can see is an immense heap of bricks, and lime, and tools, and planks, and boards, and timbers with all sorts of holes in them; and he goes up and says, "Well, if that is a village, deliver me from a village!" He laughs at it. No man can convince him that it is a village. Now, land your stores, and take these timbers that have been fitted, and these boards that have been planed, and painted, and fixed, on the far-off New England shore, and carry them up under the shadow of an evergreen hill, and put them together, making of them cozy white houses, with their little yards, and their flowers; and then bring this man out of the ship, and say, "There is the village, cut out on one shore, and set up on another!" Would he not change his mind?

This is God's sawyard. He is sawing out timber; and you are that timber. To-day he is ripping you with the saw. To-morrow he is smoothing you with a plane. The next day he is rubbing up the surface with some kind of a rasp. He plies you with hammer, and nails, and screws, and bolts, and all sorts of instruments. This great world carries you like

the hull of a ship. You are sailing to that land where all these things, which are being fitted and prepared here, are to be set up. And you can never imagine from what you see here what is to be there. You would not know yourself if you were to see yourself as you are to be. If a man could be projected outside of himself, and walk by himself, as he will be in the other life, he would say, "Who is that?" He would not know himself, such is the exceeding glory of that change which will be wrought in us, when all parts of our being have been developed and educated, and we are what God thought of and meant when He invented man.

—*Beecher.*

CHRISTIANITY.

1. The last and most glorious of the Divine revelations.

(1120.) God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets; but the complete revelation of His will and His grace was reserved for the appearance of His "only begotten Son" in our world. As the evening star precedes, in the firmament, the breaking forth of the heavenly host in all their splendour; so the announcement of the first promise was preparatory to the brighter light which beamed on the patriarchal age: and as the light of the full-orbed moon walking in all her brightness conceals from the view the twinkling stars, so the light of the Mosaic dispensation, and the prophetic revelations with which it was accompanied, eclipsed all the splendour which had preceded it. But even resplendent as the glory of Sinai was, it cannot endure comparison with the unspeakably more transcendent glory which was shed upon the Church and the world when the great "Sun of righteousness" Himself arose with healing under His wings. These were only as the light of the stars, or of the moon, which disappear and are hid in the cloudless radiance of meridian day (2 Cor. iii. 7–11). —*Ewing.*

(1121.) The main distinction between real Christianity and the system of the bulk of nominal Christians chiefly consists in the different place which is assigned in the two schemes to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. These, in the scheme of nominal Christians, if admitted at all, appear but like the stars of the firmament to the ordinary eye. Those splendid luminaries draw forth, perhaps, occasionally a transient expression of admiration when we behold their beauty, or hear of their distances, magnitudes, or properties; now and then, too, we are led, perhaps, to muse upon their possible uses; but, however curious as subjects of speculation, it must, after all, be confessed they twinkle to the common observer with a vain and idle lustre; and except in the dreams of the astrologer have no influence on human happiness, or any concern with the course and order of the world. But to the *real* Christian, on the contrary, *these peculiar doctrines constitute the centre to which he gravitates! the very sun of his system! the origin of all that is excellent and lovely! the source of light, and life, and motion, and genial warmth, and plastic energy!* Dim is the light of reason, and cold and comfortless our state while left to her unassisted guidance. Even the Old Testament itself, though a revelation from heaven, shines but with feeble and scanty rays. But the blessed truths of the Gospel are now unveiled to *our* eyes, and *we* are called upon to behold and to enjoy "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," in the full radiance of its meridian splendour. The words of inspiration best express our highly-favoured state: "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

—*Wilberforce.*

2. Indisputable facts concerning it.

(1.) *It is a system of wonders.*

(1122.) Christianity is a system of wonders. It enjoins upon mar to acknowledge himself vile,—yea, abominable; yet commands him to aspire to a likeness to God! Without such a counterpoise, his elevation would render him fearfully vain, or his abasement hopelessly abject. —*Pascal.*

(2.) *As a system of morality it is unsurpassed.*

(1123.) All systems of morality are fine. The Gospel alone has exhibited a complete assemblage of the principles of morality, divested of all absurdity. It is not composed, like your creed, of a few commonplace sentences put into bad verse. Do you wish to see that which is really sublime? Repeat the Lord's Prayer. —*Napoleon I.*

(3.) *No other religion does more to promote virtue and the national welfare.*

(1124.) There was never law, or sect, or opinion, did so much magnify goodness as the Christian religion doth. —*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(1125.) The great received articles of the Christian religion have been so clearly proved, from the authority of that divine revelation in which they are delivered, that it is impossible for those who have ears to hear, and eyes to see, not to be convinced of them. But were it possible for anything in the Christian faith to be erroneous, I can find no ill consequences in adhering to it. The great points of the incarnation and sufferings of our Saviour produce naturally such habits of virtue in the mind of man, that, I say, supposing it were possible for us to be mistaken in them, the infidel himself must at least allow that no other system of religion could so effectually contribute to the heightening morality. They give us great ideas of the dignity of human nature, and of the love which the Supreme Being bears to His creatures, and consequently engage us in the highest acts of duty towards our Creator, our neighbour, and ourselves.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(1126.) No religion ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind. It makes right reason a law in every possible definition of the word. And therefore, even supposing it to have been purely a human invention, it had been the most amiable and the most useful invention that was ever imposed on mankind for their good.

—*Lord Bolingbroke*, 1078–1751.

(1127.) What other science can even make a pretension to dethrone oppression, to abolish slavery, to exclude war, to extirpate fraud, to banish violence, to revive the withered blossoms of paradise? Such are the pretensions and blessings of genuine Chris-

tianity; and wherever genuine Christianity prevails, they are experienced. Thus it accomplishes its promises on earth, where alone it has enemies: it will therefore accomplish them in heaven, where its friends reign. —*Gregory*, 1774-1841.

(1128.) The following is related of the celebrated Dr. Belknap:

Upon a certain occasion, in the presence of a vast and brilliant assemblage, a person more noted for his self-esteem than for his learning, was speaking against the Christian religion in terms of the severest scorn and derision.

Unfortunately for the orator, his remarks were overheard by the doctor who, stepping up to him, asked: "Well, sir, have you found a religion that is better?" The scoffer, considerably abashed by this unlooked-for question, was forced to acknowledge that thus far he had not. "Well," responded the doctor, "when you have, let me know, and I will join you in adopting it."

The rebuke was as wise as it was just.

(4.) *Its effects upon society have been highly beneficial.*

(1129.) The influence of Christianity has been very efficient toward the introduction of a better and more enlightened sense of right and justice among the several governments of Europe. It taught the duty of benevolence to strangers, of humanity to the vanquished, of the obligation of good faith,—of the sin of murder, revenge, and rapacity. The history of Europe during the earlier periods of modern history abounds with interesting and strong cases to show the authority of the Church over turbulent princes and fierce warriors, and the effect of that authority in meliorating manners, checking violence, and introducing a system of morals which inculcated peace, moderation, and justice.

—*Chancellor Kent.*

(1130.) Christianity is the companion of liberty in all its conflicts,—the cradle of its infancy and the divine source of its claims. —*De Tocqueville.*

(5.) *It blesses and ennobles the poor.*

(1131.) Since the revelation of Christianity all moral thought has been sanctified by religion. Religion has given to it a purity, a solemnity, a sublimity which even amongst the noblest of the heathen we shall look for in vain. The knowledge that shone by fits and dimly on the eyes of Socrates and Plato, "that rolled in vain to find the light," has descended over many lands into the "huts where poor men lie;" and thoughts are familiar there, beneath the low and smoking roofs, higher far than ever flowed from Grecian sage meditating among the magnificence of his pillared temples.

—*Professor John Wilson.*
(*Recreations of Christopher North.*)

(6.) *The effect of universal obedience to it would be an unexampled state of national happiness.*

(1132.) If all were perfect Christians, individuals would do their duty; the people would be obedient to the laws; the magistrates incorrupt; and there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a state.

—*J. L. Rousseau.*

(7.) *It delivers those who accept it from the fear of death.*

(1133.) We recently called on a lady of culture and refinement, who, having just taken possession of a new house with elegant surroundings, had suddenly been called to face the approach of a fearful disease that seemed beyond human power to avert. With a loving husband and a winsome daughter, with a home filled with evidences of wealth and taste, encircled by warm, true-hearted friends, with everything earthly to make life glad and joyous, we remarked: "You have everything to live for. Does it not depress you to think that all this must be given up if this disease is not stayed?" The reply, simple, earnest, truthful: "Why, I have everything to die for," indicated the rich, abiding wealth of a soul whose trust is stayed on God, and showed that she was lifted up into a life of serenity and peace that could never be shaken by storms and tempests. Can any faith or any religion save that of the Christian enable one thus to triumph over pain, thus to look upon death, thus to contemplate separation from the dear ones linked by the holiest of earthly ties?

3. How difficult it is for us to appreciate its blessings.

(1134.) We live surrounded by Christian institutions; breathe an atmosphere saturated by Christianity. It is exceedingly difficult even to imagine another state of things. In the enjoyment of domestic purity it is difficult to conceive the debasing effects of polygamy: in the midst of political liberty to conceive of the blighting power of slavery: in scientific progress to imagine mental stagnation: in religious liberty and free goodness to fancy the reign of superstition.

Yet to realise the blessings of health, we must sit by the sick-bed; to feel what light is, we must descend into the mine and see the emaciated forms which dwindle away in darkness; to know what the blessing of sunshine is, go down into the valleys where stunted vegetation and dim vapours tell of a scene on which the sun scarcely shines two hours in the day: and to know what we have from Christianity, it is well to cast the eyes sometimes over the darkness from which the Advent of Christ redeemed us. —*Robertson*, 1816-1853.

4. The extent of its benefits are not yet discernible.

(1135.) The work of Christianity we cannot see in full. It is a work which is largely in future, though some of it is here.

Do you recollect going out into Prospect Park in Brooklyn when they were first laying it out? They were going to have a great park; and it *is* a great park. It is one of the most beautiful parks in the world, and you ought to be more proud of it than you are. But how did they go to work to make it? What did they do first? They took off everything that was beautiful from the surface, and heaped it in large stacks. They took off the sod and threw up the sub-soil, and the ground was like a man that had been skinned all over. It was ugly and hideous. By and by, however, there were some little bits improved. They spread out some soil, and put in some shrubs, and some small points here and there were made quite attractive. And they followed up this process little by little. The great bulk of the park, so far as its surface was concerned, was to be created; and here came out a bit, and there a bit, from year to year; and people said, "It is beautiful as far as it goes."

Men grow just so when God takes hold of them, and they begin to be Christians. The old growths are cleaned away, and transformations take place under the Divine influence. Oftentimes a man looks less beautiful after the work of grace has first begun in him than he did before; but gradually his nature changes. In some directions it improves. One part after another begins to be wrought out by the Divine discipline, and by the concurrent desire of men for education. Little by little the lineaments of the Divine character come up. But the whole of it cannot appear until you get into a climate that is without winter. This is such a world that the highest degrees of human excellence cannot be attained until we get out of it. The lower forms, the foundation elements of the great structure, which require a certain physical manipulation, are begun and carried forward here; but as plants that are grown in greenhouses are not taken out of doors until winter is gone, and have their glory in summer, so in this greenhouse of a world, as it were, we are sprouted; and it is not until summer dawns on this sphere, and we are transplanted to a soil where frosts no longer come, that we show all the power and beauty of our character. —*Beecher.*

5. Is a religion of principles.

(1136.) Moses, who had to provide for the wants of a particular people at a time when religion was only in its childhood, was instructed to teach them, as we treat children, and to give them rules, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." . . . . Jesus Christ, who spake for all men, for all nations, for all ages, did not lay down rules like Moses; did not say, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." No; by an exertion of His power and wisdom, more marvellous to a thinking mind than any, even the greatest miracle He ever wrought, He at once by a few plain words set religion free from all her former swaddling-clothes and leading-strings. . . . . In the room of burdensome rites and former rules, He gave us the law of faith and love; and thereby made His doctrine a *doctrine of principles*,—living, active, pure, universal, and eternal. —*A. W. Hare.*

6. Its distinctive doctrine.

(1137.) The distinctive doctrine of Christianity is the doctrine of a Divine humanity. Whatever else Christianity derived from other religions, this, at least, was underived. Whatever else was interwoven into the Christian web from the threads spun by Jewish sage or heathen philosopher, this was not. It was itself the warp on which the whole Christian woof was woven. Both Eastern and Western religions had seen this truth of God and man in one, floating, a nebulous dream, before them, and had tried to resolve it into the guiding-star of their thought, but their efforts closed in failure. The oriental, beginning with God condescending to man, ended, at the very moment when he seemed nearest to the true conception, in a deification of the universe in which God and man were both lost. The Western, beginning with man aspiring to God, found its grave in the Alexandrian Platonism, which, rejecting the deified world of the Greeks, ended in the conception of one divine substance, before which everything finite was only phenomenal, not actual. The Greek ended where the Hindu began. The circle of failure was complete. But the proclamation of the true idea explained the failure, and realised the dream. Christ came, and the fountain idea of a true union of the divine and human broke upward through the mountain-top of the world, and streamed on all sides down through the radiating valleys of the nations, drawing into itself all the local religious streams, and developing from itself new rivers of spiritual ideas. —*Stopford Brooke.*

7. Challenges Inquiry.

(1138.) Our religion is a religion that dares to be understood; that offers itself to the search of the inquisitive, to the inspection of the severest and the most awakened reason; for, being secure of her substantial truth and purity, she knows that for her to be seen and looked into is to be embraced and admired; as there needs no greater argument for men to love the light than to see it.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

8. Will bear investigation.

(1139.) As to the Christian religion, besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favour from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth after a serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man, a lawyer, a man accustomed to examine evidence, and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse, but a man of the world, who certainly had no bias on the side of religion. Sir Isaac Newton set out an infidel, and came to be a very firm believer. —*Dr. S. Johnson.*

9. Many of its doctrines are necessarily mysterious.

(1140.) In the nature of the things which are the subject-matter of the Christian religion, there are these three properties which must of necessity render them mysterious, obscure, and of difficult apprehension:—

First, their surpassing greatness and inequality to the mind of man. The Christian religion, as to a great part of it, is but an instrument to convey right conceptions of God into the soul of man, so far as it is capable of receiving them. But how can such vast and mighty things be crowded into a little, finite understanding?

A second qualification of the chief things treated of in our religion, and which must needs render them mysterious, is their spirituality and abstraction from all sensible and corporeal matter; of which sort of things it is impossible for the understanding of man to form to itself an exact idea: so that when we hear or read that God is a Spirit, and that angels and the souls of men are spirits, our apprehensions are utterly at a loss how to form any notion of them, but are put to float and wander in an endless maze of conjectures, and know not certainly what to fix upon. For in this case we can fetch in no information or relief to our understandings from our senses; no picture or draught of these things from the reports of the eye; but we are left entirely to the uncertainties of fancy, to the flights and ventures of a bold imagination.

And here to illustrate the case a little, let us imagine a man who was born blind, able upon bare hearsay to conceive in his mind all the varieties and curiosities of colour, to draw an exact scheme of Constantinople, or a map of France: to describe the towns, point out the rivers, and distinguish the situations of these and the like great extraordinary

places: and when such an one is able to do all this, and not before, then perhaps may we also apprehend what a spirit, an angel, or an immaterial being is. The difficulty of understanding which sufficiently appears from this consideration, that in all the descriptions which we make of God, angels, and spirits, we still describe them by such things as we see. And when we have done, do this argument right again on the other side: as it would be extremely irrational for a blind man to conclude and affirm positively that there neither are nor can be any such things as colours, pictures, or landscapes, because he finds that he cannot form to himself any true notion of them; so would it be equally, or rather superlatively more unreasonable for us to deny the great articles of our Christianity, because we cannot frame in our minds any exact representation of them. The Christian religion, which treats of and is conversant about such things, must, of necessity, be mysterious.

A third property of matters belonging to Christianity, and which also renders them mysterious, is their strangeness and unreducibleness to the common methods and observations of nature. I, for my part, cannot look upon anything (whatsoever others can) as a more fundamental article of the Christian religion than Christ's satisfaction for sin, by which alone the lost sons of Adam are reconciled to their offended God, and so put into new capacities of salvation; and yet, perhaps, there is nothing more surprising, strange, and out of the road of common reason than this, if compared with the general course and way of men's acting. Now that He who was the offended person should project and provide a satisfaction to Himself in the behalf of those who had offended Him, and with so much zeal solicit a reconciliation with those whom He had no need of being reconciled unto, but might with equal justice and honour have destroyed them, was a thing quite beside the common course of this world; and much more was it so, that a Father should deliver up an innocent and infinitely beloved Son to be sacrificed for the redemption of His justly hated and abhorred enemies; and on the other hand, that a Son who loved His Father as much as He could be loved by Him, should lay down His life for the declared enemies of Him whom He so transcendantly loved, and of Himself too; this, I say, was such a transaction, as we can find nothing analogous to in all the dealings of men, and cannot but be owned as wholly beside, if not also directly contrary to, all human methods. And so true is this, that several things expressly affirmed of God in Scripture, relating to the prime articles of our faith, are denied or eluded by the Arians and Socinians, because they cross and contradict the notions taken up by them from what they have observed in created beings, and particularly in men; which yet is a gross fallacy and inconsequence, concluding *ab imparibus tanquam paribus*, and more than sufficiently blown off by that one passage of the prophet concerning Almighty God, that "His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways" (Isa. lv. 8), to which we may add, that neither is His nature as our nature, nor His Divine Persons as our persons.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

10. Can be judged rightly only from within.

(1141.) You have seen, it may be, an antique, Italian painted window, with the bright Italian sunshine glowing through it. It is the special excellence of pictured glass that the light which falls merely on the outside of other pictures is here interfused throughout the work, illuminating the design, and investing it with a living radiance . . . Christian faith is a grand cathedral, with Divinely pictured windows. Standing without you see no glory, nor can possibly imagine any. Nothing is visible but the merest outline of dusky shapes. Standing within all is clear and defined, every ray of light reveals an army of unspeakable splendours. —*Ruskin.*

11. How assurance of its truth is to be attained.

(1142.) Our Saviour prescribes men an unfailing method to assure themselves of the truth of this doctrine (John vii. 17). "If any one," says He, "will do the will of the Father, he shall know of My doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." If men could but be brought to look upon the *agenda* of Christianity as suitable, they would never judge the *credenda* of it irrational. There is a strange intercourse and mutual corroboration between faith and practice. For as belief first engages practice, so practice strengthens and confirms belief. The body first imparts heat to the garment, but the garment returns it with advantage to the body. God beams in peculiar evidences and discoveries of the truth to such as embrace it in their affections and own it in their actions.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(1143.) You never, in this age of inquiry, can fortify Christianity against the most sifting and critical investigations in regard to its history and its external instruments. There will be an assaulting of revealed religion. But I hold that you no more touch Christianity when you assault it in its external forms of development, than you touch a man when you pierce his robe and do not touch his body, or when you pierce his arm and do not touch his heart. The way to test Christianity is, not to examine its origin, nor to examine its incarnations, but to see whether it has the power to produce the fruits that it declares it has, and whether it produces those fruits. Experimentals are the tests of Christianity, and not those things which are dogmatic, historic, or philosophic, in the ordinary sense of the term. It is to be experimentally discerned. The logic by which it is tested is in the heart.

Here sit philosophers in grave argument round about a harp. It is declared that that was David's harp, and that it is able to make, not only solemn, but all harmonic and wondrous sounds. One man opposes this view, because the wood bears evidence of never having come down from olden times. He says that it evidently is modern wood. Another man examines the strings, and insists upon it that he sees in them proof that it cannot be David's harp. Another man gives it as his deliberate opinion that it not only is not David's harp, but is no harp—that it is an unmusical thing which does not deserve the name of a harp. And so they reason about the instrument for half-a-day, without any of them touching it; until a gray bearded old harper comes in, and instead of answering their objections takes a stool, and sits up to the harp, and sweeping his hand from side to side over the strings, wakes its long-forgotten sounds, and rings out the ballad or the hymn; and then these men sit entranced. They laboured to prove that the instrument was not capable of giving forth music, but neglected to try it; and the moment the old harper laid his hand on it, it was its own argument, and it put to silence its defamers.

We hear men discussing as to whether Christianity is true. Now, Christianity is not a thing of the intellect. It belongs to the soul. It is declared that it is possible for a man's soul to catch hold of God, not only, but to spread out and root itself in universal sympathy with men. No argument can be presented that shall touch that proposition. There is but one way of trying it. Let the hand sweep over the chords of the soul, and if they answer, all argument is impertinent. I declare that the truth of Christianity stands in the experience of it, and that no argument can invalidate it. If a man says "I love God, and I desire the welfare of all mankind, and I am filled with hope and peace," what can take his experience away from him? For Christianity is an experience, not a conviction; it is a possession, not a mere belief of the outward understanding

To this Christianity I commend you. I commend you to the love of God, to the love of men, and to the life which shall consist in growing up unto Him which is the Head, Christ Jesus, in love.

—*Beecher.*

12. The experience of Christians is the best evidence that Christianity is from God.

(1144.) If all the blind men in the kingdom should endeavour to bear me down that the sun is not bright, or that the rainbow has no colours, I would still believe my own eyes. I have seen them both, they have not. I cannot prove to their satisfaction what I assert, because they are destitute of sight, the necessary medium; yet their exceptions produce no uncertainty in my mind; they would not—they could not—hesitate a moment, if they were not blind. Just so they who have been taught of God, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have an experimental perception of the truth which renders them proof against all the sophistry of infidels. I am persuaded we have many plain people here, who, if a wise man of the world was to suggest that the Bible is a human invention, would be quite at a loss how to answer him by arguments drawn from external evidences; yet they have found such effects from this blessed Book that they would be no more moved by the insinuation, than if they were told that a cunning man, or set of men, invented the sun, and placed it in the firmament. So if a wise Socinian was to tell them that the Saviour was only a man like themselves, they would conceive just such an opinion of his skill in divinity as a philosopher would do of a clown's skill in astronomy, who should affirm that the sun was no bigger than a cart-wheel.

—*Newton*, 1725-1807.

(1145.) I observe a sort of evidence of the truth of Christianity, which none but a Christian can have, and which partly depends upon a moral taste. Like a man who has an ear for music, a Christian will perceive harmony and sweetness where another, who has not this taste, will find nothing but noise.

—*Cecil*, 1748-1810.

(1146.) A Christian has also an evidence of experience; like that of a man who has long dwelt in a house which another has only walked round and examined on the outside. The external observer may question whether anything is to be found in the house at which he looks; but it is much too late for *us* to doubt who have long inhabited the dwelling; *we* cannot unknow what we have known: *we* cannot but have the clearest conviction that till we were brought into this house, we were destitute of the shelter, provisions, and comforts which we now enjoy, and of which we are so desirous that others should be partakers. I stand like one who for a long time has been imposed upon by toys and tinsel, but at length feels satisfied that he has found gold. Some, indeed, try to persuade me that I am still imposed upon, and that what I take for gold is but base metal. I therefore proceed to prove my gold by every method of trial which I can devise: I put it into the scale; I try it in the fire; I bring it to the touchstone; I place it under the hammer; and I find it still pure gold. After all this, shall I regard their cry who have never thus tried it, and whose fears and lusts oppose the trial?

—*Cecil*, 1748-1810.

(1147.) I have been informed that not long ago a certain infidel lecturer gave an opportunity to persons to reply to him after his oration, and he was of course expecting that one or two rashly zealous young men would rise to advance the common arguments for Christianity, which he was quite prepared, by hook or crook, to battle with or laugh down. Instead of reasoners, an old lady, carrying a basket, wearing an ancient bonnet, and altogether dressed in an antique fashion which marked both her age and her poverty, came upon the platform. Putting down her basket and umbrella, she began, and said, "I paid threepence to hear something better than Jesus Christ, and I have not heard it. Now, let me tell you what religion has done for me, and then tell me something better, or else you've cheated me out of the threepence which I paid to come in. Now," she said, "I have been a widow thirty years, and I was left with ten children, and I trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ in the depth of poverty, and He appeared for me and comforted me, and helped me to bring up my children so that they have grown up and turned out respectable. None of you can tell what the troubles of a poor lone woman are, but the Lord has made His grace all-sufficient. I was often very sore pressed, but my prayers were heard by my Father in heaven, and I was always delivered. Now, you are going to tell me something better than that—better for a poor woman like me! I have been to the Lord sometimes when I've been very low indeed, and there's been scarcely anything for us to eat, and I've always found His providence has been good and kind to me. And when I lay very sick, I thought I was dying, and my heart was ready to break at leaving my poor fatherless boys and girls, and there was nothing kept me up but the thought of Jesus and His faithful love to my poor soul; and you tell me that it was all nonsense. Those who are young and foolish may believe you, but after what I have gone through I know there is a reality in religion, and it is no fancy. Tell me something better than what God has done for me, or else, I tell you, you have cheated me out of my threepence. Tell me something better!" The lecturer was a good hand at an argument, but such a mode of controversy was novel, and therefore he gave up the contest, and merely said, "Really, the dear old woman was so happy in her delusion he should not like to undeceive her." "No," she said, "that won't do. Truth is truth, and your laughing can't alter it. Jesus Christ has been all this to me, and I could not sit down in the hall and hear you talk against Him without speaking up for Him, and asking you

whether you could tell me something better than what He has done for me. I've tried and proved Him, and that's more than you have."

Herein is power, logic invincible, reasoning not to be gainsayed. The testing and proving of God; getting His love really shed abroad in the heart, this is the great internal evidence of the Gospel.

—*Spurgeon.*

(1148.) What do I care if it should be told to me that Christianity stumbles in philosophy at every step? Let me become personally the recipient of that Divine influence, and my experience is worth more to me than other people's reasonings. You may demonstrate that it is not possible for a flower to grow in a given vale, but if I find it there, what is your reasoning worth to me? Flowers are generally the best evidence as to where they will or will not grow, botanists to the contrary notwithstanding.

I have bought tropical morning-glory seeds for the greenhouse, with the assurance of the seedsman that I could not raise them out of doors. I *did* raise them out of doors; that is the answer I gave to him. "But," he says "it is not possible, in our summer, to raise them;" but I *did* it. "The summer is not long enough, or warm enough, to raise them here." I *have raised* them, and I shall not give up my argument upon that question.

If a man says that there never was a Christ, or that He was only a man, I answer that I have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets spake. I have asked Him, "What wilt Thou?" and He has told me. I have put my soul and my heart, as He has commanded me, into His hand. Will any man now undertake to reason me out of the result? I *know* in whom I have trusted, and know what He has done for me. Is the music of my life, the inspiration of every faculty, the transformation of my views, the regeneration of my hopes—are these nothing? Am I to go back eighteen hundred years, with the sceptical philosopher, to reason about Jerusalem and about the Lord Jesus Christ, and not reason upon my own actual, daily, positive experience?

If a man, intelligent in other respects, not given to enthusiasm, not diseased by morbid feelings, but rational in all things, whom you would believe in respect to any and all of the transactions of daily life, bears witness, not alone, but with multitudes—with a long succession of witnesses—that there is such a fact as Christ in the soul, and the hope of glory; that there is such an experience as that the Holy Ghost descends into the soul, cleanses it, inspires it, recognises it, fills it with faith, and love, and hope, and joy, and that it abides with us—is not that testimony to be accepted? Will you accept a man's reasoning upon things that happened a thousand years ago, and reject his positive testimony in regard to things that are occurring every day? Nay! When there is a succession of witnesses coming through a period of more than two thousand years down to us, bearing witness in every possible emergency—bearing witness from the stake; from the dungeon; from the battle-field; from the mountain cave; from sick-chambers—when we see human life transformed—characters effulging from weakness and obscurity—when all the records of the past are made luminous with the memorials of what has been done in men's souls by the power of God through Jesus Christ, are we to take this long cloud of witnesses that have lived but are now passed away, and all that now live and bear the same testimony, and count it all as nothing?

—*Beecher.*

13. Importance of a study of its evidences.

(1149.) "Evidences of Christianity!" exclaims the late Mr. Coleridge in one of the most popular of his prose works; "I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it. . . . . and you may safely trust it to its own evidence."

There can be little doubt, I think, that these words express the prevailing sentiments of a very considerable number of Christians at the present day; and it cannot be denied that, for many years back, there has been a general distaste for that apologetic religious literature which was popular in the last century.

This has doubtless been greatly owing to a reaction from the disproportionate attention paid to such literature by the divines of a former age, and has taken place in virtue of that general rule which seems to ordain that an over value of any branch of knowledge in one generation shall be attended by an unjust depreciation of it in the next. The argumentative value of things even so important as the evidences of religion may, unquestionably, engross the public mind too much; and he who is continually occupied in contemplating and stating the proofs of its truth will fail of reaching the just standard of a Christian teacher or a Christian man. Such a person will be like a prince who employs all his time, and strength, and resources in raising fortresses about a territory which he does not carefully govern; or like a landlord who lives but to accumulate muniments of an estate which he neglects to till. But the folly of such conduct would be no excuse for suffering our frontiers to lie open, or our title-deeds to be lost. Yet something very like such advice is sometimes offered to us. Our forefathers, perhaps, were too apt to include all strong energy of emotion and play of fancy in their general and unsparing censures of enthusiasm; and some of us are disposed to redress the balance by appealing exclusively to the imagination and the feelings. We see that it will not do to address the head alone, and therefore we will not address it at all, but speak only to the heart. —*Thomson.*

14. What is meant by a "candid" consideration of its evidences.

(1150.) A candid and unbiassed state of mind, which is sometimes called indifference, or impartiality, *i.e.*, of the judgment, does not imply an indifference of the will—an absence of all wish on either side, but merely an absence of all influence of the wishes in forming our decision,—all leaning of the judgment on the side of inclination,—all perversion of the evidence in consequence. That we should wish to find truth on one side, rather than on the other, is in many cases not only unavoidable but commendable; but to think that true which we wish, without impartially weighing the evidence on both sides, is undeniably a folly, though a very common one. If a mode of effectual and speedy cure be proposed to a sick man, he cannot but wish that the result of his inquiries concerning it may be a well-grounded conviction of the safety and efficacy of the remedy prescribed. It would be no mark of wisdom to be indifferent to the restoration of health, but if his wishes should lead him (as is frequently the case) to put implicit confidence in the remedy

without any just grounds for it, he would deservedly be taxed with folly.

In like manner (to take the instance above alluded to), a good man will indeed wish to find the evidence of the Christian religion satisfactory, but will weigh the evidence the more carefully, on account of the importance of the question.

—*Whately.*

15. Its universal adaptation.

(1151.) The grand characteristic of Christianity is adaptation! Its unfolding powers suit themselves to all sorts and conditions of men; its breath of life is native air alike when wafted to the prairies of the West, or borne over the Red Sea waves to the children of the East. It comes like the refreshing rain from heaven passing over the face of the earth, which invigorates equally the tiny blades of grass and the forest monarchs that tower above them. Such is the Gospel of Christ! It comes not for one, but for all. It has a word in season for every man; warning, or comfort, or consolation, support or sympathy for all states and conditions of men.

—*Bellew.*

16. Two arguments for its truth.

(1152.) There are two considerations upon which my faith in Christ is built as upon a rock: the fall of man, the redemption of man, and the resurrection of man, the three cardinal doctrines of our religion, are such as human ingenuity could never have invented; therefore they must be Divine. The other argument is this: If the prophecies have been fulfilled (of which there is abundant demonstration), the Scripture must be the Word of God; and if the Scripture is the Word of God, Christianity must be true. —*Dr. Edward Young*, the poet: *Cowper to Lady Hesketh, July* 12, 1765.

17. Its prohibition of pleasure.

(1153.) Or will they change the note, and instead of pleading that Christianity leads to licentiousness, object that it bears too hard upon the pleasures of mankind, and lays them under too severe restraints; or that its penalties are excessive and cruel? But does it rob mankind of any pleasures worthy the rational nature, worthy the pursuit of creatures formed for immortality, and consistent with the good of the whole? It restrains them indeed, but it is only as a physician restrains his patient from poison or any improper regimen; it restrains men from living like beasts; it restrains them from those pleasures which will ruin their souls and bodies in the event; it restrains them from gratifying a private passion at the expense of the public; in short, it restrains them from making themselves and others miserable. Hard restraint indeed! and the Deists! to be sure, are generous patrons of human liberty, who would free us from such grievances as these! However, this objection lets us into the secret, and informs us of the reason why our pretended free-thinkers are such enemies to Christianity. It is because it checks their lusts, and will not permit them to act as well as to think freely, *i.e.*, as they please.

—*Davies.*

18. Why it is hated.

(1154.) The cause of enmity against real Christianity is in the heart. The angel Gabriel might exhibit the truth, but the heart would rise in enmity. To suppose that there is any way of preaching the Cross so as not to offend the world, is to know nothing of the subject.

There are many occasions, however, of calling forth this enmity. Any man who should bleed me, would put me to pain; but he would greatly aggravate my pain if he rudely tore my skin. Occasions may render the reception of that truth morally impossible which, under the most favourable circumstances, is received with difficulty.

Ignorance in ministers is an occasion of exciting enmity against Christianity. A man may betray ignorance on almost every subject except the way of salvation; but if others see him to be a fool off his own ground, they will think him a fool on that ground. It is a great error to rail against human learning, so as to imply an undervaluing of knowledge. A man may have little of what is called learning, but he must have knowledge. Bunyan was such a man. —*Cecil.*

19. The reasonableness of its requirements.

(1155.) Christianity forbids no necessary occupations, no reasonable indulgences, no innocent relaxations. It allows us to use the world, provided we do not abuse it. It does not spread before us a delicious banquet, and then come with a "touch not, taste not, handle not." All it requires is, that our liberty degenerate not into licentiousness, our amusements into dissipation, our industry into incessant toil, our carefulness into extreme anxiety and endless solicitude. So far from forbidding us to engage in business, it expressly commands us not to be slothful in it, and to labour with our hands for the things that be needful; it enjoins every one to abide in the calling wherein he was called, and perform all the duties of it. It even stigmatises those that provide not for their own, with telling them that they are worse than infidels. When it requires us to "be temperate in all things," it plainly tells us that we *may* use all things temperately; when it directs us to "make our moderation known unto all men," this evidently implies that, within the bounds of moderation, we may enjoy all the reasonable conveniences and comforts of the present life.

—*Porteus.*

(1156.) Now you say, alas! Christianity is hard: I grant it; but gainful and happy. I contemn the difficulty when I respect the advantage. The greatest labours that have answerable requitals are less than the least that have no reward. Believe me, when I look to the reward I would not have the work easier. It is a good Master whom we serve, who not only pays, but gives; not only after the proportion of our earnings, but of His own mercy.

—*Hall*, 1574-1656.

20. Can only be learned by practice.

(1157.) The religion of Jesus Christ is altogether a practical thing. Just consider how we are taught anything else that is practical. It is not by hearing or reading about making shoes that a man becomes a shoemaker, but by trying to make them.

—*A. W. Hare.*

21. Should govern our whole life.

(1158.) Christianity did not come from heaven to be the amusement of an idle hour, to be the food of mere imagination; to be as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and playeth well upon an instrument. No: it is intended to be the guide, the guardian, the companion of all hours; it is intended

to be the food of our immortal spirits; it is intended to be the serious occupation of our whole existence.

—*Bishop Jebb.*

22. Its motive power.

(1159.) Go into a large manufacturing establishment. If you will notice carefully, you will perceive a large shaft running the whole length of the building. To this are attached wheels, and bands go from these wheels to other wheels, and in these is inserted short shafting, and to it are attached augers, saws, knives, and chisels; and by these an immense amount of mechanical work is done. But what is the cause of all this motion? Where is the secret power which makes all this machinery do the work of five hundred men? The answer is easily given. It is steam. Let the steam go down, and this whole machinery would become as still and silent as the grave. So is the love of Christ the main-spring of the gospel—the motive-power which puts all the machinery of Christianity in operation.

—*C. M. Temple.*

23. Is independent of human help.

(1160.) The real security of Christianity is to be found in its benevolent morality, in its exquisite adaptation to the human heart, in the facility with which its scheme accommodates itself to the capacity of every human intellect, in the consolation which it bears to the house of mourning, in the light with which it brightens the great mystery of the grave. To such a system it can bring no addition of dignity or of strength, that it is part and parcel of the common law. It is not now for the first time left to rely on the force of its own evidences and the attractions of its own beauty. Its sublime theology confounded the Grecian schools in the fair conflict of reason with reason. The bravest and wisest of the Cæsars found their arms and their policy unavailing, when opposed to the weapons that were not carnal, and the kingdom that was not of this world. The victory which Porphyry and Diocletian failed to gain is not, to all appearance, reserved for any of those who have, in this age, directed their attacks against the last restraint of the powerful, and the last hope of the wretched. The whole history of Christianity shows that she is in far greater danger of being corrupted by the alliance of power, than of being crushed by its opposition. Those who thrust temporal sovereignty upon her treat her as their prototypes treated her Author. They bow the knee, and spit upon her; they cry "Hail!" and smite her on the cheek; they put a sceptre in her hand, but it is a fragile reed; they crown her, but it is with thorns; they cover with purple the wounds which their own hands have inflicted on her; and inscribe magnificent letters over the cross on which they have fixed her to perish in ignominy and pain.

—*Macaulay*, 1800–1859.

24. Its progress.

(1161.) All the might of the world is now on the side of Christianity. Those barbarous, inchoate powers which still cling to heathenism, are already trembling before the advancing strides of the Christian nations; Christian just enough to rouse all their energies, and to make them intensely ambitious and on the alert to increase their own dominion, without having learned Christianity's highest lesson, the lesson of love.

Even that heathenism which seems to have some power, is only waiting for its time of decay. In vast, undisturbed forests, whose intertwining boughs exclude the light, moisture is generated, and rills, fed by marshes and quiet pools, unite to form running rivers. But let the trees be cut down, and the ground be laid open to the sun, and the swamps will dry up, and the rivers run no more. So is it with the Brahmins, and with all the effete teachers of heathenism. As long as the dense shadows of ignorance brood over the people, they will possess some little trickling power; but let the light of knowledge shine in upon the masses, and the channels of their influence will dry up and be forgotten.

Already, war, with its bloody hand, raps at the gate of empire in India and in China. England presses upon them. Russia is steadily moving through craunching snows to the southward. The great nations, like lions roused from their lairs, are roaring and springing upon the prey, and the little nations, like packs of hungry wolves, are standing by licking their jaws, and waiting for their share of the spoils. The world is out hunting—what? heathenism. And it will be caught; it will be unearthed. A little while and there will be no den so deep, or forest so dark, or island so remote, that it can find refuge.

—*Beecher.*

(1162.) You tell your child that this pine-tree out here in the sandy field is one day going to be as large as that great sonorous pine that sings to every wind in the wood. The child, incredulous, determines to watch and see whether the field-pine really does grow and become as large as you say it will. So, the next morning, he goes out and takes a look at it, and comes back and says, "It has not grown a particle." At night he goes out and looks at it again, and comes back and says, "It has not grown a bit." The next week he goes out, and looks at it again, and comes back and says, "It has not grown yet. Father said it would be as large as the pine-tree in the wood, but I do not see any likelihood of its becoming so."

How long did it take the pine-tree in the wood to grow? Two hundred years. Then men who lived when it began to grow have been buried, and generations besides have come and gone since then.

And do you suppose that God's kingdom is going to grow so that you can look at it and see that it has grown during any particular day? You cannot see it grow. All around you are things that are growing, but that you cannot see grow. And if it is so with trees, and things that spring out of the ground, how much more is it so with the kingdom of God! That kingdom is advancing surely, though it advances slowly, and though it is invisible to us.

You will remember our Master's beautiful parable, where He says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened." I suppose you know what that means. I go into your kitchen when you are baking bread, and ask, "What is that you are stirring into that flour?" You say, "It is yeast." I ask, "What is it for?" You say, "It is to raise the bread." I imagine that it is to raise it in a way that shall be perceptible to my senses, and say, "Let me see it do it." You set the bread away in a warm place, or at the south, in a cool place, if you can find one, and you say, "Now it will rise." After watching it closely for a while, I say to you, "I do not see that it has risen at all." You say, "Bless you, my child, you can-

not see it rise!" I go away, and stay till I think it will have come up, if there is any such thing as its coming up, and then go back, but I cannot see that it has undergone any change. I wait and wait, and wait, and at last say, I do not believe it is going to rise." And you say, "It has risen already," and tear it open; and lo! it is full of holes; and you say, "Now do not you believe that it has risen? It has been rising all the time, only you could not see it rise."

Christ says that His kingdom is just like that. It is a great kingdom, which extends all over the world, and into which He has put the leaven of Divine grace. That grace is like yeast, and it works in this kingdom of Christ.

You cannot see it, even if you watch for it; but there it is; and if, after a while, you go and look at it, you will be convinced that it has been working, by the results which it has produced. You will find that things have been done, though you could not see them done. Men are becoming better the world over, though you cannot trace the process by which they are becoming better. Christ's kingdom goes forward from age to age, though you cannot discern the steps by which it is going forward. While men, as individuals, pass off from the stage of life, God's work does not stop. —*Beecher.*

25. The great obstacle to its progress.

(1163.) The religious world has many features which are distressing to a holy man. He sees in it much proposal and ostentation, covering much surface. But Christianity is deep and substantial. A man is soon enlisted; but he is not soon made a soldier. He is easily put into the ranks, to make a show there; but he is not so easily brought to do the duties of the ranks. We are too much like an army of Asiatics: they count well, and cut a good figure; but when they come into action, one has no flint, another has no cartridge—the arms of one are rusty, and another has not learnt to handle them. This was not the complaint equally at all times. It belongs, too, peculiarly to the present day. The fault lies in the muster. We are like Falstaff: he took the king's money to press good men and true, but got together such ragamuffins that he was ashamed to muster them. What is the consequence? People groan under their connections. Respectable persons tell me such stories of their servants who profess religion as to shame and distress me. High pretensions to spirituality! Warm zeal for certain sentiments! Priding themselves in Mr. Such-a-one's ministry! But what becomes of their duties?—Oh, these are "beggarly elements" indeed! Such persons are alive to religious talk; but if you speak to them on religious tempers, the subject grows irksome. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(1164.) Tomochichi, chief of the Chickasaws, said to Wesley, "I will go up and speak to the wise men of the nation, and I hope they will hear. But we would not be made Christians as the Spaniards make Christians; we would be taught before we are baptized." He felt the want unconsciously acknowledged by the King of Siam, spoken of by John Locke in his chapter on Probability. A Dutch ambassador, when entertaining the king with the peculiarities of Holland, amongst other things told the sovereign that the water in Holland would sometimes in cold weather be so hard that men walked upon it, and that it would bear an elephant if he were there. To which the king replied, "Hitherto I have believed the strange things you have told me, because I looked upon you as a sober, fair man, but now I am sure you lie." But Tomochichi had an eye that saw the faults of the colonists, if he did not understand their religion. When urged to listen to the doctrines of Christianity, he keenly replied, "Why, there are Christians at Savannah! there are Christians at Frederica! Christian much drunk! Christian beat men! Christian tell lies! Devil Christian! Me no Christian!" This recalls the pathetic story of the West Indian cazique, who, "at the stake, refused life, temporal or eternal, at the price of conversion, asking where he should go to live so happily. He was told—in heaven; and then he at once refused, on the ground that the whites would be there; and he had rather live anywhere, or nowhere, than dwell with such people as he had found the white Christians to be." Almost the first word, says Dr. Medhurst, uttered by a Chinese, when anything is said concerning the excellence of Christianity, is, "Why do Christians bring us opium, and bring it directly in defiance of our laws? The vile drug has destroyed my son, has ruined my brother, and well-nigh led me to beggar my wife and children. Surely those who import such a deleterious substance, and injure me for the sake of gain, cannot wish me well, or be in possession of a religion better than my own. Go first and persuade your own countrymen to relinquish their nefarious traffic; and give me a prescription to correct this vile habit, and then I will listen to your exhortations on the subject of Christianity!"

—*Russell.*

26. Is indestructible.

(1165.) There is a picture frontispiece in Wycliffe's Bible which, to my mind, is very significant, very prophetic. There is a fire burning and spreading rather rapidly, representing Christianity; and around the spreading fire are congregated a considerable number of significant and most important individuals, all endeavouring to devise methods whereby they can put the fire out. Among the number I see there one gentleman with horns and a tail, I suppose representing his Satanic Majesty; and another is the Pope of Rome, with a few red coated cardinals; Mahomet I believe has a representative there too, and there is another representative of infidelity; and they are all devising some means, suggesting some method whereby to extinguish the fire, and after considerable cogitation one of them suggests that they should all make a desperate effort to blow on the fire till they blow it out. The resolution is adopted, and there they are, with swollen cheeks and extended lips, blowing upon the fire with all their might, but, instead of blowing it out, they are blowing it up, and they blow themselves out of breath before they blow the fire out. It is an unquenchable flame, and no human power can extinguish it. —*R. Roberts.*

27. Its ultimate triumph.

(1166.) I stood some years ago on the top of the Riffelberg, that grand mountain which springs out of the valley of the Zermat. It was early morning. The stars were still shining with a lustre that became dimmer and dimmer in the light shed from the as yet uncertain sun. There was darkness in the valley, and silence, except for the sound of waterfalls, on the right and on the left. Suddenly the

peak Mount Cervin was illuminated, and then one by one the whole amphitheatre of mountains was kindled by the king of day, and the more he ascended into the heavens the more his light was diffused, till the shadows were startled and chased away from the valley, and night had gone from the soil. Thus shall it be with the Bible, and thus shall it be with Him who is its Lord, its Giver, and its Theme. He shall rise more and more, covering mountains and filling valleys, until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and He shall reign for ever and ever. —*Mellor.*

(1167.) We see some signs of the fulfilment of the prediction. But the question I ask is this—Is it our prerogative, our duty, to go by signs, or have we to take our stand on a command and a promise to go and execute that command whether the sign appear or do not appear? The Israelites received a command to go and take Jericho, and they went. The city was to be taken by circumambulation. They went round once, but not a brick of the walls fell, and they went round a second time, and a third, fourth, fifth, and sixth time, and still all the bricks were there; firmly cemented, and the walls stood. The defenders of Jericho would look on those wonderful walkers, and one can imagine them saying, It is a new mode of assault you are adopting; we wonder how long you will have to walk before the walls fall; Jericho will stand for a long time if it is to be taken by walking. Nevertheless, the Israelites held in their hands the promise, and they felt it in their hearts, and they went round the last time and the walls fell to the ground. And if it should be so that the final triumph of Christianity should come thus suddenly, why should we look for signs? Does not the Lord say that the kingdom of God cometh not by observation? We know therefore that we shall accomplish our purpose. Does not our Lord say, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of My Word shall pass away?" —*Mellor.*

(1168.) We cannot despair of success. What, though the dreary winter of the world's moral life may have lasted far longer than the eager hopes of the Church anticipated? What, though the thick darkness of an apparently eternal night may have hung for centuries over the vast majority of our race? We do not, we cannot despair. Not suddenly—not in a moment—was it reasonable to expect that the bright and blessed change would come. When the morning dawns and struggles with the gloom of night, how doubtful, how gradual is the progress of the conflict. Silently, and we know not when, the darkness begins to melt in the east, but heavy clouds may still resist the splendour of the sun. Gleams of the coming brightness shoot up the heavens, their lines of glory quiver along the horizon, and prophesy the approaching day; but the mists still hang gloomily in the skies, and threaten to bring the hours of darkness back; and yet the ultimate victory of the light is secure. When the winter begins to feel the thrilling influence of spring, for how long a time is the triumph hindered and delayed. Bitter winds by day, and frosts by night, prolong the desolation, and retard the life which is struggling into faint and tender beauty. Even when in more southern lands the wild flowers have begun to blossom, and the trees are robed in the sweet fresh beauty of their young foliage, travel northwards, and the ground is hard and bare, and the forests are standing in the grim nakedness of winter still. But there is no uncertainty about the issue; the winds become more genial, and fruitful rains begin to fall, and the heat of the sun becomes more intense, and the silent presence of Spring steals upwards from the warmer south across the fields of the north, and at last the whole earth is bright with beautiful blossoms, as far as the eye can see, along the course of rivers and wide-spreading plains, and even up the gaunt sides of rugged mountains there is the luxuriant and living green.

Yes; Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles—and the glory of the upper heavens shall yet scatter and chase away the darkness which still broods sullenly over the earth; and the new, Divine life, long repressed, shall yet reveal itself in fair and wonderful and lavish fertility; the very deserts of the world shall be covered with a moral wealth and beauty of which the brightest spring time and the richest autumn are poor and pale symbols, and of which the loveliness of Paradise was only a dim and imperfect promise. The songs which filled the night with joy when Christ was born shall be heard again, with sweeter music, deeper harmonies, and more exulting raptures; all heaven shall come down to earth,—thrones and dominions, seraphim and cherubim, and shining armies of angels,—to celebrate with sounding trumpets and golden harps and loud acclamations and tumultuous strains of triumph, the final victory of Divine love over human sin, and the restoration of our race to God. We are not "mad" in exulting in these happy and confident expectations. God's mercy is mightier than all the powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We—fanatics, as men may deem us—"speak the words of truth and soberness."
—*R. W. Dale.*

28. How its triumph is to be secured.

(1169.) Let me show Christianity, not in ideas but in living men, and in companies of them, and it will be triumphant wherever it is seen.

Is there anything that Protestants repudiate so much as Roman Catholics? Is there anything that they have a more salutary horror of than these same Roman Catholics? And yet, when the war is raging, and there is pestilence in the camp, and men are sick and dying in the hospitals, let those meek-eyed Sisters of Mercy go there and minister to the wants of Protestant boys, being tender and gentle with them, never seeking to breathe any ideas into their minds that their mothers would not, night and day walking in and out full of disinterestedness and delicacy, and diffusing about them an influence of cheer and hope; and let those noble boys go home; and let any man dare to speak a word against these kind creatures, and they will turn with clenched hand, and say, "I will beat you to the dust if you speak against them, just as quick as I would if you spoke against my mother or my sister!"

What has overcome their prejudice against the Catholics? Is it the edict of the Pope? Is it the arguments of the priests? Is it the influence of the adherents of that Church? Is it any charm of its service? No, it is the pure lives of some of its members. Those are arguments which no man wants to refute. If there were more such lives there would be less atheism.

Do you suppose that men would conspire to kick out of the heavens the sun, which is the source of their harvests, and all that is beautiful, and every

thing that makes life desirable? Men want the sun. And do you suppose that if God were pictured to men as transcendant in beauty, as glorious in holiness, and as in sympathy with men, they would want to be atheists? They would call out for Him. They would watch for Him as in the night men watch for the morning. But if God is held up as a crystal, cut on the edges, I do not wonder that men are atheistic, pantheistic, and infidel. And if you take Christianity according to your sect, or church, or creed, and offer it to men, I do not wonder, that they feel that they are fed with sand or bran. But if you bring the fruit of the Spirit to men they will not reject it; they will accept it with gladness.

—*Beecher.*

CHURCH. THE.

I. *IS BELOVED OF GOD.*

(1170.) Let the head of a family ascend a lofty eminence, and looking on hill and dale and river, and all the beauteous prospects which is poured in rich profusion beneath his feet, suddenly his eye is arrested by his own peaceful dwelling, where he has enjoyed the tender charities of love, where the partner of his bosom and little ones are nestled; it is *here* his affections are drawn, here he dwells in imagination with a fondness, an interest, which creation's beauties cannot excite in him. So is it with God as it respects His beloved Zion. The infinite Jehovah, who has called forth at His bidding creation's glories—the great Father of His family, which He has adopted in Christ Jesus, surveys creation—looks down upon the world, but sees no object round the spacious globe from east to west, from pole to pole, so fair in His divine esteem as Zion is: "This is My rest for ever, saith the Lord; here will I dwell." The seat of His desire and palace of His presence is the Church.

—*Salter.*

II. *EMBRACES ALL BELIEVERS, AND BELIEVERS ONLY.*

(1171.) True it is, this one Church may have many parts; as the ocean sea is but one, yet distinguished according to the regions upon which it lies. And so there is the German Ocean, the Spanish Ocean, the English Ocean, the Irish Ocean, and the like. And thus there is a church in Geneva, a church in France, a church in Scotland, a church in England, and yet but one militant Church upon the earth.

Reason: For as a kingdom, divided into many shires, and more towns and villages, is called one, because it hath one and the same king, one and the same law; so the Church is one, because it liveth by one and the same Spirit, and is ruled by one and the same Lord, and professeth one and the same faith; hath one and the same hope, and hath been baptized with one and the same baptism.

—*Rogers*, 1594–1660.

(1172.) A man's wife is his wife, though she be never so perverse and disobedient to him; but no soul is one of His Church and Spouse, nor owned by Christ as such, unless she become subject to Him.

—*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(1173.) There is but one Universal Church of Christians in the world, of which Christ is the only King and Head, and every Christian is a member. . . . . If then thou hast faith, and love, and the Spirit, thou art certainly a Christian, and a member of Christ, and of this universal Church of Christians. . . . . As thou art a subject of the king, and a member of this kingdom, whatever corporation thou be a member of (perhaps sometime of one, and sometime of another); so thou art a subject of Christ, whatever particular church thou be of: for it is no church if they be not Christians, or subjects of Christ. For one sect then to say, Ours is the true Church, and another to say, Nay, but ours is the true Church, is as mad as to dispute whether your hall, or kitchen, or parlour, or coal-house is your house; and for one to say, This is the house, and another, Nay, but it is that: when a child can tell them, that the best is but a part, and the house containeth them all.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1174.) My next address is to them that are so solicitous to know which is the true Church among all the parties in the world that pretend to it. Silly souls! they are hearkening to that party, and to that party, and turn it may be to one, and to another, to find the true universal Church. I speak not in contempt, but in compassion. You are in the wood, and cannot find it for trees: but you ask, Which of these sort of trees is the wood? Is it the oak, or the ash, or the elm, or poplar? or is it the hawthorn, or the bramble? Why, it is all together. You are studying which of the members is the man: Is the hand the man? or is it the foot? or is it the eye? or the heart? or which is it? Why, it is the whole body and soul, in which all parts and faculties are comprised. You wisely ask, Which part is the whole? Why, no part is the whole. Which is the Catholic Church? Is it the Protestants, the Calvinists, or the Lutherans, the Papists, the Greeks, the Æthiopians, or which is it? Why, it is never any one of them, but all together that are truly Christians. Good Lord! what a pitiful state is the poor Church in, when we must look abroad and see such abundance running up and down the world, and asking, Which is the world? whether this country be the world, or that country be the world? They are as it were running up and down England to look for England, and ask, Whether this town be England, or whether it be the other? They are as men running up and down London to inquire for London, and ask, Whether this house be London, or that street be London? or some other? Thus they are in the midst of the Church of Christ inquiring after the Church, and asking, Whether it be this party of Christians, or whether it be the other? Why, you doting wretches, it is all Christians in the world of what sort soever, that are truly so, that constitute the Catholic Church.

Indeed if your question were only, Which is the purest, or soundest, or safest part of the Church, then there were some sense in it, and I could quickly give you advice for your resolution. If you only ask, Whether the parlour or the coal-house be the better part or room of the house? or Whether the bramble or the oak be the better part of the wood? I should soon give you an answer. So if you ask, Whether the Protestants, or Papists, or Greeks, be the sounder part of the Church? I should soon answer you. The same family may have in it both infants and men at age, sound men and sick men; some that have but small distemper, and some that have the plague or leprosy: and yet all are men,

and members of the family: and so hath the Church of God such members.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1176.) From a small town that lay in the bosom of gently swelling hills rose, some with spires and some without them, three or four churches belonging to the chief denominations of our country—the sign at once of our religious liberties and religious earnestness. On a sweet summer evening a traveller looked along the valley on this peaceful scene, when a shower of rain was falling. Suddenly the sun broke out, and flung a bright bow on the cloud that, like that of mercy, discharged its showers on all. The rainbow encircled within its arms suburb and city, lofty church and humble meeting house. And was it not a true and happy fancy that saw in this heavenly bow an emblem of that covenant which, irrespective of minor differences, embraces all believers within the same arms of mercy?

—*Guthrie.*

(1177.) The Church is a garden laid out in many beds which vary in shape with the nature of the ground. Some of the under-gardeners regret there is not one large bed within one and the same border. Others would have all the beds of the same form, some advocating the square shape, others the circular, others the oval. A few of the gardeners, however, regarded by some of their fellow-labourers as lax and dangerous in their opinions, think that the existing arrangement may be best after all, the variety favouring both beauty and productiveness. Some, not satisfied that the shape of the bed they are appointed to cultivate distinguishes it from others, fence it with a thick and lofty hedge, within which they carefully shut themselves up, and by which the rest of the garden is so concealed from them that they begin to fancy their little section is the whole of it. But when God's bright sun arises it shines on all the garden, heeding not the fences, which only serve to cast a dark shadow on the beds they shut off from the rest; and the impartial showers fall, and the refreshing dews distil, on all alike. And the same flowers bloom in all; and from mignonette and rose the bees gather the same honey, heedless of the fences. Those gardeners who, while retaining the shape of their several borders, content themselves with hedges the lowest and the thinnest, are best able to look beyond their own enclosure, and to derive pleasure from viewing the fruits and flowers that flourish elsewhere. —*Newman Hall.*

III. *ALL ITS MEMBERS ARE IMPERFECT.*

(1178.) The Church of Christ is a common hospital, wherein all are in some measure sick of some spiritual disease or other, that we should all have ground of exercising mutually the spirit of wisdom and meekness. —*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

IV. *THOUGH IT CONTAINS MANY UNHOLY PERSONS, YET EVEN THE VISIBLE CHURCH IS HOLY.*

(1179.) To the *saints* of God (Eph. i. 1). Though we have sins too many, yet the better part gives the name. Corn-fields we see have many weeds, yet we call them corn-fields, not fields of weeds; so here. —*Bayne*, 1617.

(1180.) As a heap of wheat, though it have chaff in it, is yet called wheat; or as a tun of wine, though it have lees in it, is yet called wine; or as a field wherein tares appear with the wheat is called a corn-field: even so the visible Church is the Church. Though it consisteth of good and bad, and be mixed of the elect and reprobate, yet are they called God's Church for the elect's sake, and have their denomination from the better, not the bigger part.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1181.) This profession may be much in the dark, and not be so visible as before; as a field of corn overtopped by weeds looks at a distance as if it were nothing else but the blue and red cockle and darnel, but when we come near we see that the good grain shows its head as well as the weeds. So among a professing people there will be some somewhere or other. —*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

(1182.) The visible Church is much larger than the mystical, though but one Church; that is, the Church hath more professing than regenerate members, and will have to the end of the world, and none must expect that they be commensurate.

As a corn-field,—1. corn, 2. straw and chaff, and 3. weeds and stricken ears,—is denominated from the corn, which is the chief (preserved) part; but the straw must not be cast out because it is necessary for the corn; but the weeds must be pulled up, except when doing it may hurt the wheat: even so the Church hath, 1. sincere Christians from whom it is denominated; 2. Close hypocrites, whose gifts are for the good of the sincere, and must not be cast out by the pastors; 3. Heretics and notorious wicked men, who are impenitent after due admonition; and these must be cast out, except when it may hazard the Church.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1183.) In every corn-field there are plants of sickly as well as of luxuriant appearance, supplying a fit emblem of the various characters which compose the true Church of Christ. Some indeed are stunted in their growth by various causes; others ripening into the full measure of the stature of Christ, having received a larger measure of the spirit of all grace, and enjoyed a more copious effusion of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Yet these must be permitted to mingle together till the harvest. Each have their separate uses; and as the wise husbandman is content and thankful if the weeds do not overpower the corn, so the wise Christian will be grateful to God that errors both in doctrine and practice are not more abounding than they are, being satisfied that in the final issue and separation of the tares from the corn, there will be nothing to complain of; but on the contrary, that the purposes of God will work their way through all human hypocrisy and weakness, so as to fulfil the truth of the gracious promise (Matt. iii. 12).

V. *HER MISSION.*

(1184.) The true and grand idea of a church is a society for the purpose of making men like Christ, —earth like heaven,—the kingdoms of the world the Kingdom of Christ. —*Arnold*, 1795-1842

(1185.) There is a new-fangled modern doctrine that the Church is bound to take care of its own

subjects, and not go out of itself to meddle with other subjects. That is, in my judgment, as if the sun should take counsel with itself, and say, "Here am I, a splendid old sun, and I have got to take care of my light: everything depends on me, and it will not do for me to compromise myself, and go into that deep valley, into that dark cave, or into that obscure thicket. My business is to keep bright, and take care of myself." What kind of a sun would it be that should talk thus? But you will find ministers and churches talking in the same way. They say, "It is the business of the Church to take care of religion." Did Christ die for religion, or did He die for man? I had always supposed that the business of the Church was to take care of men. Suppose a mother should say, "My business is to take care of maternal and filial love, and not of my children!" She would exhibit the same wisdom that you see in churches and ministers when they declare that it is their business to take care of religion. Why, it is the most hideous form of selfishness out of hell—this attempt of a great moral institution, that is set to be the light of the world, and the teacher of men in every visible relation in life, and that is ordained to lay the law of God on thought and feeling and conduct, to draw back from its great work, and say, "It is not our business to take care of those things." It is fundamental apostasy. It is egregious recreancy. And that dark-lantern Church that shines on nothing outside, and only on that which is inside of itself, does not belong to Christ. Who owns it? I do not pretend to say!

—*Beecher.*

(1186.) A church is corrupted when it wants Christianity for its own peace, and not for the amelioration of persons that are not members of it. When a lighthouse-keeper, on a stormy, dark, tempestuous night, is told to go into his attic and take care of the lantern, why does he receive such instruction? Because the ocean-burdened ship afar off, and a long way from home, is coming upon the coast. He is to do it, because wind-driven craft are creeping toward the land, and need the guidance of the light. It is for the sake of the imperilled mariner that he is sent to take care of the lantern. But suppose he should say, "I am instructed to take care of this light;" and should put up the shutters, saying, "The wind is not going to blow this light out;" and should hang curtains over all the cracks, saying, "I will keep out every breath of air." The light is safe, and it illumines the little room in which it burns; but on the sea it is dark. He might just as well let the light go out; for the only object in keeping it is that those on the deep who are approaching the shore may be directed by it. Now churches are God's lighthouses, and He says to them, "Shine out for the poor, the ignorant, the wretched, the neglected." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

—*Beecher.*

VI. *THE CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE AGES.*

(1187.) The Church has many times been compared by divines to the ark of which we read in the Book of Genesis; but never was the resemblance more perfect than during that evil time when she rode alone, amidst darkness and tempest, on the deluge beneath which all the great works of ancient power and wisdom lay entombed, bearing within her that feeble germ from which a second and more glorious civilisation was to spring.

—*Macaulay*, 1800–1859.

VII. *THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE.*

(1188.) God speaks in the Scriptures, and by it teaches the Church herself; and therefore His authority in the Scriptures is greater, the authority of Him that teaches, than of those by whom He teaches: as the authority of a king in his laws is greater than that of an officer that proclaims them. A king may by his council or judges acquaint his subjects with his laws; but will it therefore follow, because he speaks his mind which is in those laws by such officers, that their authority is greater than that of those laws themselves? God speaks by the Church (the true Church we mean); but He speaks nothing by her but what He speaks in the Scriptures, which she does only ministerially declare to us: and therefore the authority of God and His law is above hers, who, though she publish, yet did not make it, but is herself subject to it, and by that law only stands obliged to publish it to others. [See THE BIBLE. 533–534.]

—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

VIII. *HER AUTHORITY TO ORDAIN CEREMONIES.*

(1189.) It is no more disgrace to Scripture to have left things free to be ordered by the Church, than for nature to have left it to the wit of man to devise his own attire.

—*Hooker*, 1586–1647.

IX. *HER UNITY.*

1. In what it consists.

(1190.) This unity, whereof the apostle speaks, consists in submission to one single influence or spirit. Wherein consists the unity of the body? Consists it not in this, that there is one life uniting, making all the separate members one? Take away the life, and the members fall to pieces; they are no longer one; decomposition begins, and every element separates, no longer having any principle of cohesion or union with the rest.

There is not one of us who, at some time or other, has not been struck with the power there is in a single living influence. Have we never, for instance, felt the power wherewith the orator unites and holds together a thousand men as if they were but one; with flashing eyes and throbbing hearts all attentive to his words, and by the difference of their attitudes, by the variety of expressions of their countenances, testifying to the unity of that single living feeling with which he had inspired them? Whether it be indignation, whether it be compassion, or whether it be enthusiasm, that one living influence made the thousand for the time one. Have we not heard how, even in this century in which we live, the various and conflicting feelings of the people of this country were concentrated into one, when the threat of foreign invasion had fused down and broken the edges of conflict and variance, and from shore to shore was heard one cry of terrible defiance, and the different classes and orders of this manifold and mighty England were as one? Have we not heard how the mighty winds hold together as if one the various atoms of the desert, so that they rush like a living thing across the wilderness? And this,

brethren, is the unity of the Church of Christ, the subjection to the one uniting spirit of its God.
—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(1191.) Unity, is that it subsists between things not similar and alike, but things dissimilar or unlike. There is no unity in the separate atoms of a sand-pit; they are things similar; there is an aggregate or collection of them. Even if they be hardened in a mass they are not one, they do not form a unity; they are simply a mass. There is no unity in a flock of sheep; it is simply a repetition of a number of things similar to each other. If you strike off from a thousand five hundred, or if you strike off nine hundred, there is nothing lost of unity, because there never was unity. A flock of one thousand or a flock of five is just as much a flock as any other number.

On the other hand, let us turn to the unity of peace which the apostle speaks of, and we find it is something different; it is made up of dissimilar members, without which dissimilarity there could be no unity. Each is imperfect in itself, each supplying what it has in itself to the deficiencies and wants of the other members. So, if you strike off from this body any one member, if you cut off an arm, or tear out an eye, instantly the unity is destroyed; you have no longer an entire and perfect body, there is nothing but a remnant of the whole, a part, a portion; no unity whatever.

This will help us to understand the unity of the Church of Christ. If the ages and the centuries of the Church of Christ, if the different churches whereof it was composed, if the different members of each church were similar, one in this, that they all held the same views, all spoke the same words, all viewed truth from the same side, they would have no unity; but would simply be an aggregate of atoms, the sand-pit over again.
—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(1192.) The unity the Scriptures speak of does not mean *agreement in doctrine*, nor yet concord and mutual good will; though these are strongly insisted on by the apostles. Nor, again, does it mean that all Christians belong, or ought to belong, to some *one society on earth*. This is what the apostles never aimed at, and what never was actually the state of things, from the time that the Christian religion extended beyond the city of Jerusalem. The Church is undoubtedly *one*, and so is the human race *one;* but not as a society or community, for, as such, it is only *one* when considered as to its future existence. The teaching of Scripture clearly is, that believers on earth are part of a great society (church or congregation), of which the Head is in heaven, and of which many of the members only "live unto God," or exist in His counsels,—some having long since departed, and some being not yet born. The universal Church of Christ may therefore be said to be ONE in reference to HIM, its supreme Head in *heaven;* but it is not *one community* on earth. And even so the human race is *one* in respect of the *One Creator and Governor;* but this does not make it one *family* or one *state*. And though all men are bound to live in *peace*, and to be kindly disposed towards every fellow creature, and all bound to *agree* in thinking and doing whatever is right, yet they are not at all bound to live under one *single government*, extending over the whole world. Nor, again, are all nations bound to have the same form of government, regal or republican, &c. That is a matter left to their discretion. But all are bound to do their best to promote the great *objects* for which all government is instituted,—good order, justice, and public prosperity.

And even so the apostles founded Christian churches, all based on the same principles, all sharing common privileges—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism,"—and all having the same object in view, but all quite independent of each other. And while, by the inspiration of Him who knew what was in man, they delineated those Christian principles which man could not have devised for himself, each church has been left, by the same Divine foresight, to make the application of those principles in its symbols, its forms of worship, and its ecclesiastical regulations; and while steering its course by the chart and compass which His holy Word supplies, to regulate for itself the sails and rudder according to the winds and currents it may meet with.

Now, I have little doubt that the sort of variation resulting from this independence and freedom, so far from breaking the bond, is the best preservative of it. A number of neighbouring families, living in perfect unity, will be thrown into discord as soon as you compel them to form one family, and to observe in things intrinsically indifferent the same rules. One, for instance, likes early hours, and another late; one likes the windows open, and another shut; and thus, by being brought too close together, they are driven into ill-will by one being perpetually forced to give way to another. Of this character were those disputations which arose (though they subsequently assumed a different character) about Church music, the posture of the communicants, the colours of a minister's dress, the time of keeping Easter, &c. —*Whately*.

(1193.) If unity has been lost, truth has been preserved to us. And this is our consolation. If the Church be not the great ocean, vast, bright, fresh, a counterpart of the blue heaven above it, still she is like the hundred lakes that nestle among the sheltering hills; they know not each other, but every one of them reflects, and truly, the firmament above. So far as salvation by Christ is brought home to men by the teaching of the churches, so long there is an underlying bond of agreement which outward misunderstanding cannot conceal. We are one in the one witness that we bear to Jesus, in the one hope that we awaken through His gospel, in the one common direction towards which our faces turn, waiting till the dark sky shall kindle with the Orient flush of His glorious reappearing.
—*Archbishop Thomson*.

2. Uniformity is not essential to unity.

(1194.) Men have formed to themselves two ideas of unity: the first is a sameness of form—of expression—the second an identity of spirit. Some of the best of mankind have fondly hoped to realise a unity for the Church of Christ which should be manifested by uniform expressions in everything. Their imaginations have loved to paint, as the ideal of a Christian Church, a state in which the same liturgy should be used throughout the world, the same ecclesiastical government, even the same vestment, the same canonical hours, the same form of architecture. They could conceive nothing more entirely one than

a Church so constituted that the same prayers, in the very same expressions, at the very same moment, should be ascending to the Eternal Ear.

There are others who have thrown aside entirely this idea as chimerical; who have not only ceased to hope it, but even to wish it, who if it could be realised would consider it a matter of regret; who feel that the minds of men are various, their modes and habits of thought, their original capacities and acquired associations, infinitely diverse; and who, perceiving that the law of the universal system is manifoldness in unity, have ceased to expect any other oneness for the Church of Christ than that of a sameness of spirit showing itself through diversities of gifts. Among these last was the Apostle Paul; his large and glorious mind rejoiced in the contemplation of the countless manifestations of spiritual nature beneath which he detected one and the same pervading mind. Now let us look at this matter somewhat more closely.

1. All real unity is manifold. Feelings in themselves identical find countless forms of expression; for instance, sorrow is the same feeling throughout the human race; but the Oriental prostrates himself upon the ground, throws dust upon his head, tears his garments, is not ashamed to break out into the most violent lamentations. In the north we rule our grief; suffer not even a quiver to be seen upon the lip or brow, and consider calmness as the appropriate expression of manly grief. Nay, two sisters of different temperament will show their grief diversely; one will love to dwell upon the theme of the qualities of the departed; the other feels it a sacred sorrow, on which the lips are sealed for ever. Yet would it not be idle to ask which of them has the truest affection? Are they not both in their own way true? In the East, men take off their sandals in devotion; we exactly reverse the procedure, and uncover the head. The Oriental prostrates himself in the dust before his sovereign; even before his God the Briton only kneels: yet would it not again be idle to ask which is the essential and proper form of reverence? Is not true reverence in all cases modified by the individualities of temperament and education? Should we not say, in all these forms worketh one and the same spirit of reverence?

2. All living unity is spiritual, not formal; not sameness, but manifoldness. You may have a unity shown in identity of form; but it is a lifeless unity. There is a sameness on the sea-beach—that unity which the ocean waves have produced by curling and forcibly destroying the angularities of individual form, so that every stone presents the same monotony of aspect, and you must fracture each again in order to distinguish whether you hold in your hand a mass of flint or a fragment of basalt. There is no life in unity such as this.

But as soon as you arrive at a unity that is living, the form becomes more complex, and you search in vain for uniformity. In the parts it must be found, if found at all, in the sameness of pervading life. The illustration given by the apostle is that of the human body—a higher unity, he says, by being composed of many members, than if every member were but a repetition of a single type.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(1195.) Out of eight hundred millions of the human race a few features diversify themselves into so many forms of countenance that scarcely two could be mistaken for each other. There are no two leaves on the same tree alike; nor two sides of the same leaf; unless you cut and kill it. There is a sacredness in individuality of character; each one born into this world is a fresh new soul intended by his Maker to develop himself in a new fresh way; we are what we are, we cannot be truly other than ourselves. We reach perfection not by copying, much less by aiming at originality; but by consistently and steadily working out the life which is common to us all, according to the character which God has given us.

And thus will the Church of God be one at last—will present a unity like that of heaven. There is one universe in which each separate star differs from another in glory: one Church in which a single spirit, the life of God, pervades each separate soul; and just in proportion as that life becomes exalted does it enable every one to shine forth in the distinctness of his own separate individuality, like the stars of heaven.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(1196.) As uniformity is not unity, so, in the evil sense of the term, variety is not variance; and there may be in the Church of God, as in His works, variety the most diversified, combined with unity the most Divine. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; and one star differeth from another star in glory. The stars differ in size; they differ in colour; they differ in their distance from the source of light. One has belts, another satellites; some move in eccentric, and others in regular orbits; but by virtue of their fellowship with one central sun, they have fellowship one with another; and as all stars revolving round the sun belong to one solar system, all the minds deriving life, light, and impulse from Christ, however varied in other respects, belong to one Church. This is the dictum of no mere human authority, the speculation of no vain theorist. An apostle himself has announced it; for, writing, not to the men of his own generation alone, but to all for whom the Bible is intended—that is, to all the human race—he teaches, in terms the most unequivocal, that if we have fellowship with that Saviour whom the apostles declare, we have fellowship with the apostles themselves. —*Stanford.*

3. Its advantages.

(1197.) Great is the force of unity, peace, and concord. One man serves to strengthen and stablish another, like many staves bound together in one. Many sticks or staves bound together in one bundle are not easily broken; but sever them and pull them asunder, they are soon broken with little strength. Thus the case in all societies, whether it be in the Church, or commonwealth, or in the private family.

—*Attersol*, 1618.

(1198.) Union is power. The most attenuated thread when sufficiently multiplied will form the strongest cable. A single drop of water is a weak and powerless thing; but an infinite number of drops united by the force of attraction will form a stream; and many streams combined will form a river; till rivers pour their waters into the mighty ocean, whose proud waves defying the power of man none can stay but He who formed them. And thus forces which acting singly are utterly impotent, are when acting

in combination resistless in their energies, mighty in power. And when this great union of the several powers of the Church shall be brought to bear unitedly on one point, its triumph will be the subjection of a world to Christ which now defies the solitary efforts of single forces. —*Salter.*

4. How it is to be attained.

(1199.) An apparent union may be produced by none thinking at all, as well as by all thinking alike; but such a union, as Leighton observes, is not produced by the active heat of the spirit, but is a confusion rather arising from the want of it; not a fusing together, but a freezing together, as cold congregates all bodies how heterogeneous soever, sticks, stones, and water: but heat makes first a separation of different things, and then unites those that are of the same nature. —*Salter.*

(1200.) For the sake of unity, it is not needful to surrender an iota of the truth, or yield one conscientious conviction, so long as it remains conscientious. It is very common with those who misunderstand the matter, to say, "Come, now, you and I do not think exactly alike; perhaps we are both right, and it is as likely we are both wrong. But it is a point of no moment; what would you say to throw it overboard altogether, and give ourselves no more concern about it?" To which, *in many cases*, it might be a very just answer—"You may intend this for liberality, but to me it sounds like latitudinarianism. I believe that I found this truth in the Bible; and if so, it is one of the truths of God. I dare not cast it overboard; and I shall be very sorry if having it on board deprives me of your company. If it be so offensive to you that you must needs sail in a separate ship, I hope we shall not hoist hostile flags. But as neither of us holds it vital, might we not agree to differ regarding it; and as we grow in knowledge and in grace, may we not hope that the Lord will reveal even this unto us?" Wherever souls are joined to the Lord Jesus, and His image is visible upon them, there is actual unity of the most important kind. Were this actual unity more frequently made the foundation of a practical unity, there would soon be more doctrinal unity among Christians. But it is an unhallowed mode of procuring practical unity to purchase it at the price of truth. As a compromise of error cannot lead to unity, so "truth in love" will breed no schism. Christian unity is the union of believers—union in the truth—union in the Lord. Like every good and perfect gift, it cometh down from the Father of Lights. It is given where the Holy Ghost is given. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is love as well as liberty. —*Hamilton*, 1814-1867.

(1201.) Heaven is the abode of unity, and when the spirit of unity comes into a soul or into a Church it cometh from above. The Comforter brings it down. Discord is of the earth or from beneath. The divisions of Christians show that there is still much carnality amongst them. The more carnal a Christian is the more sectarian will he be, and the more spiritual he is the more loving and forbearing and self-renouncing are you sure to find him. And it is with Christian communities as with individual Christians. When the tide is out, you may have noticed as you rambled among the rocks little pools with little fishes in them. To the shrimp in such a pool his foot depth of salt water is all the ocean for the time being. He has no dealings with his neighbour shrimp in the adjacent pool, though it may be only a few inches of sand that divide them. But when the rising ocean begins to lip over the margin of his lurking place, one pool joins another, their various tenants meet, and by and by in place of their little standing water they have the ocean's boundless fields to roam in. When the tide is out—when religion is low—the faithful are to be found insulated, here a few and there a few, in the little standing pools that stud the beach, having no dealings with their neighbours of the adjacent pools, calling them Samaritans, and fancying that their own little communion includes all that are precious in God's sight. They forget for a time that there is a vast and expansive ocean rising—every ripple, every influx brings it nearer—a mighty communion, even the communion of saints, which is to engulf all minor considerations and to enable the fishers of all pools, the Christians—the Christ-lovers—of all denominations to come together. When like a flood the Spirit flows into the churches, church will join to church, and saint will join to saint, and all will rejoice to find that if their little pools have perished, it is not by the scorching summer's drought, nor the casting in of earthly rubbish, but by the influx of that boundless sea whose glad waters touch eternity, and in whose ample depths the saints in heaven as well as the saints on earth have room enough to range. Yes, our churches are the standing pools along the beach, with just enough of their peculiar element to keep the few inmates living during this ebb-tide period of the Church's history. But they form a very little fellowship—the largest is but little; yet is there steadily flowing in a tide of universal life and love which, as it lips in over the margin of the little pool, will stir its inhabitants with an unwonted vivacity and then let them loose in the large range of the Spirit's own communion. Happy church, farthest down upon the strand, nearest the rising ocean's edge. Happy church, whose sectarianism shall first be swept away in this inundation of love and joy, whose communion shall first break forth into that purest and holiest and yet most comprehensive of all communions, the communion of the Holy Ghost. Would to God that church were ours! —*Hamilton*, 1814-1867.

(1202.) The union of Christians—and of churches, for that matter—is to come from this characteristic spirit of love, or from nothing at all. A physical union of all denominations is manifestly impossible. There can be no such union. Nor will identity of intellect (that is doctrinal sameness), or identity of instruments (that is ecclesiastical institutions), ever constitute a true union. That is to consist, in the mass of men, of the same quality which makes each one of them a child of Christ—namely, the dominant spirit of a pure benevolence. You may attempt to bring churches together; but it is easier to weld iron that is cold than to unite churches by simply making them think and act alike. You must make them *feel* alike in this one great element of benevolent, gospel, Christian love, before you can unite them. When the ruling element of all denominations in any age shall be love, then there can be no separation of them, except a bodily separation. You cannot build a wall so high or so broad that my heart cannot go over it or through it to the heart of one that I love; and you cannot build a wall in the sanctuary so high or so broad that the hearts

of those that love each other cannot get together; and if you throw down every wall, there can be no unity unless there is love. The union of love is the only union which Christ sought to establish, or which is attainable in this world.

When winter reigns, your birds sing to you in their cage, and in your house, and nobody hears them sing but you; when winter reigns, your flowers are the light of your parlour; but when summer comes, you cannot any longer hinder my hearing your robins, though they sing in your orchard, or smelling your honeysuckles, though they twine over your doorpost. And when there is throughout Christendom the true spirit of universal love, you cannot hinder the ineffable virtues of men from commingling.

Love is to the soul what perfume is to the air, that, rising, forgets whence it came; that forgets the cups, and cells, and blossoms, in which it was born. That which is sweetest of all the flowers moves through the air as a universal bounty, and as a common wealth. And the day is to come when, out of each soul, blossoming, shall rise a sweet fragrance that shall mingle with the fragrance of other souls, and when there shall be an ineffable union—a union that is moral and spiritual—between Christians of every name. —*Beecher.*

5. Love to Christ the sole and sufficient bond of union.

(1203.) The union for which the Lord Jesus prayed was a union of spiritual men—a union not of mere professors but of His true disciples—a union in the Lord. Any other union is little worth. A union of professors with professors of one dead church with another dead church is but a filling of the charnel house, a heaping of the compost-pile. A union of dead professors with living saints, this union of life and death is but to pour the green and putrid water of the stagnant-pool into the living spring. It is not to graft new branches into the goodly vine, but to bandage on dead boughs that will but deform it. It is not to gather new wheat into the garner, but to blend the wheat and chaff again together. It is not to gather new sheep into the fold, but it is to borrow the shepherd's brand and imprint it on the dogs and wolves and call them sheep. The identifying of christened pagans with the peculiar people has done much dishonour to the Redeemer, has deluded many souls, and made it much more difficult for the Church to convince the world.

It was not this amalgamation of the Church and the world which the Saviour contemplated when He prayed for His people's unity. It was a union of spiritual men—a holy unity springing from oneness with Himself. Union with Christ is an indispensable preliminary to union with the Church of Christ. An individual must be joined to Christ before he can be a true member of the Church of Christ. And those individuals and those churches which are the most closely joined to Christ are the nearest to one another, and will be the first to coalesce in the fulfilment of Christ's prayer—"May they all be one!"
—*Hamilton*, 1814-1867.

6. Falsely claimed by the church of Rome.

(1204.) Yes: the great idea of an undivided Church, completely fused and compacted by love and by truth, came down from heaven; but the treasure was received in earthen vessels which could not contain it: the vessels broke, and the treasure was lost. I know that the Church of Rome insists still that visible unity is a mark of the Church, and that she alone exhibits that mark, and that no other Christian body separated from her can claim the title of a Church, because it wants one of its essential notes. But such pretensions cannot be admitted. The mirror in which the ascended Lord was to be visibly reflected to an admiring world has been broken to pieces. Every fragment still reflects, but more or less perfectly, the Lord of glory. To take up one of the pieces, much defiled by the earth on which it has fallen, and to set in a gaudy frame, and to say, "This fragment is the mirror, and all the rest are nothing," this may deceive some who yearn so much for unity, that they would rather admit than sift the claim. But earnest hearts sicken at the vain pretensions. From east to west, in parts of which Rome know nothing, voices of praise arise to the one Lord of all believers; and works of good are done in the name and in the power of that Lord. The Lord is their Judge, the Lord is their Lawgiver, the Lord is their King. To deny that they are Christ's seems hardly to stop short of blasphemy against Him whose power is seen among them. That Rome should claim to be the sole trustee of that precious gift, because of the mark of unity, is indeed a bold assumption. Rome, ever more ready to cut off than to embrace; Rome, that would have nothing to do with those holy aspirations after a purer worship and a truer teaching which brought round the Reformation. Rome, like her sisters, may muse in sorrow over Christ's promise of unity made seeming void by man's sin; but for her, less than for others, is the arrogant pretension that she alone is the Divine Zion, and all that she has cut off are useless fragments cast into the darkness. And yet so deep-seated is the love for unity, that many have accepted her at her word, and sought in her bosom what she had not to give. Because the flower is withered, they have been fain to clasp to their bosom an artificial flower, different even to the eye from that which it would imitate, but without the life or the odour. All we, the rest, to whom such pretensions are an idle tale, sit brooding on the seeming frustration of a most blessed promise. Where is the one fold, whose sheep is one flock following the leading footsteps of the one Shepherd into green pastures that never fail? God's promise cannot have been in vain. Man must have hindered it; God hath not forgotten it! —*Archbishop Thomson.*

7. A call to union.

(1205.) The controversies which one evangelic church has with another—and it is a misnomer calling that a church which does not preach the gospel—are very trivial compared with that controversy which the Church of Christ has with the world. One heresy, called "drunkenness," is ruining far more souls than any church is saving. The sect of the Sabbath-breakers outnumbers any denomination in England. And there is an infinitely wider interval between the party who deny the sole-sufficiency of the atonement, or who believing it refuse to preach it publicly, than between all the denominations in Europe, whose watchword is the old Reformation talisman—"Jehovah-Tsidkenu—the Lord our Righteousness." And whilst there are many parishes in England and

Scotland where a free and full salvation is not preached at all, or preached so obscurely that people cannot understand it, or so timidly that they are afraid to believe it; whilst there are myriads in this very city whom you must *compel* to come in, or else they will never come into the house of God at all; whilst many are preaching another gospel which is not another, and subverting the grace of God, are we to lavish all our strength on ephemeral controversy and mutual recrimination? Are we to waste the rapid days and allow the harvest to rot upon the fields, whilst we are settling which is the best form of the sickle, and debating in what sort of vehicles we shall carry home the sheaves? Are there not all-important truths for which our concurring testimony, and helping prayers, and mutual countenance, would be all too little to win a nation's reluctant ear; and in the effort to rouse a sleeping world, and convert an ungodly kingdom, will any voice be loud enough except the united cry of an awakening Church? Amongst the higher orders and middling classes of British society are many who make no religious profession, and many more who make a general profession, but on whom Divine realities have such shadowy hold, that in the testing trials of Christian principle you may with painful certainty foretell the result. Amongst the industrious and more independent classes is a fearful multitude, especially in rural places, whom mental torpor and uninquiring ignorance have prepared for any faith or fancy which authority may enjoin: and another multitude, abounding in cities and manufacturing regions, too acute to credit the dreams of superstition, but in ignorance of revelation and in dislike of its restraints, all too ready to hail the scorning infidelity, which in a land of free inquiry is superstition's unfailing satellite. For such a state of things there is but one remedy. It is that only form of truth so important and so true, as to be worthy of the Spirit's demonstration—the truth as it is in Jesus. But to secure wide and efficient circulation for this truth, would need the undiverted strength and diligence of *all* who know and love it. An evangelical union for evangelistical purposes was never more needed than it is this day; and as the materials for such union are not wanting, and the providential call to it is louder every day, why do we postpone? In days of confusion and bloodshed, the first thing that united Europe was a crusade against the infidel. The first thing that will unite a torn and distracted Church will be a cross-exalting war,—a crusade upon the world,—a simultaneous forthgoing in the wake of that banner, which did we lovingly eye and implicitly follow, we should conquer at once the world and ourselves. A CONFEDERACY FOR THE RESUSCITATION OF GOSPEL TRUTH, AND FOR THE REVIVAL OF TRUE RELIGION, WOULD ITSELF BE UNION.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

X. *UNIFORMITY.*

1. Is not supremely important.

(1206.) A church is none the better for its outward unity, and its magnificent and beautiful forms, if it have no inward life, and no beauty of holiness. "A living dog is better than a dead lion." A living tree, though it shows about it some unnatural offshoots, some crooked growths, yet, if its branches bear some pleasant fruit, is far better than a dead tree of stately form and formal stateliness, whose heart is rotten or whose fruit is cast and withered. There is, away in the Eastern hemisphere, a body of water, whose surface the winds and storms of heaven never ruffle; its outward form is always the same; but whose waters are black and bitter and heavy; no living thing is in them; and beneath them are unsepulchred Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain. They call it the Dead Sea. So a church may have an outward uniformity, and boast of its unchanging forms and ceremonies, and yet have none living within it. It may be like the garnished sepulchres of the Jews, beautiful in outward appearance, and within the dwelling-place of death. When the visible Church, of any form or order, is unduly exalted, and its ceremonies and government too highly valued, the only source of spiritual life, and the only means of spiritual growth, are likely to be neglected. When the gold seems greater than the temple which sanctified the gold, then the evidence of union with Christ is incomplete; for He is not the head of any particular visible church, but only of the Church invisible and universal. And all true believers seek their spiritual life in Him, by direct and intimate commune of the soul with the Spirit, not through any human meditations, or church order, or sacraments, or rites and forms of worship. —*E. E. Hall.*

2. Does not insure unity.

(1207.) Mere denominational uniformity is not Christian unity. It is a favourite project with many in the present day to single out some sect—usually their own—and then say to themselves, "If we could only get all the world to join us there would be unity." And so possessed are they with the notion that the unity of the Church consists in conformity to them; that many of them have determined to know nothing among men, save their Church (meaning their own community) and conformity thereto. Their union is separation from non-canonical Christians; and could they make but one font, one surplice, and one service-book for all, they are persuaded the Church would be one. In place of unity of spirit, they labour for unity of costume. They cannot understand a united family which does not wear a regimental uniform.

We, on the other hand, have seen a uniformity where there was nothing but the form. The Church of the Middle Ages was united just as the sleepers in the funeral vault are united, in the tranquillity of death. It was like listening at the door of a sepulchre: Hush! for all is peace within. Enter, and all is uniform—uniformly dead—black frieze and rottenness—a sepulchre of souls. The Church of the early centuries was united, as scorpions are united when one glass receiver holds them and leaves them room to fret about, and strike their stings into one another. There was uniformity, but it was not unity, for the world did not believe. The world saw it and was hardened; the world saw it and blasphemed. To preserve the unity of the Church they excommunicated or burned alive those who thought or believed for themselves, till faith had well-nigh perished from the earth. The Church became so Catholic, that there was no place found for the Gospel. The union of coercion, or the union which, as the first term of communion, takes away your right of private judgment, is not the union con-

templated by Him, the first law of whose kingdom is love, and the first gift of whose Spirit is light.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

3. Is not essential.

(1208.) Different Christians may have their opinions and preferences in favour of different forms of discipline, matters of order and modes of worship. Let each, by all means, enjoy what he prefers, and hold to that of which he is persuaded. The *form* of the fold is not the source of the life, nor essential to the security of the sheep. *His* sheep they may be—all belonging to the one flock—and all alike loved and watched over by the one Great Shepherd, though they may be gathered into pens framed after a somewhat different fashion. —*Binney.*

4. Impossible and undesirable.

(1209.) A great stress has indeed been often laid upon uniformity of sentiment and modes of worship; but this, in the present state of human nature, can no more be effected either by force or persuasion, than men can be forced or persuaded to a uniformity of stature or complexion; and if it were practicable, it might prove of little value. The form of religion may be strenuously contended for by those who are strangers to the power of it; but the best form we can conceive, if destitute of power, is lifeless, like the body without the soul.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(1210.) There is one glory of the sun, says St. Paul, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another in glory. Nor, in respect of variety, is heaven itself unlike the firmament which forms its starry floor. Basking in the cloudless sunshine of God's countenance, and engaged day and night in the lofty services of His throne, are different orders of celestials—angels and archangels, seraphim and cherubim, principalities, dominion, and powers—all perfect mirrors of the Divine perfection; yet each class, like the stars beneath their feet, differing from another in glory. And on leaving heaven for earth, we find that, however widely they differ, variety is equally a feature of both. The very globe itself presents a series of heights and hollows, hills and dales, mountains that, towering above the clouds, are covered with eternal snow, and valleys that, robed in flowers and crowned with fruit, lie smiling at their giant feet—often, as the humbler classes of society would be, had they grace to look without envy on those above them, happier in their humility than the mountains that overshadow them in their cold, stormy, lofty, barren pride. A corresponding variety meets and delights us in every department of nature; for though in the services of Divine worship within the Church, some, the worst enemies of unity, insist on uniformity, we may say, as the old philosophers did of vacuum, that Nature abhors it. Uniformity is not the mind or manner of God.

—*Guthrie.*

5. The absurdity and mischievousness of insisting on it.

(1211.) It seems to me a strange penalty to forbid men to worship God at all, because they think some subscriptions or forms to be sin. More strange than to say, all that will not wear crape shall go naked; or all that will not eat anchovies shall eat nothing. If a man think the use of a crucifix in worship sinful, surely to give over all worship is more sinful. But men have their ways.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1212.) Physicians use their patients with some humanity, and will not say to him that saith, "My stomach cannot take down this potion: I shall cast it up," "You shall take it, or die, or go to prison." Or if one say, "This pill is bigger than my throat can swallow," they will rather say, it shall be made less, than they will cut his throat wider to get it down. And sure the reason is because the law doth make them physicians to none but volunteers, and give them no compelling power. If it did, I know not what inhumanity they might come to. For I will not believe that there is anything in divinity which tendeth to make men more inhuman than physicians. I have seen Jews and others that will eat no swine's flesh; and I have known many that a taste of cheese would cast into a swoon near death; and I never knew any say, "You shall eat this or die;" nor that ever motioned the making of a law, that all men should be imprisoned, or forbidden all other meat, who refused to eat swine's flesh, for fear of tolerating Jews.

But we have priests too many that will say, "Take every oath, promise, or ceremony required of you, or preach not, nor worship God openly at all; take me for your pastor, or you shall have none; hear me, or hear no man; receive the communion from me, or from none; deny not the lawfulness of a ceremony, or be excommunicate."

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1213.) Is it not a strange thing to hear men accuse others for not using the liturgy in God's worship, and at the same time would have them that refuse it to be forbidden all public worshipping of God at all? Doth this signify any dislike of their omitting God's worship? Which is the more ungodly omission? To omit all worship of God and live like atheists, or to omit only so much of the liturgy as the apostles used not? I have known many that could not eat cheese, as is said before (nor scarce smell it,) without danger of death. If you would have a law made that such shall eat no other meat, few wise men will believe that it is their health and life that you desire. If a man fail in paying some excise, or using bow and arrows, will you forbid him paying anything or serving the king at all? Surely they that forbid men all public worship be offended at somewhat else than that men do not rightly worship God, unless they think that not to worship Him at all is better than doing it without their book.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1214.) This vice of pretended certainty and knowledge hath set up several false terms of Christian unity and peace, and by them hath done more to hinder the Church's peace and unity than most devices ever did which Satan ever contrived to that end. By this Church-tearing vice, abundance of falsehoods, and abundance of things uncertain, and abundance of things unnecessary, have been made so necessary to the union and communion of the churches and their members, as that thereby the Christian world hath been ground to powder by the names and false pretences of unity and peace. Just as if a wise statesman would advise His Majesty, that none may be his subjects that are not of one age, one stature, one complexion, and one dis-

position, that so he might have subjects more perfectly concordant than all the princes on earth besides; and so might be the most glorious defender of unity and peace. But how must this be done? Why, command them all to be of your mind; but that prevaileth not, and yet it is undone. Why, then, they are obstinate, self-willed persons. Well, but yet it is undone. Why, lay fines and penalties upon them. Well, but yet it is undone;—all the hypocrites that had no religion are of the religion which is uppermost, and the rest are uncured. Why, require more bricks of them, and let them have no straw, and tell them that their religion is their idleness, stubbornness and pride, and let your little finger be heavier than your father's loins. But hearken, young counsellors, Jeroboam will have the advantage of all this, and still the sore will be unhealed. Why, then, banish them, and hang them that obey not, till there are none left that are not of one mind. But, sir, I pray you, who shall do it? and who shall that one man be that shall be left to have all the kingdom? You are not such a fool as to be ignorant that no two men will agree in all things, nor be perfectly of the same complexion. If there must be one king, and but one subject, I pray you who shall that one subject be? I hope not he that counselleth it: "Neque enim lex justior ulla est, quam necis artifices arte perire suâ." But hark you, sir, shall that one man have a wife or not? If not, the kingdom will die with him: if, yea I dare prognosticate, he and his wife will not be in all things of a mind. If they be, take me for a mistaken man.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

XI. *IMPORTANCE OF THE MAINTENANCE OF DUE ORDER.*

(1215.) Study to be quiet, and meddle with your own business. The Church of God is as the body of man. In a man's body every part hath his several office, the arm, the leg, the hand, the foot, do what whereto they are appointed; and doing the same, they live together in peace. But if the arm would take in hand to do that is the duty of the leg, or the foot that is the part of the hand, it would breed great disorder in the whole body. So if every man in the Church of God seek to do that to them belongeth, the Church shall flourish and be quiet; but when every man will be busy, and take upon him to look into other; when every private man will govern, and the subject take in hand to rule the prince, all must needs come to wreck and decay.

—*Jewel*, 1522–1571.

(1216.) As there is an order in God Himself, even in the Blessed Trinity, where, though the persons be co-eternal and co-equal, and the essence itself of the Deity indivisible, yet there is the first, second, and third person. And as in God, so in the whole creation: angels have their orders, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, and an archangel, that at the last shall blow the trumpet. So it is amongst the saints, the souls of just men perfected: all of them have enough, none of them want; yet there is a difference in the measure of their glory, because every one hath his own reward according to his labour. Stars are not all of one magnitude, one differs from another in glory. As for things below, some have only a being; some, being and life; others, being, life, and sense; and others, besides all these, have reason and understanding. All arts and sciences, before they can be learned, must be reduced into order and method. A camp well disciplined is a perfect pattern of good order; nay, there is a kind of order even in hell itself, a place of disorder and confusion; and shall, then, God and Belial, angels and men, saints and devils, heaven and earth, be all in order, and the Church out? It cannot be: the Church is to be as an army with banners, to consist of governors and governed, some to teach and some to hear, each in his own order. —*Attersol*, 1618.

(1217.) In the ringing of bells, whilst every one keeps his due time and order, what a sweet and harmonious sound they make! all the neighbouring villages are cheered with the sound of them; but when once they jar and check each other, either jangling together or striking preposterously, how harsh and unpleasing is that noise! So that as we testify our public rejoicings by an orderly and well-tuned peal, when we would signify the town is on fire we ring the bells backward, in a confused manner. It is just thus in Church and commonwealth: when every one knows his station and keeps his due rank, there is a melodious concert of comfort and contentment; but when either states or persons will be clashing with each other, the discord is grievous and extremely prejudicial.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

XII. *DISSENSIONS IN THE CHURCH.*

1. Are often due to trivial causes.

(1218.) Dr. Cannon was once appealed to by a certain church where there was a great commotion in regard to the point, whether in newly painting their church edifice the colour should be white or yellow. When the committee had stated their case, and with an emphasis, not to say acrimony, which gave sad proof of the existence of a fearful feud upon the unimportant question, the doctor quietly said, "I should advise you, on the whole, to paint the house black. It is cheap, and a good colour to wear, and eminently appropriate for a body that ought to go in mourning over such a foolish quarrel among its members."

2. Are always unreasonable.

(1219.) Suppose a master, before he goes forth, should charge his servant to look to his child, and trim up the house handsomely against he comes home; but when he returns, will he thank his servant for sweeping his house and making it trim (as he bade him), if he find his child through negligence fallen into the fire, and so killed or crippled? No, sure; he left his child as his chief charge, to which the other should have yielded if both could not be done. Thus there has been a great zeal of late amongst us about some circumstances of God's worship; but who is it that looks to the little child, the main duties of Christianity? Was there ever less love, charity, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, or the power of godliness to be found than in this sad age of ours? Alas! these, like the child, are in great danger of perishing in the fire of contention and division, which a perverse zeal in less things has kindled amongst us.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1220.) The true unity of spirit is derived from the things in which those who are taught and born

of God agree, and should not be affected by those in which they differ. The Church of Christ, collectively considered, is an army; they serve under one Prince, have one common interest, and are opposed by the same enemies. This army is kept up, and the places of those who are daily removed to the Church triumphant supplied entirely by those who are rescued and won from the power of the enemy, which is chiefly effected by the Gospel ministry.

This consideration should remind ministers that it is highly improper (I might use a stronger expression) to waste much of their time and talents, which ought to be employed against the common foe, in opposing those who, though they cannot exactly agree with them in every smaller point, are perfectly agreed, and ready to concur with them in promoting their principal design. A wise statesman, who has a point much at heart which he cannot carry without assistance, will gladly accept of help from persons of all parties on whom he can prevail to join with him, and will not, at such a crisis, preclude himself from this advantage by an unseasonable discussion of more minute concerns, in which he knows they must and will be against him. When I see ministers of acknowledged piety and respectable abilities very busy in defending or confuting the smaller differences, which already too much separate those who ought to be of one heart and one mind, though, while they are all fallible, they cannot be exactly of one judgment; though I give them credit for their good intention, I cannot but lament the misapplication of their zeal, which, if directed into another channel, would probably make them much more successful in winning souls. Let us sound an alarm in the enemy's camp, but not in our own!

I have somewhere met with a passage of ancient history, the substance of which, though my recollection of it is but imperfect, I will relate, because I think it very applicable to this part of my subject. It is an account of two large bodies of forces which fell in with each other in a dark night. A battle immediately ensued. The attack and resistance were supported with equal spirit. The contest was fierce and bloody. Great was the slaughter on both sides, and on both sides they were on the point of claiming the victory; when the day broke, and as the light advanced, they soon perceived, to their astonishment and grief, that, owing to the darkness of the night, they had been fighting not with enemies as they supposed, but with friends and allies; they had been doing their enemies' work, and weakening the cause they had wished to support. The expectation of each party to conquer the other was founded upon the losses the opponent had sustained; and this was what proportionably aggravated their lamentation and distress, when they had sufficient light to show them the mischief they had done. Ah! my friends, if shame be compatible with the heavenly state, as perhaps in a sense it may (for believers, when most happy here, are most sensibly ashamed of themselves), shall we not, even then, be ashamed to think how often, in this dark world, we mistook our friends for foes, and that, while we thought we were fighting for the cause of God and truth, we were wounding and worrying the people whom He loved, and perhaps indulging our own narrow, selfish, party prejudices under the semblance of zeal for His glory? —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(1221.) Suppose the troops of a nation, called out against the common enemy, should under the influence of natural prejudices be continually engaged in quarrels. And while they expected to be besieged, instead of strengthening the outer walls of their fortifications, they employed themselves in raising lines of partition to keep separate from one another. Their common interests must greatly suffer. Let them continue to wear their natural costume, and each prefer their own tactics and peculiar discipline; but let them remember that coldness and lukewarmness in their efforts to assist each other against the enemy, and maintain the cause for which they were enlisted, would be sadly betraying the interest of the sovereign in whose services they were engaged. What must we think of those individuals who are more intent to draw lines of distinction than to agree to differ? The true soldiers of Jesus Christ should hold it necessary to raise and strengthen the wall by which Christ's Church is surrounded, and that not for the purpose of intercepting the flow of kindness and Christian philanthropy from *within*, but for the purpose of intercepting the streams of contamination from without. The line of partition which obtains between the Church and the world—the line which measures off the ground of vital and evangelical religion from the general ungodliness of mere profession, must be preserved and strengthened. The latitudinarianism which would pull down one of its stones must be abhorred as treason. Let an impregnable sacredness be thrown around the people who stand peculiarised by their devotedness and their faith, from the general bulk of a species who are of the earth and earthly. There are landmarks between the children of light and the children of darkness which can never be moved away; but for the lines of partition which have been drawn among themselves, let them be utterly swept away. The signals of distinction between one party of Christians and another need not be put down, but each allowed to wear its own. But with zeal for essentials, they must tolerate each other in the circumstantials of their faith; and under all the variety which they wear, whether of complexion or of outward observance, let them recognise the brotherhood of a common doctrine, and of the common spirit of Christianity. How else, in thus weakening the cause of Christ, can we be free from the guilt of disloyalty to our Lord? What Scriptural partition has He raised between believers but this for our guidance,—"That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me?" —*Salter.*

(1222.) For wolves to devour sheep, is no wonder: but for sheep to devour one another, is monstrous and astonishing. —*Salter.*

(1223.) Whenever two Christians, either of this church or that, begin to quarrel about matters of ceremonial detail, what is the natural result? The still small voice of truth is lost in the clamour of controversy; love decays, life dies; and the world exclaims, not as of old, "Behold how these Christians love one another," but, "See how they hate and assail one another." Where we must differ from a Christian brother in many things that he thinks right, let us do so without calling him by a single bad name; use the softest words, the strongest

reasons; and, depend upon it, strong reason couched in courteous language will gain the day, when violent declamation ensoured by a bitter spirit will do evil, and gain no laurels. And instead of spending our aggressive energy upon internal disputes, let us expend it upon the masses of London that hear no chimes of Sabbath bells, see no Sabbath sun, and are ignorant of those precious things that we know. Oh! while patients are dying in the wards, let not the physicians quarrel by the bedside about who has the best diploma. While souls are passing to the judgment-seat, we should have no time to dispute about mere mechanical and paltry differences.
—*Cumming.*

(1224.) A wall having become very feeble by age, a portion of it one day fell down. Great consequences followed the falling of the piece of the old wall.

First,—the sun was able to pour more light into the gardens on either side, which the height of the wall had obstructed, so that the flowers looked to greater advantage; and owing to their having more air and sunshine, became really more beautiful.

Then,—the perfume was borne across the breach; so that the gardens were the sweeter.

"What a pity that piece of old wall had not fallen down before," said the flowers.

Next,—the shrubs looked over to one another, and got into friendly talk; and so they said, "What a good thing that that piece of old wall fell down; —it is a pity it stood so high so long."

Then,—the flowers and shrubs of each garden discovered that members of their own families had been living on the other side, and therefore really near to each other, though they had had no communion, owing unto the wall between.

And finally, so many benefits were seen to be the result of the occurrence, that instead of rebuilding the fallen part, the remainder was pulled down to a low level, that air and sunshine might have freer course, and the gardens a free communication. And not a few afterwards acknowledged that a real good and blessing was the consequence unto all parties, by the opportunely falling down of that old dividing wall.

. . . . . .

Party-spirit is a wall of separation which the coming and the work of Christ was intended to remove. "For He is our peace, who hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Let none now seek to divide Christians, by building up a wall of party-spirit between them; for, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." —*Bowden.*

3. Are a hindrance to the progress of the Gospel.

(1225.) The time for the pastures of profession to be green, and for the field of true godliness to grow ripe for the harvest, and for the rose of devotion and heavenliness to be fragrant and flourish, is not in the blustering stormy tempestuous winter, but in the calm delightful summer of peace.

Oh, what abundance of excellent, hopeful fruits of godliness have I seen blown down before they were ripe, by the impetuous winds of wars and other contentions, and so have lain trodden under foot by libertinism and sensuality, as meat for swine, who else might have been their Master's delight! In a word, I never yet saw the work of the gospel go on well in wars, nor the business of men's salvation succeed among dissensions; but if one have in such times proved a gainer, multitudes have been losers.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. Enfeeble and imperil the Church.

(1226.) Melancthon, persuading the divided Protestants of his time to peace and unity, illustrateth his argument by a notable parable of the wolves and the dogs who were marching onward to fight one against another. "The wolves, that they might the better know the strength of their adversary, sent forth a master-wolf as their scout. The scout returns, and tells the wolves that indeed the dogs were more in number, but yet they should not be discouraged, for he observed that the dogs were not one like another. A few mastiffs there were, but the most were little curs which could only bark but not bite, and would be afraid of their own shadow. Another thing also he observed, which would much encourage them, and that was, that the dogs did march as if they were more offended at themselves than with us, not keeping their ranks, but grinning and snarling and biting and tearing one another as if they would save us a labour; and therefore let us march on resolutely, for our enemies are their own enemies, enemies to themselves and their own peace; they bite and devour each other, and therefore we shall certainly devour them." Thus, though a kingdom or state be never so well provided with men, arms, ammunition, ships, walls, forts, and bulwarks, yet notwithstanding, if divisions and heart-burnings get into that kingdom, that state, or that city, like a spreading gangrene, they will infect the whole, and, like a breach made in the walls of a city besieged, they will let in the enemy to destroy it. Nay, though there should be a kingdom of saints, if differences and distractions get within that kingdom, they will, like the worm in Jonah's gourd, eat up all the happiness of it in one night. —*Calamy*, 1600–1666.

(1227.) You all profess to have been baptized into the spirit of the gospel; but you do not show it, when you bite and snarl at one another. The gospel, that makes wolves and lambs agree, doth not teach the lambs to turn wolves and devour each the other. Our Saviour told the two disciples, whose choler was so soon up, that they would be fetching fire from heaven to go on their revengeful errand, that they little thought from what hearth that wildfire of their passion came, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." As if He had said, "Such fiery, wrathful speeches do not suit with the meek Master you serve, nor with the gospel of peace He preacheth to you." And if the gospel will not allow us to pay our enemies in their own coin, and give them wrath for wrath; then much less will it suffer brethren to spit fire at one another's face. No, when any such embers of contention begin to smoke among Christians, we may know who left the spark; no other but Satan, he is the great kindle-coal of all their contentions. If there be tempest (not in the air) in the spirits of Christians, and the wind of their passions be high and loud, it is easy to tell who is the conjuror: Oh, it is the devil that is practising his black art upon their lusts, which yet are so much unmortified, as gives him too great an advantage of raising many times sad storms of division and strife amongst

them. Paul and Barnabas set out in a calm together, but the devil sends a storm after them, such a storm as parted them in the midst of their voyage. There is nothing (next Christ and heaven) that the devil grudges believers more than their peace and mutual love; if he cannot rend them from Christ or stop them from getting heaven, yet he takes some pleasure to see them go thither in a storm; like a shattered fleet severed one from another, that they may have no assistance from, nor comfort of, each other's company all the way; though, where he can divide, he hopes to ruin also, well knowing this to be the most probable means to effect it; one ship is easier taken than a squadron. A town, if it can be but set on fire, the enemy may hope to take it with more ease. Let it therefore be your great care to keep the devil's spark from your powder. Certainly peace among Christians is no small mercy, that the devil's arrows fly so thick at its breast.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1228.) The corruptions in a church are not of so destructive an influence as schisms and divisions from it, the constant effects of enthusiasm. It being much in the body spiritual as in the natural; where that which severs and dissolves the continuity of parts tends more to the destruction of the whole than that which corrupts them. You may cure a throat when it is sore, but not when it is cut.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

5. Are a cause of rejoicing to the enemies of the truth.

(1229.) Consider where you are, and among whom; are you not in your enemies' quarters? If you fall out, what do you but kindle a fire for them to warm their hands by? Aha! so would we have it, say they. The sea of their rage will weaken this bank fast enough, you need not cut it for them. The unreasonableness of the strife betwixt Abraham's herdmen and Lot's is aggravated by the near neighbourhood of the heathen to them (Gen. xiii. 7). To fall out while these idolaters looked on, this would be town-talk presently, and put themselves and their religion both to shame. And I pray, who have been in our land all the while the people of God have been scuffling? Those that have curiously observed every uncomely behaviour among them, and told all the world of it. Such as have wit and malice enough to make use of it for their wicked purposes. They stand on tip-toes to be at work; only we are not yet quite laid up and disabled (by the soreness of those our wounds which we have given ourselves) from withstanding their fury. They hope it will come to that; and then they will cure us of our own wounds, by giving one if they can that shall go deep enough to the heart of our life, gospel, and all. O Christians, shall Herod and Pilate put you to shame? They clapt up a peace to strengthen their hands against Christ; and will not you unite against your common enemy? It is an ill time for mariners to be fighting when an enemy is boring a hole at the bottom of their ship.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

6. Are offensive to God.

(1230.) God makes account, that He brings a heavy judgment upon a people when He Himself leaves them. If the master leaves the ship, it is near sinking indeed; and truly, no readier way to send Him going than by strifes among brethren; these smoke Him out of His own house.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

XIII. *ITS DISCIPLINE.*

1. Must be impartial.

(1231.) We must not stand in fear of the faces of men, though they be never so great and mighty. The censures of the Church must not be like the spider's web which catches flies and gnats, whereas the bigger creatures break from it. They must be administered indifferently, without respect of persons; otherwise it lays open a gap to destroy religion, faith, honesty, justice, and equity, and makes a way to all wrong and all impiety.

This reproves such as dare not deal with great men, rich men, and mighty men. They are afraid to touch them, lest they purchase their displeasure. These are like to fowlers, that pitch not the net to catch kites or hawks that do hurt, but for such as do no hurt. They suffer great men to do what they list, and see them not: they let them alone, and either through negligence they will not, or through fear they dare not, control them.

—*Attersol*, 1618.

2. Importance of strictly maintaining it.

(1232.) When nations are to perish in their sins,
'Tis in the Church the leprosy begins:
The priest, whose office is, with zeal sincere,
To watch the fountain and preserve it clear,
Carelessly nods and sleeps upon the brink,
While others poison what the flock must drink;
Or, waking at the call of lust alone,
Infuses lies and errors of his own:
His unsuspecting sheep believe it pure,
And, tainted by the very means of cure,
Catch from each other a contagious spot,
The foul forerunner of a general rot.

—*Cowper.*

XIV. *DUTIES OF ITS MEMBERS TOWARDS EACH OTHER.*

(1233.) After proof and trial made of their fidelity, we are to trust our brethren without any further suspicion. Not to try before we trust is want of wisdom, not to trust after we have tried is want of charity. The goldsmith must purify the dross and ore from the gold, but he must be wary lest he make waste of good metal if over anxious in too often refining. We may search and sound the sincerity of our brethren, but after good experience made of their uprightness, we must take heed lest by continual sifting and proving them we offend a weak Christian. Christ tried the woman of Syrophœnicia, first with silence, then with two sharp answers; at last finding her to be sound, He dismissed her with granting her request and commending of her faith. When He said to Peter the third time, "Lovest thou Me?" He rested satisfied with Peter's answer, and troubled him with no more questions.

—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(1234.) Every one entering a church has a right to feel that he is going into a higher atmosphere than that in which he has been accustomed to move. Every one has a right to feel that when he goes into the Church of Christ he goes into an association, a brotherhood, where the principle of gentleness and kindness is carried on to a higher degree than it is outside of the Church. I know that it is not so.

I know that the Church is keyed, often, very low in the matter of sympathy. I know that too frequently persons who go into the Church are like those who go at night to a hotel. Each lodger has his own room and calls for what he himself needs, and does not feel bound to take care of any of the other lodgers. And a church, frequently, is nothing but a spiritual boarding-house, where the members are not acquainted with each other, and where there is but very little sympathy. Now, every church should be under the inspiration of such large sympathy and benevolence as to make every one of its members the object of kindly thought and feeling. There should be a public sentiment and an atmosphere of brotherhood in every church. —*Beecher.*

(1235.) The help which he receives from the Church depends upon what church he goes into. Some do not get any help at all from the Church. Some churches are like those Trust-Companies where a man can go and deposit his silver and gold and bonds, and have them kept so securely that nobody can take them away, but where they are simply kept, and are doing nothing. The Church should be a garden where men are taken and planted as in a nursery in frames or in parterres, and where with good soil and a good summer they will grow and blossom and bear fruit. Whether you grow in a church will depend upon what church you get into, and upon what the preaching in that church is, and upon what the social influences are there. In this particular Church there is a social spirit. Men are looked after, and followed up, and comforted, as well as instructed. —*Beecher.*

(1236.) A Boston minister says he once preached on "The Recognition of Friends in the Future," and was told after service by a hearer, that it would be more to the point to preach about the recognition of friends here, as he had been in the church twenty years and didn't know any of its members.

XV. *THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.*

1. The contrast between it and the pagan world.

(1237.) Those Christian churches which sprang up in Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, and Rome, stood absolutely new creations, with a new life, new spirit, and new manners, in the midst of the old and decaying society of paganism.

So, in the primeval forest where thick and dark rises the growth of centuries, shadowing a luxuriant but useless soil over which roam beasts of prey or men scarcely less savage, you may meet broad clearings where the hand of labour has broken up the gloomy vegetation, and let in upon the hazy earth the light and air of heaven. Instead of brooding vapours, the breath of the healthy breezes of the open sky. Instead of rottenness and mould, stretch wide green meadows, where the even-footed mowers sweep down the fragrant grass, and sloping fields of grain wave with golden promise. Instead of the cry of beasts prowling for their prey, or the whoop of savages thirsting for blood, there are cheery voices of labour, the soft laugh of children hearty at their play, the morning prayer or evening psalm. Thus amid the old heathen wastes sprang up these little centres and clearings of Christian civilisation. That ancient, stately, gloomy growth of paganism, beneath which society lay in a luxurious neglect delivered over to base and beastly uses, fell for a space around each Christian church. The light of heaven came in. A new, humane, and Christ-like style of living established itself in the heart of a crooked and perverse nation. A new social order grew upon the old soil, not only uncorrupted by surrounding iniquities, but powerful to penetrate and purify the age. The contrast between the rank and miasmatic verdure of the dismal swamp, and the soft beauty of an English landscape garden, is not more real than between the social life prevalent in Corinth or Pompeii, and the associations which surrounded the Christian home of Aquila and Priscilla and the church that was in their house.

Truly the early disciples of Jesus were the "salt of the earth"—"the light of the world."

—*W. H. Goodrich.*

2. Contrasts between the primitive Church and our own.

(1238.) The unity of the Church is exceedingly hindered by an unworthy privacy and retiredness of most Christians that live, like the snail, in a shell, and look but little abroad into the world. Some know not the state of the world, or of the Church, nor much care to know it; but think it is with all the world as it is with us in England; when as if they knew the fewness of Christians, the huge numbers of infidels, the corruptions of other churches, in comparison of ours, it would surely set them lamenting and praying that the kingdom of Christ might come. Yea, many ministers are of so base a privacy of spirit, that they look little further than their own parishes, and think if all be well there, all is well everywhere; and seldom inquire how it goes with the Church in the rest of the world: nor will scarcely be brought to associate and keep correspondence with their brethren, for the union and communion of the several churches and the common good: far unlike the temper of Paul and the other apostles and servants of Christ in those days. They have not a care of all the churches. They long not to hear of their welfare. They would think it much to travail and labour for it the thousandth part so much as they. They cannot say, "who is weak, and I am not weak," &c.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1239.) The water is purest at its fountain among the mountains where it gushes cold from the rock, or bubbles up at the mossy spring; the nearer to its source, the clearer is the stream. By every mile it rolls, it grows in volume; till the streamlet which a child could leap, fed by many tributaries, has swollen into a broad river, on whose bosom, as it nears the sea, fishermen shoot their nets and the ships of nations ride. But what the water has acquired in depth and breadth, it has lost in purity; growing the muddier the further it goes. How like to what happens with churches—which, as they become larger, usually become more loose in doctrine and more lax in discipline. With an increase of numbers, they often present such an increase of corruptions, that to find the purest days of many a sect, we must turn our steps backward to the period of its rise.

In some respects this is true even of the Christian Church. When young in years, and small in numbers, and poor in point of wealth, what love, unity, purity, and peace, dwelt within her walls! Since then how have these walls been shaken by the violence and filled with the din of controversies!

Here, one sect carrying on fierce war against another; and there, intestine wars—two parties contending within the same body, and more like wolves than sheep, "worrying, biting, and devouring" one another. Suppose an inhabitant of another sphere to alight on this one! He sees the Church of Christ rent into jealous, envious, angry, hostile factions; and finds them, instead of presenting one bold front to the common enemy, burying their swords in each other's bosoms. How difficult it were for him to believe that they were subjects of one King; had a common faith, a common cross, a common Bible, a common hope, a common heaven; and that the choicest title of their Sovereign was not the god of war, but the Prince of Peace. Once the heathens said, "See how these Christians love one another!" They say it no more. And we cannot contrast what the Church is now, and has been for bygone ages, with the purity and peace of her early days, without being ready to cry, "How are the mighty fallen; the weapons of war how are they perished!—How is the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed!" —*Guthrie.*

(1240.) What a picture of Christian unity, love, self-denial, mutual affection, devotedness to each other's welfare, and to the great interests of Messiah's kingdom, is offered to our admiration in the opening chapters of the Acts—in that community of goods which sanguine politicians have often dreamed of, but Christians only have ever attained to! In those days the Church of Christ was like one large, loving family, to whose common treasury each member brought his wealth and wages. Nobody was immensely rich, and none were miserably poor. Riches and rags, splendour and squalidness, did not stand in incongruous conjunction, and worship, as I have seen them, under the same roof, or sit side by side at the same communion-table. As all the rivers of the earth pour their waters into one sea, and all the roots of a tree convey their nourishment to one stem, and all the veins of the body empty themselves into one heart, from which the tide of blood, borne along the bounding arteries, is sent forth again to be distributed to every member according to its needs—so was it in primitive times with the wealth of those who constituted the Church, the body of Christ. What states have been in name, it was in fact—a commonwealth; and the only one the world ever saw. The people lived for Christ; regarding their possessions as His, not their own. They judged that as a man who buys land, buys all belonging to it—the trees that grow on its surface and the minerals that lie in its bowels—so, when Christ bought them with His blood, with them He bought all that was theirs. They felt that if Christ gave His life for the poorest saints, they could not do less than share their "means and substance" with them; and so, as we are told—"They who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

There was no command laid on them to do so; nor does any command lie on us to imitate their example in this matter. Such a practice would now be as undesirable as it is impracticable. Still, though their circumstances were so peculiar as to lead them to adopt a peculiar line of conduct, how ought their conduct—the spirit of their example, and, to adduce a still higher authority, how ought the example of Christ, who, with His disciples, had a common purse, to call forth our charity to God's poor saints; teaching us to fill their scanty cups with the overflowings of our own. —*Guthrie.*

XVI. *HER DEPENDENCE ON DIVINE AID.*

(1241.) The dependence of the Church's vitality upon the hourly exercise of Christ's offices as a living Saviour may be thus illustrated. Conceive the wheels of nature to be stopped, the sun to cease to give its light, the earth and the planets to roll their courses, and the great elements of nature to be powerless and deprived of all their virtue. The visible creation in which man is placed would first droop and languish; her exhausted energies would fail her, and she would expire. Life, in all her creative and sustaining power, would give place, and yield up her dominion to the reign of universal death. No less a work of confusion and death would ensue in the Church if a suspension of Christ's offices were to take place. When He ascended up on high, He received the gift of the Spirit, and He is continually pouring it out as the Spirit of life, animating and imparting vitality to every part of His Church. Not a ray of light can shine into the heart of any member of His body but what comes from the great Prophet of His Church. Not a sinner can start forth from the grave of spiritual death without Christ is there to give him light and life. Not a prayer or offering of whatever kind can come up with acceptance before God without His merits to recommend, and the incense of His intercession to purify and perfume it; while, but for the continual exercise of His kingly office, by virtue of which He holds the keys of death and hell, His Church would be the prey of her spiritual enemies, and fall before the powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places. Let all these offices be suspended, and what must follow? This Church, which is now radiant with light and life, would instantly be in darkness, and gasping in death. The progress of gospel light would be no more; conversion ceases—the Redeemer's car, travelling in the greatness of His strength to the uttermost bounds of the earth, is suddenly arrested in its course. In one word, behold the Church extinct, and mankind again falling before the powers of darkness.

—*Salter.*

(1242.) If a plot of ground should be laid out for a garden, square it never so accurately, let it have never so exact a figure, bestow upon it everything of ornament that art can invent, yet if nature also do not do its part, if the sun never shine upon it, if no showers or dews ever descend, would it be, think you, a pleasant flourishing garden? We have all of us reason to have done expecting much from lifeless outward forms; even the best constitution imaginable, while a spirit of life from above breathes not, despairs that that will ever work miracles, or do any great things amongst us. —*Salter.*

(1243.) We want the baptism of the Spirit upon us if we are to be as a Church should be, or do as a Church of God should do. Learning will be powerless, intellect will be powerless, eloquence will be powerless, yea the ministry you enjoy will be powerless, without the baptism of the Spirit of God. Not one of these, or all of these, will form a substitute, or take the place of the baptizing of the heart and soul. It must kindle our prayers and praises,

and penetrate our affections, and dwell in our hearts, and vitalise every religious effort for God and man, or everything will be in vain. This is the power we want. Yonder is a man gazing on some gigantic vessel. He is lost in amazement at the inventive power represented there; he looks down and sees all those polished levers, and tries to count all those mammoth wheels which are made to revolve there. He goes home struck with wonder at the power of man; and yet he has seen no power. Nothing he has looked at represents anything of power. There must be put into the machinery a power, a hidden power, a mighty moving power, and then will those wheels revolve majestically, and the vessel make its way through the mighty waters. He who made the vessel had that power in view; everything he did was with a view to the coming of that power, or else he would have been the contempt and scorn of all scientific men. Is it so in what men are doing? much more so is it in what God is doing. Without this power in the ministry and laity of this Church, we shall never be able to say, "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord." —*Fleming.*

XVII. *HER TROUBLES DIVINELY SENT FOR GOOD.*

(1244.) The husbandman in autumn and winter is pruning of his trees, and boughs and branches are scattered up and down all the parts of the orchard. He is then digging up the earth, and baring the roots of trees, transplanting some, and setting others in their rooms, and doing many other works which make the garden lie rough and unhandsome; but all these works tend to the greater beauty, pleasure, and profit in the garden afterwards, in the spring and summer.

This similitude shadows out unto us this proposition (which is cleared by Scripture); that the commotions, troubles, and confusions in the Church of God will end in the settlement, peace, and glory of it. —*Austen*, 1656.

(1245.) She has often been refined by the most violent persecutions of her enemies. She has not only survived the flames kindled against her, but, as refined gold comes out more beautiful from the furnace, left her dross behind her, and has been wrought into a more beautiful frame by the hand of her great artificer. Like the sand upon the seashore, she has not only broken the force of the waves, but been assisted by them to discharge her filth, and been washed more clean by those waves that rushed in to drown her. She has been more conformed to the image of her head; and made fitter to glorify God here, and to enter into the glory of God hereafter. The Church is to "cast forth her roots like Lebanon" (Hos. xiv. 5). The cedar by its shakings grows up more in beauty as well as strength, and the torch by its knocks burns the clearer. Though the number of her children might sometimes decrease through fear, yet her true offspring that have remained have increased in their zeal, courage, and love to God. Apostates themselves have proved refiners of them that they have deserted: "And some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, and to purge, and make them white" (Dan. xi. 35). The corn is the purer by the separation of the chaff; thus has she grown purer by flames and sounder by batteries.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

XVIII. *HER SAFETY.*

(1246.) If the Church be a burning bush, it will not be consumed, because God is in it. As it is safe in the fire, so also in the water; though it be a vessel, as that wherein the disciples were sailing in a rough sea, tossed up and down with tempestuous winds and boisterous waves, nay, filled almost with water and ready to sink, yet there is no fear, because Christ is in it; for though He seem to sleep, He is waiting only for a fit opportunity to manifest and magnify His power, yet when the storm comes He will be sure to awake, and with His word of command to cause a calm. The Church, as Jerome saith of Arcturus, *semper versatur nunquam mergitur*, is much tossed, but never drowned. "God is in the midst of her, she shall never be moved; He shall defend her, and that right early."

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1247.) As for the trouble thou puttest thyself to concerning the cause and Church of Christ, which thou mayest see at any time distressed by the enemy, though God takes thy good-will to them (from which those thy fears arise) very kindly, yet there is no need of tormenting thyself with that which is sure never to come to pass. The Ark may shake, but it cannot fall. The ship of the Church may be tossed, but it cannot sink, for Christ is in it, and will awake time enough to prevent its wreck. There is therefore no cause for us, when the storm beateth hardest upon it, to disturb Him as once the disciples did with the shrieks and outcries of our unbelief as if all were lost. Our faith is more in danger of sinking at such a time than the cause and Church of Christ are. They are both by the promise set out of the reach of men and devils. The Gospel is an "Everlasting Gospel." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one iota of this shall perish." "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever," and shall be alive to walk over all its enemies' graves, yea to see the funeral of the whole world. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1248.) A foundation must be hidden and out of sight unto all those that outwardly look upon the house. They cannot perceive it, though every part of the house does rest upon it. And this has occasioned many mistakes in the world. An unwise man coming to a great house, seeing the antics and pictures [figures?] stand crouching under the windows and sides of the house, may haply think that they bear up the weight of the house, when indeed they are for the most part pargeted posts. They bear not the house,—the house bears them. By their bowing, and outward appearance, the man thinks the burden is on them, and supposes that it would be an easy thing at any time by taking them away to demolish the house itself. But when he sets himself to work, he finds these things of no value; there is a foundation in the bottom which bears up the whole that he thought not of;—against that he may waste himself until he be broken in pieces. Men looking upon the Church do find that it is a fair fabric indeed, but cannot imagine how it should stand. A few supporters it seems to have in the world, like crouching antics under the windows, that make some show of under-propping it;—here you have a magistrate, there an army, or so. Think the men of the world, "Can we but remove these props, the whole would quickly topple to the ground." Yea, so

foolish have I been myself, and so void of understanding before the Lord, as to take a view of some goodly appearing props of this building, and to think, "How shall the house be preserved, if these should be removed?"—they looked unto me like the mariners in Paul's ship, without whose abode therein they could not be saved, — when lo! suddenly, some have been manifested to be pargeted posts, and the very best to be held up by the house, and not to hold it up. On this account the men of the world think it no great matter to demolish the spiritual Church of Christ to the ground:—they encourage one another to the work, never thinking of the foundation that lies hidden, against which they dash themselves all to pieces. I say, then, Christ, as the Foundation of this house, is hidden to the men of the world,—they see it not, they believe it not. There is nothing more remote from their apprehension that Christ should be at the bottom of them and their ways, whom they so much despise.
—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(1249.) As Noah's ark, notwithstanding all the unlikelihood and improbability of the event, was miraculously preserved in the midst of the conflicting elements, and enabled to withstand all the violence of the breaking up of the great abyss, and the rushing down of the waters of the firmament from above, with all the terrific accompaniments of this convulsion of nature, during a period of one hundred and fifty days; so the Ark of the Church, by the same sustaining power, has hitherto rode in safety through the stormy deeps and over the mountain billows of a deluge of persecution, trouble, and temptation, issuing from the abyss of hell, agitated by the storms and tempests which have been congregated in the atmosphere of this world by "the prince of the power of the air," who has directed all their fury to accomplish her destruction. Has not Jehovah then, in controlling and overruling all this hellish hate and fury for the accomplishment of His wondrous designs in the salvation of His Church, been making known His "manifold wisdom of the principalities and powers in heavenly places"? And will not that grace, and wisdom, and power, which have hitherto triumphed, still secure and maintain her interests, until, guided through the ocean of time, she rests on the mountains of eternal love, where there shall be no more sea, nor clouds, nor tempests, to disturb the serenity of the celestial regions of purity and bliss? (Matt. xvi. 18). —*Ewing.*

(1250.) The Church of God has often been in a low, languishing, and, to all human appearance, in a desperate condition; yet one thing, as Solomon says, is set against another, and it has been at such times that His people have realised most fully the comforts of His providence and gracious presence. These stars shine brightest in dark winter nights. There was a time, for example, when the Church was reduced to the small number of eight persons; and these eight in imminent danger of perishing. If one plank of the ark had started; if some gigantic billow, striking broadside on, had swept her against the rugged summit of a mountain-top lying like a reef below the flood; if any one of the hundred accidents that are daily wrecking other ships had happened to this that sailed a shoreless sea without crew, or helm, or helmsman, to so low a pitch was the Church of God reduced, that the wreck of one ship had been her ruin—the whole race of men had perished.

It is astonishing and refreshing to look back on the way God has often extricated His people when they seemed hemmed in by destruction and without a chance of escape; and more still, to see how Haman swung on the gallows which he raised for Mordecai; how the persecutors of the three Hebrew children were consumed in the flames they had kindled for them, and how the Red Sea, into which the Egyptians would have driven God's people, became, not the grave of the oppressed, but of their oppressors. Thus, in the days of old, God made the wrath of man and of devils also to praise Him. He does so still. The trials and temptations to which He leaves His saints exposed shall be but the storm that flashes, and thunders, and roars through the air, to leave it fresher and purer than before.
—*Guthrie.*

(1251.) The wars and conquests of kings, the ambitious schemes of politicians, have all been overruled by Him who maketh the very wrath of man to praise Him, for the wider extension and the more efficient establishment of His own Church. The very colossal power of the Roman Empire itself was made subservient to the process by which it was to be broken up: and the efficacy of its laws manifested in favour of the religion to which it was inveterately and specially hostile. Little did the Emperor Titus imagine that, while laying waste the Jewish kingdom, he was raising up from its very ruins a kingdom destined speedily to overshadow and overthrow his own empire, and lay his proud religion in the dust. The Roman sword, intent only on self-glorification and the pride of conquest, was wielded by the Almighty Arm to clear the way for the triumphant march of Christianity over every nation and kingdom; and though that sword was frequently turned against the Church, and wrought sad havoc among its members, yet each pruning, each shoot that it cut off, became a separate living vine, extending to other regions the blessings of the Gospel, like that strange American plant which has been recently introduced into our rivers and canals, every joint and fragment of which, however minutely cut, becomes an independent individual, thus diffusing the plant by the very efforts made to extirpate it. And in this way the Church grew and spread, until now its range extends from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.
—*Macmillan.*

COMFORT.

1. Its sources.

(1252.) It is God's presence which constitutes the saint's morning. As the stars may impart some light, and yet the brightness of all combined cannot form the light of day, but when the sun appears there is day forthwith; so God may make some comfort arise to a soul from secondary and inferior means; but it is He Himself alone who, by the shining of His face and the smiles of His countenance, causes morning.
—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(1253.) The Christian's comfort increaseth or wanes, as the aspect of his faith is to the power of God. Let the soul question that, or his interest in it, and his joy gusheth out, even as blood out of a

broken vein. It is true, a soul may scramble to heaven with much ado, by a faith of recumbency, relying on God as able to save, without this persuasion of its interest in God; but such a soul goes with a scant side-wind, or like a ship whose masts are laid by the board, exposed to wind and weather, if others better appointed did not tow it along with them. Many fears like waves ever and anon cover such a soul, that it is more under water than above; whereas one that sees itself folded in the arms of Almighty Power;—Oh, how such a soul goes mounting before the wind, with her sails filled with joy and peace! Let affliction come, storms arise, this blessed soul knows where it shall land and be welcome. The name of God is his harbour, where he puts in as boldly as a man steps into his own house when taken in a shower. . . . Do you not think they sleep as soundly who dwell on London Bridge, as they who live at Whitehall or Cheapside, knowing the waves that roar under them cannot hurt them? Even so may the saints rest quietly over the floods of death itself, and fear no ill.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

2. How God administers it.

(1254.) The second light which God vouchsafes His people, ordinarily to help and eke out their faith, is the sight and comfort of their own graces, unto which so many promises belong; as of their love to His people, fear of His name, desire to obey Him. So that often when the sun is set, yet starlight appears; that is, though that other, the immediate presence and evidence of His favour shines not on the soul, yet His graces therein appear, as tokens of His love; so the soul knows that there is a sun still that gives light to these stars, though it sees it not; as in the night we know that there is a sun in another horizon, because the stars we see have their light from it, and we are sure that it will arise again to us. —*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(1255.) Remember thou dependest on God for the continuance of thy comfort. They are not the smiles thou hadst yesterday can make thee joyous to-day, any more than the bread thou didst then eat can make thee strong without more; thou needest new discoveries for new comforts. Let God hide His face, and thou wilt soon lose the sight and forget the taste of what thou even now hadst.

It is beyond our skill or power to preserve those impressions of joy and comfortable apprehensions of God's favour on our spirit which sometimes we find; as God's presence brings those, so when He goes He carries them away with Him, as the setting sun doth the day. We would laugh heartily at him, who, when the sun shines in at his window, should think by shutting that to imprison the sunbeams in his chamber; and dost thou not show as much folly, who thinkest because thou now hast comfort, thou therefore shalt never be in darkness of spirit more?

The believer's comfort is like Israel's manna; it is not like our ordinary bread and provision we buy at market, and lock up in our cupboards where we can go to it when we will: no, it is rained as that was from heaven. Indeed, God provided for them after this sort to humble them.—"Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee." It was not because such was mean food that God is said to humble them, for it was delicious food, therefore called "angels' food;" but the manner of the dispensing it from hand to mouth every day, their portion and no more, so that God kept the key of their cupboard, and they stood to His immediate allowance; and thus God communicates our spiritual comforts for the same end to humble us.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1256.) God will keep the rich store of consistent and abiding comforts till the Great Day. When all the family shall come together, He may pour out the fullness of His hidden treasures on them. We are now in the morning of the day, the feast is to come; a breakfast must serve to stay the stomach, till the King of saints with all His friends sit down together. —*Simonds*.

3. Exceeds our distresses.

(1257.) Our comforts vie with the number of our sorrows, and win the game. The mercies of God passed over in a gross sum breed no admiration; but cast up the particulars, and then arithmetic is too dull an art to number them. As many dusts as a man's hands can hold, is but his handful of so many dusts; but tell them one by one, and they exceed all numeration. It was but a crown which King Solomon wore; but weigh the gold, tell the precious stones, value the richness of them, and what was it then? —*Adams*, 1653.

4. Its source to be tested.

(1258.) Great is the excellency, transcendent the comforts, that are to be found in God's promises; they are the good Christian's Magna Charta for heaven, the only assurance that he hath to claim by. There is no comfort—no true, real, virtual comfort—but what is built and founded upon a Scripture promise; if otherwise, it is presumption, and cannot properly be called true comfort.

—*Calamy*, 1600–1663.

(1259.) "Thy comforts delight my soul!" In all the comforts we have, it is good to consider from whence it comes; is it God's comfort, or a fancy of our own? A comfort that is made up of our fancies is like a spider's web that is weaved out of its bowels, and is gone and swept away with the turn of a besom. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

5. Why it is sometimes withheld.

(1260.) As little children, when they see a heap of beautiful roses lying upon a table, and their mother puts them in a mortar, and therein beats them all to pieces; the children cry out and think the mother spoils them, though she does it merely to make a conserve of them, that they may be more useful and durable. Thus it is that we think we have comforts like beds of roses; yet when God takes them from us, and breaks them all to pieces, we are apt to conceive that they are all spoiled and destroyed, and that we are utterly undone by it; whereas God intends it to work for our greater benefit and advantage (Rom. viii. 28).

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(1261.) According to the secret design of His providence, He is pleased to withhold from us the milk and the honey of consolation, that, by weaning us in this manner, we may learn to feed on the more dry and solid bread of a vigorous devotion, exercised under the trial of distaste and spiritual dryness. —*De Sales*.

6. Is not the measure of grace.

(1262.) Sense of sin may be often great, and more felt than grace; yet not to be more than grace. A man feels the ache of his finger more sensibly than the health of his whole body; yet he knows that the ache of a finger is nothing so much as the health of the whole body. The sun under the clouds is still a sun; the fire in embers, still fire; the sap is shut up in the root, and confined thither by the cold of winter, that it cannot show itself in production of leaves and fruits, as in the spring, yet is there still life in the tree. So in the distressed heart, during the storm of affliction, there is still some hidden grace, some spark of fire in the smoking flax which the Lord Jesus will not quench. Though thou be wounded with God's own arrows, that seem to drink up thy blood; although thy own sins be presented to the eye of thy soul; though the serpent (to increase thy terror) put forth his dismal countenance; yet, canst thou believe? take comfort, there is more health in the Seed of the woman than there can be venom in the head of the serpent.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(1263.) Great comforts do, indeed, bear witness to the *truth* of thy grace, but not to the *degree* of it; the weak child is oftener in the lap than the strong one. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1264.) Take heed thou thinkest not grace decays because thy comfort withdraws. . . . Did ever faith triumph more than in our Saviour crying "My God, my God!" Here faith was at its meridian when it was midnight in respect of joy. Possibly thou comest from an ordinance, and bringest not home with thee those sheaves of comfort thou used to do, and therefore concluded, grace acted not in thee as formerly. Truly, if thou hast nothing else to go by, thou mayest wrong the grace of God in thee exceedingly; because thy comfort is extrinsical to thy duty, a boon which God may give or not, yea, doth give to the weak, and deny to the strong. The traveller may go as fast, and ride as much ground, when the sun doth not shine as when it doth, though indeed he goes not so merrily on his journey; nay, sometimes he makes the more haste, the warm sun makes him sometimes to lie down and loiter, but when dark and cold he puts on with more speed. Some graces thrive best (like some flowers) in the shade, such as humility, dependence on God, &c.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1265.) Take heed thou dost not mistake and think thy grace decays, when may be it is only thy temptations increase and not thy graces decrease. If you should hear a man say, because he cannot to-day run so fast when a hundredweight is on his back, as he could yesterday without any such a burden, that therefore he was grown weaker, you would soon tell him where his mistake lies. Temptation lies not in the same heaviness always upon the Christian's shoulder. Observe, therefore, whether Satan is not more than ordinary let loose to assault thee, whether thy temptations come not with more force and violence than ever; possibly, though thou dost not with the same facility overcome these, as thou hast done less, yet grace may act stronger in conflicting with the greater, than in overcoming the less. The same ship that when lightly ballasted and favoured with the wind goes mounting, at another time deeply laden and going against wind and tide may move with a slow pace, and yet they in the ship take more pains to make it sail thus than they did when it went faster.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

7. Not to be supremely desired.

(1266.) He is not a good subject that is all for what he can get of his prince, but never thinks what service he may do for him. Nor he the true Christian, whose thoughts dwell more on his own happiness than the honour of his God.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

8. Not to be too earnestly craved.

(1267.) Suppose two men in your work—one that must have his pay presently, his wages presently, yea, before he has done his work: the other will not have his wages till his work be all done; and if you offer him money, "No," says he, "I will stay till all be done, and receive it in a lump together." Which of these two is the ablest man, or which the poorest man? Will you not say, "Surely, he that cannot stay is the poorest, and he that can stay longest for his wages is the ablest man"? So it is here, God has two sorts of servants: one that go by visions and manifestations of love, and are not able to live at all by faith, but must have sights, and visions, and manifestations every day, or else they die, and murmur, or complain. And others say, "Oh, but these sights and visions are for heaven; if God will have it so, I am contented to stay till all the work be done." Which of these two is the poorest, or the strongest? Labour more and more to live by faith, and when you are in desertion, say, "Whether saved or not saved, whether hypocrite or not hypocrite, I will stay, I will wait on God, and let Him come when He pleases." If you lay yourself at Christ's feet He will take you into His arms.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

9. Not always attained at the outset of the Christian life.

(1268.) Though a man have prayed earnestly and often, it is not an easy matter to wash off the stain of sin, and quiet the conscience. As after a storm on the sea, though the tempest be gone, yet there is not by and by a calm, there will be a rolling and tossing of the waves up and down a long while after; so, to believe that God will hear our prayers, and that He has done away all our sins out of His sight, it is not by and by done; there is a rolling and a stain of sin that will toss up and down a long time after our prayers are done.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(1269.) Few Christians do come to know either what are solid grounds of comfort, or whether they have any such grounds themselves in the infancy of Christianity. But as an infant hath life before he knoweth it; and as he hath misapprehensions of himself, and most other things for certain years together; yet it will not follow that, therefore, he hath no life or reason: so it is in the case in hand. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

10. How it is to be attained.

(1270.) If, when God hath given you assurance, or strong probabilities of your sincerity, you will make use of it but only for that present time, you

will never then have a settled peace in your soul; besides, the great wrong you do to God, by necessitating Him to be so often renewing such discoveries, and repeating the same words to you so often over. If your child offend you, would you have him, when he is pardoned, no longer to believe it than you are telling it him? Should he be still asking you over and over every day, "Father, am I forgiven, or no"? Should not one answer serve his turn? Will you not believe that your money is in your purse or chest any longer than you are looking on it? Or that your corn is growing on your land, or your cattle in your grounds, any longer than you are looking on them? By this course a rich man should have no more content than a beggar, no longer than he is looking on his money, or goods, or land; and when he is looking on one, he should again lose the comfort of all the rest. What hath God given you a memory for, but to lay up former apprehensions and discoveries, and experiences, and make use of them on all meet occasions afterwards? Let me, therefore, persuade you to this great and necessary work. When God hath once resolved your doubts, and shown you the truth of your faith, love, or obedience, write it down, if you can, in your book (as I have advised you in my "Treatise of Rest"), "Such a day, upon a serious perusal of my heart, I found it thus and thus with myself." Or, at least, write it deep in your memory; and do not suffer any fancies, or fears, or light surmises to cause you to question this again, as long as you fall not from the obedience or faith which you then discovered.

Alas! man's apprehension is a most mutable thing! If you leave your soul open to every new apprehension, you will never be settled; you may think two contrary things of yourself in an hour. You have not always the same opportunity for right discerning, nor the same clearness of apprehension, nor the same outward means to help you, nor the same inward assistance of the Holy Ghost. When you have these, therefore make use of them, and fix your wavering soul, and take your question and doubt as resolved, and do not tempt God by calling Him to new answers again and again, as if He had given you no answer before.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1271.) You must not make use only at the present of your experiences, but lay them up for the time to come. Nor must you tempt God so far as to expect new experiences upon every new scruple or doubt of yours, as the Israelites expected new miracles in the wilderness, still forgetting the old. If a scholar should in his studies forget all that he hath read and learned, and all the resolutions of his doubts which in study he hath attained, and leave his understanding still as an unwritten paper, as a receptive of every mutation and new apprehension, and contrary conceit, as if he had never studied the point before, he will make but a poor proficiency, and have but a fluctuated, unsettled brain. A scholar should make all the studies of his life to compose one entire image of truth in his soul, as a painter makes every line he draws to compose one entire picture of man; and as a weaver makes every thread to compose one web; so should you make all former examinations, discoveries, evidences, and experiences, compose one full discovery of your condition, that so you may have a settled peace of soul; and see that you tie both ends together, and neither look on your present troubled state without your former, lest you be unthankful and unjustly discouraged; nor on your former state without observance of your present frame of heart and life, lest you deceive yourself or grow secure.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1272.) Take heed of foolish, carnal, hasty expectations of comfort from the bare words of any man; but use men's advice only to direct you in that way, where, by patience and faithfulness, you may meet with it in due season!

Nothing is more usual with silly souls, than to go to this or that excellent minister, whom they deservedly admire; and to look that with an hour or two's discourse he should comfort them, and set all their bones in joint; and when they find that it is not done, they either despair, or turn to the next deceiver, and say, "I tried the best of them: and if such a man cannot do it, none of them can do it." But, silly soul, do physicians use to charm men into health? Wilt thou go and talk an hour with the ablest physician, and say, that because his talk doth not cure thee, thou wilt never go to a physician more, but go to ignorant people that will kill thee? The work of a minister is not to cure thee always immediately, by comfortable words (What words can cure an ignorant, melancholy, or incapable soul!); but to direct thee in thy duty, and in the use of those means, which if thou wilt faithfully and patiently practise, thou shalt certainly be cured in due time: if thou wilt use the physic, diet, and exercise which thy physician doth prescribe thee; it is that which must restore thy health and comfort, and not the saying over a few words to thee. If thou lazily look that other men's words or prayers should cure and comfort thee without thy own endeavours, thou mayest thank thyself when thou art deceived. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1273.) You must not go to a minister to be cured merely by good words, as wizards do by charms; and so think that all is well when he hath spoken comfortably to you. But you must go for directions in your own practice, that so the cure may be done by leisure when you come home. Truly, most even of the godly that I have known do go to a minister for comfort, as silly people go to a physician for physic. If the physician could stroke them whole, or give them a pennyworth of some pleasant stuff that would cure all in an hour, then they would praise him. But, alas! the cure will not be done.—1. Without cost;—Nor 2. without time and patience;—Nor 3. without taking down unpleasing medicines; and so they let all alone. So you come to a minister for advice and comfort, and you look that his words should comfort you before he leaves you, or at least, some short, small direction to take home with you. But he tells you, if you will be cured, you must resolve against that disquieting corruption and passion; you must more meekly submit to reproof; you must walk more watchfully and conscionably with God and men; and then you must not give ear to the tempter; with many the like. He gives you a bill of thirty several directions, and tells you you must practise all these. Oh, this seems a tedious course, you are never the nearer comfort for hearing these; it must be by long and diligent practising of them. Is it not a foolish patient that will come home from the physician, and say, "I have heard

all that he said, but I am never the better"? So you say, "I have heard all that the minister said, and I have never the more comfort." But have you done all that he bid you, and taken all the medicines that he gave you? Alas, the cure is most to be done by yourself (under Christ) when you come home. The minister is but the physician to direct you what course to take for the cure. And then as silly people run from one physician to another, hearing what all can say, and desirous to know what every man thinks of them, but thoroughly follow the advice of none, but perhaps take one medicine from one man, and one from another, and let most even of those lie by them in the box, and so perish more certainly than if they never meddled with any at all; so do most troubled souls hear what one man saith, and what another saith, and seldom thoroughly follow the advice of any; but when one man's words do not cure them, they say, "This is not the man that God hath appointed to cure me." And to another, "And that is not the man;" when they should rather say, "This is not the way," than, "This is not the man." This lazy complaining is not it that will do the work, but faithful practising the directions given you.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1274.) Another most common, unhappy miscarriage of sad Christians lieth here. That they will rather continue complaining and self-tormenting, than give over sinning, so far as they might give it over if they would. I beseech you in the name of God, to know and consider what it is that God requireth of you. He doth not desire your vexation but reformation. No further doth He desire the trouble of your mind, than as it tendeth to the avoiding of that sin which is the cause of it. God would have you less in your fears and troubles, and more in your obedience. Obey more, and disquiet your mind less. Will you take this counsel presently, and see whether it will not do you more good than all the complaints and doubtings of your whole life has done. Set yourself with all your might against your pride, worldliness, and sensuality, your unpeaceableness and want of love and tenderness to your brethren; and whatever other sin your conscience is acquainted with. I pray you tell me if you had gravel in your shoe, in your travel, would it not be more wisdom to sit down and take off your shoe and cast it out, than to stand still, or go complaining, and tell every one you meet of your soreness? If you have a thorn in your foot, will you go on halting and lamenting? or will you pull it out? —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1275.) The Syrophœnician woman gained comfort in her misery by thinking great thoughts of Christ. The Master had talked about the children's bread. "Now," argued she, "since Thou art the Master of the table of grace, I know that Thou art a generous housekeeper, and there is sure to be abundance of bread on Thy table: there will be such an abundance for the children that there will be crumbs to throw on the floor for the dogs, and the children will fare none the worse because the dogs are fed." She thought Him one who kept so good a table that all she needed would only be a crumb in comparison. Yet remember what she wanted was to have the devil cast out of her daughter. It was a very great thing to her, but she had such a high esteem of Christ, that she said, "It is nothing to Him; it is but a crumb for Christ to give." This is the royal road to comfort. Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into the haven of peace. —*Spurgeon.*

11. Various consolations for feeble and fearful believers.

(1276.) Abel offered unto God the firstlings of his flock, and God had respect unto Abel and his offering. Though the earth was but newly cursed for the sin of man, yet God accepts the first-fruits thereof, well knowing there were no such things in the offerer's power to perform, but that which He had commanded the earth to yield. So shall those mean graces that are in us be accepted of God, though, too, too much they savour of the naughtiness of our nature. And why so, but because they proceed from His special blessing, and are the work of His Spirit. A great comfort for such as feel in themselves reluctances and spiritual assaults, by reason of the corruptions and imperfections that cleave unto the best things they do.

—*Leslie*, 1627.

(1277.) A living member is not burdensome to the body. A man's arms are not any burden to him, though otherwise massy and weighty; but a withered arm, or a limb mortified, hangeth like a lump of lead on it. Thus, so long as sin liveth in the soul, unkilled wholly, and unmortified as yet, so long our corruption is nothing at all cumbersome unto us, but when it is once mortified in a man, it beginneth to grow burdensome unto him, and to hang like a lump of dead flesh on his soul, and then beginneth the poor soul, pestered and oppressed with the weight of it, to cry out with the apostle: "O wretched man that I am! when shall I be once freed from this body of sin?"

—*Gataker*, 1574-1654.

(1278.) He is a scholar in the school that beginneth at Christ's cross-row, and he is entered into the college that readeth but Seton's logic, and he is a member of the family that was bound apprentice but yesterday. Thus, if thou be a penitent, though not in fulness of perfection; if thou believe, though not with the fullest measure of believing; if thou obey, though not in the highest degree of obedience; be comforted in thy weak beginnings, and resolve to proceed, and know that thou art already entered into the covenant of grace, and shalt enjoy that which Christ hath promised—freedom from damnation—"Thou shalt never see death." —*Spencer*, 1658.

(1279.) As a man doth feel a pain which is but in the top of his finger more sensibly than the health of his whole body, yet the health of the body is more than the pain of a finger: even so a godly Christian doth more feel the flesh than the spirit, yet the power and efficacy of the spirit, by the virtue of the Holy Ghost, is such that it is able to prevail ordinarily against the flesh, and therefore the flesh is not more than the spirit. And as men feel corruption, not by corruption, but by grace: so, the more they feel their inward corruptions, the more grace they have. —*Cawdray*, 1598-1664.

(1280.) God may communicate the less of His assisting strength, that He may show the more of

His supporting strength, in upholding weak grace. We do not wonder to see a man of strong constitution that eats his bread heartily, and sleeps soundly, live; but for a crazy body, full of ails and infirmities, to be so patched and shored up by the physician's art that he stands to old age, this begets some wonder in the beholders. It may be thou art a poor trembling soul, thy faith is weak, and thy assaults from Satan strong, thy corruptions stirring and active, and thy mortifying strength little, so that in thy opinion they rather gain ground on thy grace, than give ground to it, ever and anon thou art ready to think, thou shalt be cast as a wreck upon the devil's shore; and yet to this day thy grace lives, though full of leaks; now is it not worth the stepping aside to see this strange sight? A broken ship with masts and hull rent and torn, thus towed along by Almighty Power, through an angry sea, and armadoes of sins and devils, safely into His harbour! To see a poor dilling or rush-candle in the face of the boisterous wind, and not blown out! in a word to see a weak stripling in grace held up in God's arms till he beats the devil craven! This God is doing in upholding thee. Thou art one of those babes out of whose mouth God is perfecting His praise, by ordaining such strength for thee that thou, a babe in grace, shall yet foil a giant in wrath and power. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1281.) There may be truth of grace where there is not present sense of that truth. Yea, the creature may be passionately hunting from ordinance to ordinance to get that sincerity which it already hath; as sometimes you may have seen one seek very earnestly all about the house for his hat when at the same time he hath it on his head. Well, lay down this as a real truth in thy soul; I may be upright, though at present I am not able to see it clearly. This, though it will not bring in a full comfort, yet it may be some support till that come; as a shore to thy weak house, though it does not mend it, yet it will underprop and keep it standing till the Master-workman comes, the Holy Spirit, who with one kind word to thy soul, is able to set thee right in thy own thoughts, and make thee stand strong on the promise, the only true basis and foundation of solid comfort. Be not more cruel to thy soul, O Christian, than thou wouldst to thy friend's (shall I say?) yea, thy enemy body. Should one thou didst not much love lie sick in thy house, yea, so sick that if you should ask him whether he be alive, he could not tell you (his senses and speech being both at present gone), would you presently lay him out and coffin him up for the grave, because you cannot have it from his own mouth that he is alive? Surely not. Oh, how unreasonable and bloody then is Satan, who would presently have thee put thyself into the pit-hole of despair, because thy grace is not so strong as to speak for itself at present.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1282.) The infiniteness of God's knowledge is a comfort in case the saints have not so clear a knowledge of themselves. They find so much corruption that they judge they have no grace. "If it be so, why am I thus? If I have grace, why is my heart in so dead and earthly a frame?" Oh, remember God is of infinite knowledge; He can spy grace where thou canst not; He can see grace hid under corruption as the stars may be hid under a cloud. God can see that holiness in thee which thou canst not discern in thyself: He can spy the flower of grace in thee, though overtopped with weeds. "Because there is in him some good thing" (1 Kings xiv. 13). God sees some good thing in His people, when they can see no good in themselves; and though they judge themselves, He will give them an absolution. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1283.) If you have faith, though but in its infancy, be not discouraged; for,

(1.) A little faith is faith as a spark of fire is fire.

(2.) A weak faith may lay hold on a strong Christ: a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage as well as a strong. She, in the Gospel, who but touched Christ, fetched virtue from Him.

(3.) The promises are not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise doth not say, He who hath a giant faith, who can believe God's love through a frown, who can rejoice in affliction, who can work wonders, remove mountains, stop the mouth of lions, shall be saved; but, Whosoever believes, be his faith never so small. A reed is but weak especially when it is bruised; yet the promise is made to it—"A bruised reed will He not break."

(4.) A weak faith may be fruitful. Weakest things multiply most. The vine is a weak plant, but it is fruitful. The thief on the cross, who was newly converted, was but weak in grace; but how many precious clusters grew upon that tender p'ant!

(5.) The weakest believer is a member of Christ as well as the strongest; and the weakest member of the body mystically shall not perish. Christ will cut off rotten members, but not weak members. Therefore, Christian, be not discouraged: God who would have us receive them that are weak in faith (Rom. xiv. 1) will not Himself refuse them.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(1284.) Amid all your conscious unworthiness, remember, *you are His children*. The soiled garments of earth which you may carry to the very portals of glory cannot alter a Father's feelings towards you, or lead Him to belie or forego His promises. If there be joy in heaven (and that joy deepest in the *Father's* heart) over the sinner in the hour of his *repentance;* what will be that joy in the hour of his glorification, when, stripped of his travel-worn, sin-stained raiment, all his truant-wanderings, and estrangements, and backslidings at an end, he enters the threshold of the paternal Home!

We have read somewhere a story in real life, regarding a long missing child, the heir to vast estates. The tale described how this innocent little one had been decoyed from the parental roof, and was last seen when a tribe of gipsies had been prowling about the neighbourhood of his princely home. Golden bribes had a hundred times been offered for his restoration; but the cruel mystery remained hopelessly unsolved, all efforts were in vain to recover the valued life. The anguished parents, seeing the pride and hope of their household wrenched from their grasp, abandoned themselves to inconsolable grief. One day, as the family carriage was, at a little distance, bearing along the highway these two saddened hearts, a gang of the wandering race were passing by. In their midst, with a heavy burden on his shoulders, and attired in tatters, an eye and a countenance

met theirs which could not be mistaken. A shriek of mingled terror and delight was heard; the mother, leaping in frantic joy from her seat, had in a moment that aggregate of rags and squalor in her arms; her son who had been long dead was alive again; long lost, he was again found. What signified to her these years of degradation! It was her beloved boy, by whose cradle she had, in days gone by, sung her lullaby and weaved visions of fond hope; and though the golden ringlets were now matted with filth, the tiny hands hardened and begrimed with boyish drudgery, and the face browned and weatherbeaten by exposure to the hot sun by day and the cold, dewy, houseless night; yet *there* he was, her own, her only one! Yonder castle, looking forth on the wide demesne, kept high festal holiday that evening. Servants were gathered, and menials were feasted, and the fire-sides of the poor were made brighter and happier by the recovery of the wanderer.

So shall it be with the children of the heavenly kingdom in entering the heavenly home. What though, to the last, by these rags and tatters of nature, these souls begrimed with the remains of sin, we belie our lofty birthright, and render ourselves all unworthy of so glorious an inheritance; "doubtless Thou art our FATHER, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." —*Macduff.*

(1285.) Do not be troubled because you have not great virtues. God made a million spears of grass where He made one tree. The earth is fringed and carpeted, not with forests, but with grasses. Only have enough of little virtues and common fidelities, and you need not mourn because you are neither a hero nor a saint. —*Beecher.*

CONSCIENCE.

I. *DEFINED.*

(1286.) Conscience is a Latin word (though with an English termination), and, according to the very notation of it, imports a double or joint knowledge; to wit, one of a Divine law or rule, and the other of a man's own action: and so is properly the application of a general law to a particular instance of practice. The law of God, for example, says, "Thou shalt not steal;" and the mind of man tells him that the taking of such a thing from a person lawfully possessed of it is stealing. Whereupon the conscience, joining the knowledge of both these together, pronounces, in the name of God, that such a particular action ought not to be done. And this is the true procedure of conscience, always supposing a law from God, before it pretends to lay any obligation upon man. Conscience neither is nor ought to be its own rule.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(1287.) As science means knowledge, conscience etymologically means self-knowledge. . . . But the English word implies a moral standard of action in the mind, as well as a consciousness of our own actions. . . . Conscience is the reason employed about questions of right and wrong, and accompanied with the sentiments of approbation and condemnation. —*Whewell.*

(1288.) Conscience is the power by which we discern, judge, and feel, respecting human actions. It is the eye, the judge, and the heart of man's spiritual being. This is very unphilosophical language, but it is nearer the mark than much of the verbiage of philosophers. As the eye of the body discerns between white and black, so the conscience distinguishes between what is right and what is wrong in human conduct. And as our nerves discriminate between heat and cold, so the conscience feels either pain or pleasure, according to the moral qualities it discerns in the actions which it contemplates. —*Tozer.*

(1289.) "What is conscience?" said a Sunday-school teacher one day to the little flock that gathered around to learn the words of eternal life. Several of the children answered, one saying one thing, and another another, until a little timid child spoke out, "It is Jesus *whispering in our hearts.*"

II. *IS MORE THAN OPINION.*

(1290.) Mere opinion or persuasion may be every whit as strong, and have as forcible an influence upon a man's actions as conscience itself. But then we know, strength or force is one thing, and authority quite another. A rogue upon the highway may have as strong an arm, and take off a man's head as cleverly as the executioner. But then there is a vast disparity in the two actions, when one of them is murder, and the other justice: nay, and our Saviour Himself told His disciples "that men should both kill them, and think that in so doing they did God service." So that here, we see, was a full opinion and persuasion, and a very zealous one too, of the high meritoriousness of what they did; but still there was no law, no word or command of God to ground it upon, and consequently it was not conscience.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

III. *ITS FUNCTIONS.*

1. It is designed to be our guide and monitor through life.

(1291.) Even as a man about to make an unknown journey should find one that would go with him and show him the way, with all the turnings thereof, he could not but take it for a great point of courtesy: so, likewise, seeing we are pilgrims in this world, our life is our journey, and God also hath appointed our conscience to be our companion and guide, to show us what course we may take and what we may not. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1292.) The voice of God Himself speaks in the heart of men, whether they understand it or no; and by secret intimations gives the sinner a foretaste of that direful cup which he is like to drink more deeply of hereafter. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(1293.) The commandments of God being conformable to the dictates of right reason, man's judgment condemns him when he violates any of them, and so the sinner becomes his own tormentor.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(1294.) If there is such a power, what is its office? It would seem to be simply this—to approve our conduct, when we do what *we believe* to be right; and to censure us, when we commit

whatever *we judge* to be wrong. When reason, or religion, or education, has marked the distinction between virtue and vice, we are conscious of a pleasurable feeling when we practise the one, and of a painful sentiment when we are guilty of the other. The office of the conscience is not legislative, but judiciary: its voice is either laudative or objurgatory, rather than directive or imperative.

—*Crombie.*

2. It records our actions now.

(1295.) Conscience is the book in which our daily sins are written. —*Bernard*, 1091–1153.

(1296.) As a notary or a registrar hath always the pen in his hand, to note and record whatsoever is said or done, who also, because he keeps the rolls and records of the court, can tell what hath been said and done many hundred years past: even so the conscience observes and takes notice of all things that we do, and inwardly and secretly within the heart doth tell us of them all.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1297.) It is recorded of that reverend martyr, Bishop Latimer, that he took especial care in the placing of his words before Bonner, because he heard the pen working in the chimney, behind the cloth, setting down all (it may be more) than he said. So ought we circumspectly to look to all our sayings and doings; for conscience, as a scribe or registrar, sitting in the closet of our hearts, with pen in hand, makes a diurnal of all our ways, sets down the time when, the place where, the manner how things were performed, and that so clear and evident, that go where we will, do what we can, the characters of them shall never be cancelled or razed out, till God appears in judgment.

—*Carpenter*, 1628.

3. It will witness against us at the last.

(1298.) The Lord God hath set it as His deputy in the breast of man, which, though it be oftentime a neuter when the act is doing and while sin is a committing, yet afterwards it will prove a friend and faithful witness for the Lord, but an adversary against man. Oh, that the wicked would think of this, who sin in hope and secrecy! Why, who sees them, who can witness anything against them, who can condemn them for such and such an action? Alas, poor soul! there is a conscience within thee that sees thee, and will condemn thee; thyself shall pass judgment against thyself. Be watchful, therefore, and ever remember conscience. Beware of hypocrisy and secret sins; for, though thou canst hide them from men and devils, yet not from it.

—*Rogers*, 1595–1660.

IV. *HOW FAR ITS DECISIONS ARE AUTHORITATIVE.*

(1299.) The allegation or plea of conscience ought never to be admitted barely for itself; for when a thing obliges only by a borrowed authority, it is ridiculous to allege it for its own. Take a lieutenant, a commissioner, or ambassador of any prince; and, so far as he represents his prince, all that he does or declares under that capacity has the same force and validity as if actually done or declared by the prince himself in person. But then how far does this reach? Why, just so far as he keeps close to his instructions.

In like manner, every dictate of this vicegerent of God, where it has a Divine word or precept to back it, carries a Divine authority with it. But if no such word can be produced, it may indeed be a strong opinion or persuasion, but it is not conscience.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

V. *NOT AN INFALLIBLE GUIDE.*

(1300.) There is no duty, but men may doubt and scruple the doing of it, pretending that their consciences are not satisfied that it is a duty, or ought to be done. Nor is there any action almost so wicked and unjust, but they may pretend that their consciences either prompt to it as necessary, or allow them in it as lawful. As there was one, in the late blessed times of rebellion and reformation, who murdered his own mother for kneeling at the sacrament, alleging that it was idolatry, and that his conscience told him it was his duty to destroy idolaters. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(1301.) Though natural conscience ought to be listened to, yet it is revelation alone that is to be relied upon; as we may observe in the works of art, a judicious artist will indeed use his eye, but he will trust only to his rule.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(1302.) Men get embarrassed by the common cases of a misguided conscience; but a compass may be out of order as well as a conscience, and the needle may point due south if you hold a powerful magnet in that direction. Still the compass, generally speaking, is a true and sure guide, and so is the conscience; and you can trace the deranging influence on the latter quite as surely as on the former. —*Arnold*, 1795–1842.

(1303.) Conscience, as an expression of the law or will and mind of God, is not now to be implicitly depended on. It is not infallible. What was true to its office in Eden, has been deranged and shattered by the Fall; and now lies, as I have seen a sun-dial in the neglected garden of an old desolate ruin, thrown from its pedestal, prostrate on the ground, and covered by tall rank weeds. So far from being since that fatal event an infallible directory of duty, conscience has often lent its sanction to the grossest errors, and prompted to the greatest crimes. Did not Saul of Tarsus, for instance, hale men and women to prison; compel them to blaspheme; and imbrue his hands in saintly blood, while conscience approved the deed—he judging the while that he did God service? What wild and profane imaginations has it accepted as the oracles of God! and as if fiends had taken possession of a God-deserted shrine, have not the foulest crimes, as well as the most shocking cruelties, been perpetrated in its name? Read the Book of Martyrs, read the sufferings of our own forefathers; and under the cowl of a shaven monk, or the trappings of a haughty churchman, you shall see conscience persecuting the saints of God, and dragging even tender women and children to the bloody scaffold or the burning stake. With eyes swimming in tears, or flashing fire, we close the painful record, to apply to Conscience the words addressed to Liberty by the French heroine, when passing its statue, she rose in the cart that bore her to the guillotine, and throwing up her arms, exclaimed, "O Liberty, what crimes have been done in thy name!" And

what crimes in thine, O Conscience! deeds from which even humanity shrinks; against which religion lifts her loudest protest; and which furnish the best explanation of these awful words, "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

So far as doctrines and duties are concerned, not conscience, but the revealed Word of God, is our one only sure and safe directory. —*Guthrie.*

(1304.) Conscience has been compared to a clock, and the law of God to the sun. The clock is right only when it keeps time with the sun. And so it is with the conscience. It is a safe guide only when it is directed by the commandment of the Lord.
—*J. W. Richardson.*

(1305.) Conscience without a divine light, is like a dial without the sun; a shade, a blank, a useless instrument.

(1306.) There is a popular notion that in the construction of the human mind God infixed a faculty or organ which is the judge of what is right and what is wrong; and that it is inspired in some low degree, so that it is an authoritative judge. Conscience has therefore received any number of names, almost all of which are regal. Sometimes it is called *the law of the soul;* sometimes *the light of the moral nature;* sometimes *the vicegerent of God;* and sometimes *the revealer of truth.* It is supposed to be a voice of the Divine. For all feelings, when they exist in a large nature, and under a very high state of excitement, are addicted to producing impressions either of sense or of sight. That is to say, a very high degree of excitement causes the nervous system to scintillate, as it were. Men have, therefore, an impression that the conscience is to a man's soul very much what the headlight is to a locomotive—a strong light with a reflector; and that it throws a beam right ahead in the middle of the night, lifting the track up clearly into the engineer's sight, so that he may see the obstructions, or the track, as the case may be.

The conscience is no such thing. It no more determines what is right than the principle of taste determines what is beauty, or than the desire of acquiring property determines what would be successful in business.

What we *call* conscience or moral sense is a complex organisation. It is the sentiment of conscience harmoniously educated and co-operating with a man's reason. It is, therefore, the ordinary thinking mind acting in reference to certain spheres of things in consonance with the emotion of conscience, which is the emotion that inspires pain or pleasure in view of things which are supposed to be right or wrong. And conscience is so blind that if you think a thing to be wrong which is as right as the throne of God, you will feel bad in the commission of it. And if you think a thing to be right which is as wrong as wrong can be, that conviction being strong in you, conscience will go on that side. Conscience has no interpreting power except indirectly. It is the reason that interprets. Conscience follows with its sanction, and stamps the decisions of reason with pleasure or with pain, with approbation or with disapprobation, when they pertain to moral conduct. —*Beecher.*

(1307.) I do not mean that conscience is a Divine interpreter; for I do not believe there is any such conscience as that. I believe that conscience is precisely like any other emotion. It determines what is right and wrong by what the understanding says is right or wrong. Conscience is an emotion that acts concurrently with intellect, and then gives force to that which the intellect judges to be right or wrong. And it gives pleasure or pain, according to the nature of that which is selected as right or wrong.

This sentiment of conscience, acting concurrently with the understanding, belongs to the whole human family. Where men believe in killing their fathers and mothers, and where they believe in killing their new-born children, offering them up to the Ganges or to crocodiles, they have a moral sense certainly. I do not undertake to say that it does not act according to a grossly imperfect standard; I do not undertake to say that it is exercised according to the best light; but when they do offer their parents, their children, or themselves up to destruction, they think it is right; though their understanding is darkened, and they are misguided.

If you erect a false light on the shore, and the pilot steers right towards it, and wrecks his vessel, he thinks he is right. He does not make shipwreck because he intends to, but because the false light is erected on the shore. Men steer for such lights as they have; and if those lights are false, they will suffer shipwreck. Their intention is generally to go by the best light they have.
—*Beecher.*

VI. *NEVERTHELESS MUST BE STRICTLY HEEDED.*

(1308.) Let a man carefully attend to the voice of his reason, and all the dictates of natural morality, so as by no means to do anything contrary to them. For though reason is not to be relied upon as a guide universally sufficient to direct us what to do, yet it is generally to be relied upon and obeyed, where it tells us what we are *not* to do. It is indeed but a weak and diminutive light, compared to revelation; but it ought to be no disparagement to a star, that it is not a sun. Nevertheless, as weak and as small as it is, it is a light always at hand, and though enclosed, as it were, in a dark lantern, may yet be of a singular use to prevent many a foul step and to keep us from many a dangerous fall. And every man brings such a degree of this light into the world with him, that though it cannot bring him to heaven, yet if he be true to it, it will carry him a great way; indeed so far, that if he follows it faithfully, I doubt not but he shall meet with another light, which shall carry him quite through.
—*South,* 1633–1716.

(1309.) Ought not the light of reason to be looked upon by us as a rich and a noble talent, and such an one as we must account to God for; for it is certainly for Him. It is a ray of Divinity darted into the soul. "It is the candle of the Lord," as Solomon calls it; and God never lights us up a candle either to put out or to sleep by. If it be made conscious of a work of darkness, it will not fail to discover and reprove it; and therefore the checks of it are to be revered, as the echo of a voice from heaven; for whatsoever conscience binds here on earth, will be certainly bound there too; and it were a great vanity to hope or imagine, that either law or gospel will absolve what natural conscience condemns.
—*South,* 1633–1716.

(1310.) The sinner's conscience is the best expositor of the mind of God under any judgment or affliction. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(1311.) In the commission of evil, fear no man so much as thyself: another is but one witness against thee; thou art a thousand; another thou mayest avoid; thyself thou canst not. Wickedness is its own punishment. —*Quarles*, 1592–1644.

(1312.) Man without a conscience is a machine without a regulator; sometimes too fast, sometimes too slow, and seldom right.

VII. *THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING IT.*

(1313.) Conscience is a check to beginners in sin, reclaiming them from it and rating them for it; but this in long-standers becometh useless, either failing to discharge its office, or assaying it to no purpose: having often been slighted, it will be weary of chiding; or, if it be not wholly dumb, we shall be deaf to its reproof: as those who live by cataracts or downfalls of water, are, by continual noise, so deafened as not to hear or mind it; so shall we in time grow senseless, not regarding the loudest peals and rattlings of our conscience.

—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(1314.) No man ever yet offended his own conscience but first or last it was revenged upon him for it. So that it will concern a man to treat this great principle awfully and warily; by still observing what it commands, but especially what it forbids; and if he would have it always a faithful and sincere monitor to him, let him be sure never to turn a deaf ear to it; for not to hear it is the way to silence it. Let him strictly observe the first stirrings and intimations—the first hints and whispers of good and evil, that pass in his heart; and this will keep conscience so quick and vigilant, and ready to give a man true alarms upon the least approach of his spiritual enemy, that he shall be hardly capable of great surprise.

On the contrary, if a man accustoms himself to slight or pass over these first motions to good, or shrinkings of his conscience from evil, which originally are as natural to the heart of man as the appetities of hunger and thirst are to the stomach, conscience will by degrees grow dull and unconcerned, and from not spying out motes, come at length to overlook beams; from carelessness it shall fall into a slumber, and from a slumber it shall settle into a deep and long sleep; till at last perhaps it sleeps itself into a lethargy, and that such an one, that nothing but hell and judgment shall be able to awaken it. For long disuse of anything made for action will in time take away the very use of it. As I have read of one, who having for a disguise kept one of his eyes a long time covered, when he took off the covering, found his eye indeed where it was, but his sight was gone. He who would keep his conscience awake, must be careful to keep it stirring. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(1315.) The not using of one's conscience works lethargy, dulness, and blindness. But when the conscience is fired by the Divine Spirit, it awakes and glows and becomes inconceivably more sensitive. You know what it is to have your hand numb, so that you scarcely feel that which you lay it upon: and you know what it is to have your hand acutely sensitive. You know what it is to have the eye blurred, dim, unseeing; and you know what it is to have the eye clear, strong, and discerning. Just so is it with conscience. It may exist in a state in which things pass before it, and it does not see them; but lies at the door like a watch-dog that is asleep, past which goes the thief or the robber into the house and commits his depredations undisturbed. —*Beecher.*

VIII. *SHOULD BE CAREFULLY PROTECTED.*

(1316.) When we put a lighthouse on the coast, that in the night mariners may explore the dark and terrible way of the sea, we not only swing glass around it to protect it, but we enclose that glass itself in a network of iron wire, that birds may not dash it in, the summer winds may not swoop it out, and that swarms of insects may not destroy themselves and the light. For if the light in the lighthouse be put out, how great a darkness falls upon the land and upon the sea. And the mariner, waiting for the light, or seeing it not, miscalculates, and perishes.

Now, a man's conscience ought to be protected from those influences that would diminish its light, or that would put it out; but there are thousands of men who are every day doing their utmost to destroy this light. —*Beecher.*

IX. *WORKS DIFFERENTLY, BUT WITH THE SAME RESULT, IN DIFFERENT MEN.*

(1317.) In some cases, conscience is like an eloquent and fair spoken judge, who declaims not against the criminal, but condemns him justly. In others the judge is more angry, and affrights the prisoner more; but the event is the same. For in those sins where the conscience affrights, as in those which it affrights not, supposing the sins equal, but of different natures, there is no other difference, but the conscience is a clock which in one man strikes aloud and gives warning, and in another the hand points silently to the figure, but strikes not; but by this he may as surely *see* what the other *hears*,—that his hours pass away, and death hastens, and after death comes judgment.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(1318.) Every man's conscience testifies that he is unlike what he ought to be, according to that law engraven upon his heart. In some, indeed, conscience may be seared or dimmer; or suppose some men may be devoid of conscience, shall it be denied to be a thing belonging to the nature of man? Some men have not their eyes, yet the power of seeing the light is natural to man, and belongs to the integrity of the body. Who would argue that, because some men are mad, and have lost their reason by a distemper of the brain, that therefore reason hath no reality, but is an imaginary thing? But I think it is a standing truth that every man hath been under the scourge of it, one time or other, in a less or a greater degree; for, since every man is an offender, it cannot be imagined conscience, which is natural to man, and an active faculty, should always lie idle, without doing this part of its office.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1670.

X. *ITS POWER.*

(1319.) Like as it is a great pleasure and joy for a man who, returning home after a long and wearisome journey unto his own house, findeth there his wife, who cometh to take him about the neck, and embraceth him, kissing and making much of him, this courteous entertainment maketh him by and by to forget all his travail which he hath endured in his journey; and contrariwise, if he find his wife, after his return, brawling, riotous, froward, and who, instead of comforting him, would all manner of ways vex and torment him, this doing, no doubt, would increase and double his pains and torments which he hath endured in his long journey: even such is the estate of the conscience. Although our enemies commit a thousand outrages, violences, and villanies against us, yet if we, returning from ourselves, and entering into our own conscience, find there one with a cheerful and merry countenance, which doth comfort and content us, it maketh us in a moment to forget all our enemies; but, on the other side, if we have an evil conscience, it wearieth us in such sort, that we shall not find any house worse than our own, nor any place where we may worse quiet ourselves than with ourselves.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1320.) This interior master, does he dictate nothing to you? This *rack of the Almighty*, does it never force you to confess what you would willingly deny? —*Saurin.*

XI. *TRUE PEACE OF CONSCIENCE.*

1. Its only source.

(1321.) Peace of conscience is nothing but the echo of pardoning mercy, which sounding in the conscience, brings the soul into a sweet rest with the pleasant music it makes.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1322.) If a friend should come to a malefactor on his way to the gallows, put a sweet posy into his hands, and bid him be of good cheer, smell on that; alas! this would bring little joy with it to the poor man's heart, who sees the place of execution before him. But if one comes from the prince with a pardon, which he puts into his hand, and bids him be of good cheer—this, and this only will reach the poor man's heart, and overrun it with a sudden ravishment of joy. Truly anything short of pardoning mercy is as inconsiderable to a troubled conscience (towards any relieving or pacifying it) as that posy in a dying prisoner's hand would be. Conscience demands as much to satisfy it as God Himself doth to satisfy Him for the wrong the creature hath done Him. Nothing can take off conscience from accusing but that which takes off God from threatening. Conscience is God's sergeant He employs to arrest the sinner. Now the sergeant hath no power to release his prisoner upon any private composition between him and the prisoner; but listens, whether the debt be fully paid, or the creditor fully satisfied: then, and not till then, he is discharged of his prisoner. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1323.) Pardon is the only fit remedy for a troubled conscience: what can give ease to a wounded spirit, but pardoning mercy? Offer him he honours and pleasures of the world; 'tis as if you bring flowers and music to one that is condemned. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1324.) Suppose a man hath a thorn in his foot, which puts him to pain; let him anoint it, or wrap it up, and keep it warm; yet, till the thorn be plucked out, it aches and swells, and he hath no ease; so when the thorn of sin is gotten into a man's conscience, there's no ease till the thorn be pulled out; when God removes iniquity, now the thorn is plucked out. How was David's heart finely quieted, when Nathan the prophet told him, "the Lord hath put away thy sin." How should we therefore labour for forgiveness! till then we can have no ease in our mind: nothing but a pardon sealed with the blood of the Redeemer can ease a wounded spirit.

—*Watson*, 1696.

2. A life-long blessing.

(1325.) A palsy may as well shake an oak, or a fever dry up a fountain, as either of them shake, dry up, or impair the delight of conscience. For it lies within, it centres in the heart, it grows into the very substance of the soul, so that it accompanies a man to his grave—he never outlives it; and that for this cause only, because he cannot outlive himself.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

3. A reason for thanksgiving.

(1326.) When the Romans, by conquest, might have given law to the Grecians at Corinth, in the solemn time of the Isthmian games, their general, by an herald, unexpectedly proclaimed freedom to all the cities of Greece. The proclamation at first did so amaze the Grecians, that they did not believe it to be true; but when it was proclaimed the second time, they gave such a shout, that the very birds flying in the air were astonished therewith, and fell dead to the ground. But, if you will have a better story, take that of the Jews, who, when at first they heard of Cyrus' proclamation, and that the Lord thereby had turned the captivity of Sion, they confess that at the first hearing of it they were like men that dreamt; but afterwards their mouths were filled with laughter and their tongues with singing. Now, the peace that the Grecians and the Jews had was but the peace of a people, or a nation, and a great blessing of God too. But how much more reason is there that our affections should be strained to the highest pitch of joy and thanks, when we hear of the proclamation of the peace of conscience?—that peace, which is not of our bodies, but of our souls; not of our earthly, but of our heavenly estate—a peace that shall be begun here and shall endure for ever hereafter; such a peace as will make God at peace with us, reconcile us to ourselves, and make us at concord with all the world. —*Lake*, 1627.

XII. *FALSE PEACE OF CONSCIENCE.*

1. From what it arises.

(1327.) Let no man conclude, because his conscience says nothing to him, that therefore it has nothing to say. Possibly some never so much as doubted of the safety of their spiritual estate in all their lives; and if so, let them not flatter themselves, but rest assured that they have so much the more reason a great deal to doubt of it now. For the causes of such a profound stillness are generally gross ignorance, or long custom of sinning, or both; and these are very dreadful symptoms indeed to such

as are not hell and damnation proof. When a man's wounds cease to smart, only because he has lost his feeling, they are nevertheless mortal for this not seeing his need of a chirurgeon. It is not mere, actual, present ease, but ease after pain, which brings the most durable and solid comfort. Acquitment before trial can be no security. Great and strong calms usually portend and go before the most violent storms. And, therefore, since storms and calms (especially with reference to the state of the soul) do always follow one another; certainly of the two it is much more eligible to have the storm first and the calm afterwards: since a calm before a storm is commonly a peace of a man's own making; but a calm after a storm, a peace of God's.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

2. Its folly.

(1328.) Sin is in the world, sin lurks in your hearts and mine; and yet men take little account of it. There was a city visited by the plague long since; and whilst death was busily smiting every household, a few frivolous men and women sought out a pleasant retirement, and there they spent their days in weaving love-tales and playing with compliments; and still the plague was cutting off hundreds at their gate. Just so do we act under our greater plague. Oh, my friends, it is not by hiding our heads, like a silly bird pursued by hunters, that we can escape the keen eyes of our pursuer. The question is—are you willing to die as you are living? —*Thomson.*

3. Deceptive and dangerous.

(1329.) Your peace is a false peace. It is the friendship of Joab, concealing his murderous dagger. It is the slumber of Samson in the lap of Delilah, softly depriving him of his locks. It is a sleep obtained by opium. It is the loss of feeling, the presage of death. It is the calm of the Dead Sea, the consequence and the evidence of a curse. Thus we have observed, that before a fall of exceedingly heavy rain, the wind has been unusually still. Thus travellers inform us, that before an earthquake the air is uncommonly serene. Whether therefore you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I sound the alarm, and give you warning from God—"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" —*Jay.*

(1330.) This apathy of soul is but as the awful calm of nature which ushers in the bursting of the earthquake or volcano; or it may be likened to the dead repose of nature which precedes the approaching storm on some Alpine summit: the winds are hushed, not a leaf is seen to move, and the solitary bird seeks his sheltered nook—an awful stillness prevails, but it is the stillness of the gathering tempest, which is about to sweep in desolation all around it, and from which the thunders of an angry heaven are prepared to burst. Such is that deathlike stupor of the conscience which is only to issue in desolation and the blackness of darkness for ever. —*Salter.*

4. Imperfect and insecure.

(1331.) As the sick man, when he seems to sleep and take his rest, is inwardly full of troubles; so the benumbed and drowsy conscience wants not secret pangs and terrors. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1332.) Many besot their conscience with the brutish pleasures of sin; and when they have laid it as fast asleep in senseless stupidity as one that is dead drunk, then they may sin without control, till it wakes again. This is the height of that peace which any carnal receipt can help the sinner unto; to give a sleeping potion that shall bind up the senses of conscience for a while, in which time the wretch may forget his misery, as the condemned man doth when he is asleep, but as soon as it awakes, the horror of his condition is sure again to affright him worse than before. God keep you all from such a cure for your troubles of conscience, which is a thousand times worse than the disease itself! Better to have a dog that will by his barking tell us a thief is in our yard, than one that will sit still and let us be robbed before we have any notice of our danger.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

5. Satan's care not to disturb it.

(1333.) A presumptuous faith is an easy faith; it hath no enemy in Satan, or our own corrupt hearts to oppose it, and so like a stinking weed, shoots up and grows rank on a sudden. The devil never hath the sinner surer than when dreaming in this fool's paradise, and walking in his sleep, amidst his vain phantastical hopes of Christ and salvation. And therefore he is so far from waking him that he draws the curtains close about him that no light nor noise in his conscience may break his rest. Did you ever know the thief call him up in the night whom he meant to rob and kill? No, sleep is his advantage. But true faith he is a sworn enemy against; he persecutes it in the very cradle, as Herod did Christ in Cratch, he pours a flood of wrath after it as soon as it betrays its own birth by crying and lamenting after the Lord; if thy faith be legitimate, *Naphtali* may be its name; and thou mayest say, with *great wrestlings have I wrestled* with Satan, and my own base heart, and at last have prevailed.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

XIII. ***THE EFFECTS OF AN AWAKENED CONSCIENCE.***

(1334.) Even as he who is troubled with a burning fever is hotter than he who is parched with the sun: so is that man more troubled who hath a guilty conscience than a good man by all outward afflictions. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1335.) If a man be sick, wear he never so stately robes, he minds them not; have he never so dainty fare, he relisheth it not; lay him in never so soft a bed, yet he cannot rest: his diseased body feels nothing but the afflicting peccant humour. Even so, when the remorse of conscience works, all our gifts and parts, be they never so great, appear not; riches, though in great abundance, satisfy not; honours, preferments, though never so eminent, advantage not; though we have them all for the present, yet we have not the use of them: we see, we hear, but we feel nothing but sin; as experience teacheth them that have been distressed in this kind. —*Lake*, 1627.

(1336.) A guilty conscience is a real tomb, wherein the possessed person lodges, and where stench and darkness reign. —*Quesnel.*

(1337.) The envenomed head of sin's arrow that lies burning in conscience, and by its continual

boking and throbbing there, keeps the poor sinner out of quiet, yea, sometimes in insupportable torment and horror, is guilt. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1338.) Conscience is too great a power in the nature of man to be altogether subdued: it may for a time be repressed and kept dormant; but conjectures there are in human life which awaken it; and when once re-awakened, it flashes on the sinner's mind with all the horrors of an invisible ruler and a future judgment.

—*Blair*, 1718–1800.

(1339.) As soon as the conscience becomes sensitive, it brings a man's sins to a more solemn account than before.

There are many things that we adjudge to be sinful. We condemn them as sinful. A man says, "Profanity is sinful," or "dishonesty is sinful;" but, after all, he has a good-natured way of dealing with these things If men were as good-natured to their enemies as they are to their own sins, there would be much less conflict in the world than there is, for they contrive to live on the best of terms with their faults. I knew a man that had a huge rock in his field. He did not want to waste time and powder to blast and remove it. What did he do? Why, he planted ivy and roses and honeysuckles about it to cover it up; and he invites people to come and see how beautiful it is. A certain part of his farm was low, moist, and disagreeable. And, instead of collecting the water, and letting it run in a central channel, he planted mosses, ferns, rhododendrons, and the like over the place, and let them grow; and now he regards that as one of the handsomest parts of his farm. And men treat their faults so. Here is a man that has a hard and ill-temper; but he has planted all about it ivy and roses and honeysuckles which cover it, so that when he looks at it he sees only flowers and green leaves. He thinks he is a better man because all his imperfections are hidden from his sight. Here is a man that does not drain his swamps of evil courses, but covers them over with mosses and various plants, and thinks he is better because he is more beauteous in his own eyes. And men are for ever decorating themselves, smoothing their asperities, covering up their boulders. And there come times in the history of men when it seems as though God, with the voice of resurrection, called out to their conscience, and shook it, and made it awake. And then comes to them a sense of that which was spoken of by the apostle—*the exceeding sinfulness of sin.* —*Beecher.*

(1340.) When a man's conscience is aroused, and he is attempting to reform, he says: "As long as I did about as well as I knew how, I did very well; but, as soon as I attempted to regulate pride and vanity and the appetites and passions, it seemed to me that I never had so much turmoil and confusion. And is it so," he says, "that religion makes a man worse? I have been trying to live a religious life; and I think I have been a worse man than I was before." I will tell you what you have been like; you have been like an old family well, that has not been cleaned for twenty years, and that is undergoing the process of cleaning. A man has a well that has become very foul, and threatens to breed disease, and he is determined to clean it out; and men go down and scoop up bits of sticks, and pieces of crockery, and all manner of filth. And immediately after these things have been removed, the man draws a bucket of water, and says: "It is dirtier than ever before!" Of course, it is; for it has not had time to settle yet. By and by it will be purer than ever before, but not yet.

—*Beecher.*

(1341.) The next fact of this reviving of the conscience is that, while it carries up the judgment of the sinfulness of sinful acts, it brings into the category of sins a thousand things that before we never have called such. Consider how very small a part of your daily life is morally judged at all. You have set apart a few great staple sins, and if you commit any of these you think you are sinful; but all the rest of your conduct goes almost without examination. You scarcely think about it. Why, the wastes of human life in this direction are perfectly incalculable! Of the feelings that flow through your mind, the probability is that nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand are not registered. You do not consider them at all. You give them no moral standing. You have no sense of whether they are right or wrong. A vast majority of the judgments of myriads of flashing feelings in the way of retrospections or outward lookings are never recorded, never classified, never tested.

When gold comes into the Assay Office, they treat it as we do not treat ourselves. It is carefully weighed when it is brought in, and during the process of assaying it is worked up to the very last particle. Every particle is deemed precious; yea, the very sweepings of the floor are gathered together and are assayed again.

Now men throw in their conduct in bulk, and do not care for the sweepings; and vastly the greatest portion of it comes out without being brought to any test. The most transcendent feelings, the most important interior agencies in the structure of man's moral character are being acted on and worked out, and men neither scrutinise nor form just judgments of them; and it is to the last degree important that there should come periods in which men are obliged to bring into the category of sins those practices which otherwise they would call their faults, or weaknesses, or foibles, or infirmities, or what not.

See how it is to-day in New York. They have a board of health there. And how much dirt there was found the moment there was an authority to make men look for it. Everybody is scouring, and everybody is scrubbing dirt. It is not half as dirty as it was a little while ago; but the dirt is more apparent, because it is stirred up. Once bring the influence of sanitary law to bear, and see how gutters that time out of mind have been neglected are attended to. Men, looking at them, say: "They *are* filthy."

Now, let the power of conscience be brought to bear on men who have been indulging in wrong, and they pause and say: "That is not right, is it? I ought to stop it." Only give a clearer sense of what is right to men, and they will instantly see in themselves much wrong that they have not before discovered.

The probability is that now, in New York, there is more apprehension of danger from a want of cleanliness than there has been during the last twenty-five years put together. This has arisen not from the fact that the city is less cleanly than it has been—it is more cleanly; but from the increased

sensibility of men on the subject, and the application of a higher test to it.

It is so in housekeeping. You go in and out of your house, and do not perceive that it is wanting in cleanliness; but by and by comes the bustle and preparation of cleaning. Owing to a seeming annual instinct, when the birds build their nests, the housekeeper begins to clean hers. Now, see what a sense there is of webs and dust and concealed dirt, and how everything is probed, or winnowed, or tested, or washed and scoured, and what a vast amount of neglected, treasured dust and various filth there is. But take a magnifying glass, and let it reveal to you what is the structure of what you call dust. This is a particle of bone; this is a bit of shell; this is insect dirt; and what you call dust, and brush off from your hand or your clothes, is composed of specks and fragments of hundreds of different objects, which, if you saw them in a mass, would be horrible to you.

Now, that which is true of the accumulation of dust on the body is more signally true of the accumulation of particles of thought and feeling and conduct upon the soul. Men are insensible of it until there comes this revealing power of God, and the conscience is awakened so as to bring them to judgment; and then how do they say, "We are swallowed up in transgression!" —*Beecher.*

XIV. *THE DIFFICULTY OF SATISFYING IT.*

(1342.) When a man begins to labour to satisfy his conscience, his conscience becomes exacting faster than he can learn how to perform. His ideal, associated with his moral sense, augments more rapidly than his performance. So that the more he does, the less he is satisfied. Many a man will witness to me here that the most violent exertions that he ever put forth were toward reformations that brought him the least of comfort. Here stands an old house that has been a hundred years without a repair. The old master dies, and a new man comes in; and with him comes reformation and reparation. He sends for his architect and master workman, that commence searching to ascertain what is required to be done. There is a shingle off, which must be put on. But when that is taken off, it is found that the next one is rotten. When that is taken off, it is found that the next one is rotten. When that is taken off, it is found that the very boards to which the shingles are fastened are rotten. And these must come out. And when these are taken out, it is found that the very beam under them is decayed. And this must come out. And by probing it is found that there is decay all through the building. And the result is, that when the house is gone through, the man has spent enough to have built a new one, and still it is an old one. Part leads to part, and disclosure to disclosure, and decay to decay; and it seems as though it was almost impossible ever to make it good. That is but a faint emblem of the work of reformation in the human soul. When a man begins to probe his disposition, he finds it to be a very different thing from a house. A house is inert, and offers no resistance to his attempts to renew and renovate it; but the human disposition is an ever-fertile, ever-growing, ever-recreating centre. And a man is conscious that the more he tries to regulate it, the harder it is to do it.

—*Beecher.*

XV. *IS CAPABLE OF IMMENSE IMPROVEMENT.*

(1343.) How far it may be improved, is evident from that high and refined morality which shone forth both in the lives and writings of some of the ancient heathens, who yet had no other light but this, both to live and to write by. For how great a man in virtue was Cato, of whom the historian gives this glorious character: *Esse quam rideri bonus malebat!* And of what an impregnable integrity was Fabricius, of whom it was said, that a man might as well attempt to turn the sun out of his course, as to bring Fabricius to do a base or a dishonest action! And then for their writings; what admirable things occur in the remains of Pythagoras, and the books of Plato, and of several other philosophers! short, I confess, of the rules of Christianity, but generally above the lives of Christians. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(1344.) The sailor, by using his eye, can see farther than any one else; the athlete can accomplish physical results the physically untrained cannot. So, in the fine arts, the faculty of perception of the beautiful, by using it, becomes finer and more subtle. It is the same with the conscience, which may become so educated as to be the subtle detector of wrong—a good conscience. The faculty used strengthens; the faculty disused withers and decays. —*Chapin.*

(1345.) A parboiled conscience is not right, soft in one part and hard in another. The spirit of God is uniform in its work. —*Gurnall.*

XVI. *TENDERNESS OF CONSCIENCE.*

(1346.) Tenderness applied to the conscience properly imports quickness and exactness of sense, which is the perfection of this faculty, whose duty it is to be a spiritual watch to give us warning of whatsoever concerns us. It is indeed the eye of the soul: and though the eye is naturally the most tender and delicate part of the body, yet it is not therefore called weak so long as its sight is quick and strong. Conscience, the more sensible it is to accuse or excuse (which is its office), and to spy out every little thing which may annoy or defile the soul, so much the more tender it is to be accounted, but not therefore so much the more weak; which sufficiently shows weakness and tenderness of conscience to be, in strictness of speech, two different things.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(1347.) A tender conscience, like the eye, is offended with a mote. A dead corpse is unaffected with the deepest wounds; but the point of a needle makes the living body to writhe. While others do not groan, though charged with heinous crimes, the Christian complains even of infirmities, of wandering thoughts, of earthly affections. A look from his offended Lord will make him "go out and weep bitterly." —*Jay.*

CONTENTMENT.

1. Is a characteristic of the Christian.

(1348.) The Christian is content with his situation,

because the Lord chooses it for him; his spirit is not eager for alterations in his circumstances. If Divine providence points out and leads to a change, he is ready to follow, though it should be what the world would call from a better to a worse; for he is a pilgrim and a stranger here, and a citizen of heaven. As people of fortune sometimes, in travelling, submit cheerfully to inconvenient accommodations, very different from their homes, and comfort themselves with thinking they are not always to live so; so the Christian is not greatly solicitous about externals. If he has them, he will use them moderately. If he has but little of them, he can make a good shift without them: he is but upon a journey, and will soon be at home. If he be rich, experience confirms our Lord's words (Luke xii. 15); and satisfies him, that a large room, a crowd of servants, and twenty dishes upon his table, add nothing to the real happiness of life. Therefore he will not have his heart set upon such things. If he be in a humbler state, he is more disposed to pity than to envy those above him; for he judges they must have many encumbrances from which he is freed. However, the will of God, and the light of His countenance, are the chief things the Christian, whether rich or poor, regards; and therefore his moderation is made known unto all men.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

2. The example of St. Paul.

(1349.) God had brought St. Paul into as great a variety of conditions as ever we read of any man, and yet he was content; else sure he could never have gone through it with so much cheerfulness. See into what vicissitudes this blessed Apostle was cast: "we are troubled on every side," there was the sadness of his condition; "but not distressed," there was his content in that condition: "we are perplexed," there is his affliction; "but not in despair," there is his contentation. And, if we read a little further, "In afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults," &c.—there is his trouble: and behold his content, "As having nothing, yet possessing all things." When the Apostle was driven out of all, yet in regard of that sweet contentment of mind (which was like music in his soul) he possessed all. We read a short map or history of his sufferings, (2 Cor. xi. 23–25): "In prisons more frequent, in deaths oft," &c. Yet behold the blessed frame and temper of his spirit, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." Which way soever providence did blow, he had such heavenly skill and dexterity, that he knew how to steer his course. For his outward estate he was indifferent: he could be either on the top of Jacob's ladder, or at the bottom; he could sing either the dirge or the anthem; he could be anything that God would have him: "I know how to want, how to abound." Here is a rare pattern for us to imitate. Paul, in regard of his faith and courage, was like a cedar, he could not be stirred; but for his outward condition, he was like a reed bending every way with the wind of providence. When a prosperous gale did blow upon him, he could bend with that, "I know how to be full:" and when a boisterous gust of affliction did blow, he could bend in humility with that, "I know how to be hungry." St. Paul was (as Aristotle speaks) like a die that hath four squares; throw it which way you will, it falls upon a bottom: let God throw the Apostle which way He would, he fell upon this bottom of contentment. A contented spirit is like a watch: though you carry it up and down with you, yet the spring of it is not shaken; nor the wheels out of order, but the watch keeps its perfect motion: so it was with St. Paul, though God carried him into various conditions, yet he was not lift up with the one nor cast down with the other; the spring of his heart was not broken, the wheels of his affections were not disordered, but kept their constant motion towards heaven; still content. —*Watson*, 1696.

3. Is peculiar to the children of God.

(1350.) If we should put some men to an art that they are not skilled in, how unfit would they be for it? Put an husbandman to limning or drawing pictures, what strange work would he make? This is out of his sphere. Take a limner that is exact in laying of colours, and put him to plough, or set him to planting and grafting of trees; this is not his art, he is not skilled in it. Bid a natural man live by faith, and when all things go cross, be contented; you bid him do what he hath no skill in; you may as well bid a child guide the stern of a ship. To live contented upon God in the deficiency of outward comforts is an art which "flesh and blood hath not learned;" nay, many of God's own children who excel in some duties of religion, when they come to this of contentment, now do they bungle! They have scarcely commenced masters of this art. —*Watson*, 1696.

4. From what it arises.

(1351.) Content is the gift of heaven, and not the certain effect of anything upon earth; and it is as easy for Providence to convey it without wealth as with it; it being the undeniable prerogative of the first cause, that whatsoever it does by the mediation of second causes, it can do immediately by itself without them. The heavens can and do every day derive water and refreshment upon the earth without either pipes or conduits, though the weakness of human industry is forced to fly to these little assistances to compass the same effects. Happiness and comfort stream immediately from God Himself, as light issues from the sun, and sometimes looks and darts itself into the meanest corners, while it forbears to visit the largest and the noblest rooms. Every man is happy or miserable, as the temper of his mind places him, either directly under, or beside, the influences of the Divine nature; which enlighten and enliven the disposed mind with secret, ineffable joys, and such as the vicious or unprepared mind is wholly unacquainted with. "We have nothing, and yet we possess all things," says the Apostle (2 Cor. vi. 10). And can a greater happiness be imagined, than that which gives a man here all things in possession, together with a glorious eternity in reversion? In a word, it is not what a man has, but what he is, which must make him happy. —*South*, 1633–1716.

5. How it is to be attained.

(1352.) As the remedy to quench his thirst that is vexed with a hot fever cometh not of giving him drink, but of taking away his fever which causeth his thirst: even so the way to grow rich is not by heaping of riches, but by diminishing the covetousness and unlawful desire of the same.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(1353.) To secure a contented spirit, measure your desires by your fortunes, and not your fortunes by your desires. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(1354.) Be content: and the best way to be contented is, believe that condition best which God carves out to you by His providence. If God had seen it fit for us to have more, we would have had it; but His wisdom sees this best for us. Perhaps we could not manage a great estate, it is hard to carry a full cup without spilling, and a full estate without sinning. Great estates may be snares; a boat may be overturned by having too great a sail. The believing that estate best God carves for us makes us content. —*Watson*, 1696.

6. Reasons for contentment.

(1355.) If a traveller hath but enough to bring him to his journey's end, he desires no more. We have but a day to live, and perhaps we may be now in the twelfth hour of that day; and if God give us but enough to bear our charges till night, it is sufficient; let us be content. If a man had the lease of a house or farm but for two or three days, and he should fall a-building and planting, would he not be judged very indiscreet? So, when we have but a short time here, and death calls us presently off the stage, to thirst immoderately after the world, and pull down our souls to build up an estate, were it not extreme folly? Therefore, as Esau said once, in a profane sense, concerning his birthright, "Lo! I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" so let us all say, in a religious sense, "Lo! I am even at the point of death, my grave is going to be made, and what good will the world do to me? If I have but enough till sun-setting, I am content."

—*Cawdray.*

(1356.) We stand oft in our own light; if we should sort, or parcel out our own comforts, we should hit upon the wrong. Is it not well for the child, that the parent doth choose for it? Were it left to itself, it would perhaps choose a knife to cut its own fingers. A man in a paroxysm calls for wine, which if he had, it were little better than poison: it is well for the patient, that he is at the physician's appointment.

The consideration of a decree determining, and a providence disposing of all things that fall out, should work our hearts to holy contentment. The wise God hath ordered our condition: if He sees it better for us to abound, we shall abound; if He sees it better for us to want, we shall want; be content to be at God's disposal.

God sees, in His infinite wisdom, the same condition is not convenient for all; that which is good for one, may be bad for another; one season of weather will not serve all men's occasions; one needs sunshine, another rain; one condition of life will not fit every man, no more than one suit of apparel will fit everybody. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1357.) God will place us as an architect places the stones of a building, each one in the spot to which it is adapted. —*Vianney.*

7. Its wisdom.

(1358.) That happy state of mind, so rarely possessed, in which we can say, "I have enough," is the highest attainment of philosophy. Happiness consists, not in possessing much, but in being content with what we possess. He who wants little always has enough. —*Zimmermann.*

(1359.) Two chimneys stood near each other on separate houses; one high, and therefore very conspicuous; the other short, just jutting above the roof.

"What a contemptible figure you cut," said the tall one, looking down disdainfully on his neighbour, the short chimney.

"I know it," said the short one; "I am but a very humble thing, I know."

"You need to look up very high to see my top," remarked the tall chimney.

"Yes," said the little one.

"Why, you are hardly worthy the name of a chimney at all," observed the other; "you are short!"

"I don't pretend to be greater than I am, though I am just as high as I ought to be for my place," replied the little chimney.

"As high as you ought to be! Well, that is good, truly; why, you are little better than a mere hole in the roof," said the tall one with a loud laugh.

"It isn't becoming that all chimneys should be of one height," said the little one modestly. "It is fitting that some should be high, like you; and some low down, like me; and, as our duties are the same, we are pretty much upon an equality after all, whether tall or short."

The morning light showed the short chimney smoking as usual. Where was the tall one? Alas! a storm which had come on suddenly in the night had swept it from its place because so exposed—it lay only a heap of bricks on the ground.

"How thankful I am," said the little chimney, "that I was so low; had I been high, like my poor neighbour, I might, and no doubt should, have shared his unhappy fate" (Prov. xvi. 18).

—*Bowden.*

(1360.) "If I cannot do any worthier service, it is not unworthy to be what I am," said the button on the old barn door.

And then it went on to say:—

"No doubt there are stronger and much better buttons than myself; but, after all, a button's a button, whether of iron or brass, whilst I am but a plain wooden one. Well, but if my master does not despise me, and I answer the purpose for which buttons are designed, I ought to be happy in being what I am, and thankful I've lasted so long. Many better things than buttons wear out in shorter time, and my labour is much less than theirs. The poor hinges have harder work, and therefore often crack and groan with the weight of the hatch hanging upon them, and the door itself would be roughly served by the wind and other causes, were it not for me to fasten it; and therefore, with all my poverty, who am but a humble wooden button, let me be thankful I have nothing worse in my lot to complain of, and that I still can do the work for which I was at first affixed to this post."

Nothing of His works is despised by Him who made all things (Ps. cxlv. 9); but, without self-respect, an individual sinks himself to the level of the most abject.

The humblest, but honest offices in society, have their good uses, and those members of the body

which seem to be more feeble are necessary (1 Cor. xii. 22).

Right views of ourselves will prove grounds for humble thankfulness. What have we that we "have not received"? Grace excludes boasting; therefore, said St. Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am." —*Bowden.*

(1361.) "Ours is a very humble business," said one of the stepping-stones across the stream which went splashing and rattling along its way.

"Our heads are above water, however; that's one thing in our favour," said a second.

"True," observed the first speaker, "there are plenty below us."

"I judge we are very serviceable in our place, which is as much as the finest bridge over the largest river in the world can say of itself," remarked the third.

"It's just as well to be here as there, for aught that I can see," observed another.

"My opinion is, that plenty are glad of our help in crossing the stream, and would be sorry to lose our assistance," said a fifth; the truthfulness of which last observation was so apparent, that the stepping-stones together signified their assent; and therefore resolved, in future, not to be dissatisfied with their station, which, although so humble, was really so useful.

Those who are but low in the world, may find such as are even lower than themselves.

Not to be entirely overwhelmed by trials is a mercy above many. It will greatly help to reconcile the mind to its lot, to reflect that there are those whose conditions are inferior, and whose trials are greater than ours.

Some do great good that are but little known; and the poorest, with the grace and blessing of God, may further in some way the progress of truth.

In every station in life it should be the desire of the heart to do the will of the Lord, and "by love serve one another." —*Bowden.*

(1362.) "We travel far and travel fast," said the coach one day to his wheels; stopping near an old milestone by the side of the road, to which, calling, it said with a laugh—

"Aren't you tired of always standing in one place?"

"If you are not tired with running, why should I be of staying?" answered the old milestone gravely.

"Ah! but I am on wheels, and my duties require nimbleness," remarked the coach.

"Granted," replied the milestone, "but I don't see there is so great a difference between us, after all. You would be as motionless as myself without your horses; and, as to usefulness, milestones have their duties as well as have stage-coaches. If yours are to carry passengers from place to place, mine are to afford travellers information on their way. Besides, boast as you may, I have sometimes heard of coaches upsetting, and breaking down, and wearing out, and being stopped and robbed; but I never heard of such things happening unto milestones. Therefore, friend, taking all into consideration, I fancy I am the safer if the quieter of the two; and if you are happy in running, I am contented in staying, humbly to do the duties of my station; and perhaps as honourably as yourself, although you are a fast coach, and myself am but a poor milestone on the road."

All have their places in the world, and duties to perform; and

"They also serve that only stand and wait."

Great boasters are oftentimes the least secure (Eccles. ix. 11; Prov. xvi. 19). —*Bowden.*

8. Its blessedness.

(1363.) One observes concerning manna, when the people were contented with the allowance that God gave them, then it was very good; but when they would not be content with God's allowance, but would be gathering more, then, says the text, "there were worms in it." So, when we are content with our conditions, and that which God disposeth of us to be in, there's a blessing in it; but if we must needs be reaching out for more than God hath allotted, or to keep it longer than God would have us to have it, then there will be worms in it, a canker to eat it, a moth to fret it—nothing at all that is good. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(1364.) The soul which is possessed of this rich treasure of contentment, is like Noah in the ark, that can sing in the midst of a deluge.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(1365.) The contented heart is never out of heart. Contentation is a golden shield, that doth beat back discouragements. Humility is like the lead to the net, which keeps the soul down when it is rising through passion; and contentment is like the cork, which keeps the heart up when the heart is sinking through discouragements. Contentment is the great under-prop: it is like the beam which bears whatever weight is laid upon it; nay, it is like a rock that breaks the waves. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1366.) Contentment is a pearl of great price, and whoever procures it at the expense of ten thousand desires makes a wise and happy purchase.

—*Balguy*, 1686–1746.

CONTROVERSY.

1. Is often foolish and unprofitable.

(1367.) As in the burning of some wet fuel, we cannot see the fire for smoke; so the light of the Scriptures is dusked by the vapours of controversies.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(1368.) Some spend their time in nice questions, as, what Christ disputed of amongst the doctors? Where Paradise stood? In what part of the world is local hell? What became of Moses' body? How many orders and degrees of elect spirits? These curious persons, the further they go, the nearer they approach a sun that blinds them. Others spend their time in circumstantial controversies, when in the interim the essentials of religion are laid by. Such talk is but a wasting of time, and those that sweat at it are but laborious loiterers; like those that take great pains to crack a date-stone, which, when they have done, affords them no kernel. Would it not be counted a piece of great folly for a man that had a wound near some vital part, to be very busy in laying a plaster on his scratched finger, while the other lay unregarded? Were it not a piece of strange madness, when the enemy is at the walls, and the town every moment in danger

of being stormed, the bullets flying thick about the streets, for the people within to be sitting still and consulting, whether a musket would carry further than a trunk, or whether more are killed with bullets or arrows? Truly, such folly, such madness, is it to employ ourselves about needless discourse about the world or superficial things, when our inestimable souls are continually in danger of being surprised and slain. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1369.) Many controversies of these times grow up about religion, as suckers from the root and limbs of a fruit tree, which spend the vital sap that should make fruit. —*Flavel*, 1630–1691.

(1370.) There are some controversies prickly like brambles, and apt to scratch those that handle them, but yielding no savoury or wholesome fruit. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(1371.) Three natural philosophers go out into the forest and find a nightingale's nest, and forthwith they begin to discuss the habits of the bird, its size, its colour, and the number of eggs it lays; and one pulls out of his pocket a treatise of Buffon, and another of Cuvier, and another of Audubon, and they read and dispute till at length the quarrel runs so high over the empty nest, that they tear each other's leaves, and get red in the face, and the woods ring with their conflict; when, lo! out of the green shade of a neighbouring thicket, the bird itself rested, and, disturbed by these rude noises, begins to sing. At first its song is soft and low, and then it rises and swells, and waves of melody float up over the trees, and fill the air with tremulous music, and all the forest doth hush; and the entranced philosophers, subdued and ashamed of their quarrel, shut their books and walk home without a word.

So men who around the empty sepulchre of Christ have wrangled about the forms of religion, about creeds, and doctrines, and ordinances, when Christ Himself, disturbed by their discords, sings to them, out of heaven, of love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are ashamed of their conflicts, and go quietly and meekly to their duties. —*Beecher.*

2. Is sometimes necessary.

(1372.) It is in the Church, as it is with nations; war must sometimes be carried on, in order to establish a sound and durable peace at last. —*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(1373.) Controversy, though always an evil in itself, is sometimes a necessary evil. To give up everything worth contending about, in order to prevent hurtful contention, is, for the sake of extirpating noxious weeds, to condemn the field to perpetual sterility. Yet, if the principle that it is an evil only to be incurred when necessary for the sake of some important good were acted upon, the two classes of controversies mentioned by Bacon would certainly be excluded. The first controversy, on subjects too deep and mysterious, is indeed calculated to gender strife. For, in a case where correct knowledge is impossible to any and where all are, in fact, in the wrong, there is but little likelihood of agreement: like men who should rashly venture to explore a strange land in utter darkness, they will be scattered into a thousand devious paths. The second class of subjects that would be excluded by this principle are those which relate to matters too minute and trifling. —*Whately.*

3. Is better than ignorant indifference.

(1374.) The servants of God do mind the matter of religion more seriously than others do; and therefore their differences are made more observable to the world. They cannot make light of the smallest truth of God; and this may be some occasion of their indifference; whereas the ungodly differ not about religion, because they have heartily no religion to differ about. Is this a unity and peace to be desired? I had rather have the discord of the saints, than such a concord of the wicked. They are so careful about their duty that they are afraid of missing it in the least particular; and this (with their imperfect light) is the reason of their disputings about these matters. But you that are careless of your duty, can easily agree upon a way of sin, or take anything that comes next to hand. They honour the worship of God so much, that they would not have anything out of order; but you set so little by it, that you will be of the religion that the king is of, let it be what it will be; and it is easy to agree in such an ungodly, careless course. Astronomers have many controversies about the positions and motions of the heavens, and all philosophers have many controversies about the matter of their sciences; when ignorant men have none of their controversies, because they understand not, and therefore regard not the things that the learned differ about: and will you think ever the better of ignorance, or ever the worse of learning for this? The controversies of lawyers, of historians, chronologers, geographers, physicians, and such like, do never trouble the brains of the ignorant; but for all that, I had rather be in controversy with the learned, than without such controversy with you. If you scatter a handful of gold or diamonds in the street, perhaps men will scramble for them, and fall out about them, when swine will trample on them and quietly despise them, because they do not know their worth; will you therefore think that swine are happier than men? The living are vexed with strifes and controversies, about almost all the matters in the world, when the dead carcases in the grave lie still in peace, and are not troubled with any of these differences; will you say therefore that the dead corpse is happier than the living? It is a death in sin, and compliance with the times and carnal interest, and a disesteem of spiritual holy things, that is the cause of the agreement of the wicked. But the godly know the worth of the things that you set light by, and therefore make a greater matter of them than you, and therefore no wonder if they have more debates and controversies about them. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. Its advantages.

(1375.) There is no learned man but will confess he hath much profited by reading controversies,—his senses awakened, his judgment sharpened, and the truth which he holds more firmly established. If then it be profitable for him to read, why should it not at least be tolerable and free for his adversary to write? In logic, they teach that contraries laid together more evidently appear: it follows, then, that all controversy being permitted, falsehood will appear more false, and truth the more

true; which must needs conduce much to the general confirmation of an implicit truth.
—*Milton*, 1608–1674.

(1376.) However some may affect to dislike controversy, it can never be of ultimate disadvantage to the interests of truth or the happiness of mankind. Where it is indulged to its full extent, a multitude of ridiculous opinions will no doubt be obtruded upon the public; but any ill influence they may produce cannot continue long, as they are sure to be opposed with at least equal ability and that superior advantage which is ever attendant on truth. The colours with which wit or eloquence may have adorned a false system will gradually die away, sophistry be detected, and everything estimated at length according to its value. —*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

5. Should not be engaged in rashly.

(1377.) When you have nothing to say, say nothing: a weak defence strengthens your opponent, and silence is less injurious than a weak reply. —*Colton*, 1832.

6. In what spirit it is to be conducted.

(1378.) A good man should not be very willing, when his Lord comes, to be found so doing, and, as it were, *beating his fellow-servants*. And all controversy, as it is usually managed, is little better. A good man would be loath to be taken out of the world, reeking hot from a sharp contention with a perverse adversary, and not a little out of countenance to find himself in this temper, translated into the calm and peaceable regions of the blessed, where nothing but perfect charity and good-will reign for ever.
—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(1379.) We must rejoice when we see the golden chain which links the different members of the body of Christ together is not weakened; that amidst many differences of opinion among us, there is still a sound practical feeling of love to God and good-will to men. If, therefore, we see Christian love struggling against the convulsions of the moment, and that it is not subdued by these convulsions, then we may believe, as the wind which shakes the oak of our country only strengthens and increases the nourishment it derives from the roots, so all disputes and agitations without will only strengthen the great work of religion in our hearts, and give a lovelier influence to the blessed gospel of our Lord.
—*Chancellor Raikes.*

(1380.) Controversy may for the present be needful; but there never was, and never will be, need for its rancour. We may have all its victories without its virulence; and its truths without its personal tragedies; and that will be the most wholesome state of the Church when discussions wax kindly, and controversies are conducted in the spirit, not of party feuds, but of friendly investigations. Iron sharpens iron; and the day may come when, like honest experimenters in physics, earnest inquirers in theology will employ their respective acumen, not in perplexing one another, but in pursuing joint researches; and will find their full reward, not in a bewildered public, but in a text clearly interpreted, and a doctrine finally demonstrated, in a long debate concluded, and a weary question for ever set at rest.
—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

7. Heat inseparable from it.

(1381.) In this imperfect state it is perhaps as impossible for two parties, as it is for flint and steel, to come into collision without exciting some sparks of fire. It were foolish to expect that there should be nothing said or done in a time of religious controversy, which good men will see no reason afterwards to regret and to recall; for that were to expect lesser men to be greater than apostles—holier than Saint Paul and Barnabas, between whom, as we are told, there rose a "sharp contention." Nor even after the controversies have ceased, need we wonder that their unhappy influences do not always, and all at once, cease with them. That were such a miracle as was only seen in Galilee, when at Christ's voice the wind and the waves went down at once, and together. It is with human passion as with the sea, when violently agitated, stirred by some storm to its briny depths, it continues, hours after the wind has ceased, to swell, and heave, and roll its foaming breakers on the beach. We are not to wonder that wounds received in controversy, like those received in battle, take some time to heal. It is reasonable to expect that, though, as it were a bad sign of a man's constitution, if his wounds, however deep, turned into running sores, there is something wrong, unhallowed, and unchristian in our spirit, if grace does not soften the asperities, and time close the wounds of controversy. —*Guthrie.*

8. Whose judgments are to be regarded as authoritative.

(1382.) In controversies which depend on the experience of particular Christians or of the Church, regard most the judgment of the most experienced, and prefer the judgment of the later ages of the Church before the judgment of less experienced ages (except the Apostolic age that had the greater help of the Spirit). An ancient experienced Christian or divine is more to be regarded in many points, which require experience, than many of the younger sort, that are yet more zealous and of quicker understanding and expression than the elder. So those that we call the Fathers or ancients, were indeed in the younger ages of the Church, and we that are fallen into the latter and more experienced age, have all the helps of the wisdom and experience of the ages that were before us; and therefore God will require at our hands an account of these greater talents which we have received. As it were inexcusable now in a physician, that hath the help of such voluminous institutions, observations, and experiments of former ages, to know no more than those former ones that had no such helps; so would it be as inexcusable for this present age of the Church to be no wiser than those former ages.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1383.) In controversies which depend most upon skill in the languages, philosophy, or other parts of common learning, prefer the judgment of a few that are the most learned in those matters, before the judgment of the most ancient, or the most godly, or of the greatest numbers, or even whole churches that are unlearned. In this case neither numbers, nor antiquity, nor godliness, will serve their turn: but as one clear eye will see farther than ten thousand that are purblind, so one Jerome or Origen may judge better of a translation, or the grammatical sense of a text, than a hundred of the other Fathers could. One man that understandeth a language is fitter to

judge of it than a whole nation that understandeth it not. One philosopher is fitter to judge of a philosophical question than a thousand illiterate persons. Every man is most to be regarded in the matters which he is best acquainted with.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

9. The ignorant are usually the most confident.

(1384.) None so bold as the blind. "The fool rageth and is confident." If he be in an error or entangled in any evil cause or way, you know not what to say to him for his recovery. The less he knows, the more he despiseth knowledge, and sets his face against his teachers, as if they were but fools to him, and scorns to be ruled by such as they whom God hath made his rulers. Will you go to dispute or debate the case with one of these? Why be sure of it, they will put you down and have the day. He will go away and boast that you could not convince him: as if a madman should boast that the physicians could not all of them cure him. He that speaks nonsense saith nothing while he seems to speak. And there is no refuting a man that saith nothing. Nonsense is unanswerable, if there be but enough of it. Who would dispute against a pair of bagpipes, or against a company of boys that hoot at him? If you will make a match at barking or biting, a cur will be too hard for you. And if you will try your skill or strength at kicking, a horse will be too hard for you. And if you will contend with multitudes of words, or by rage and confidence, a fool will be too hard for you (as you may see by Solomon's descriptions, and by daily experience). But if you will dispute by equal, sober reasoning, it is only a wiser man by evidence of truth that can overcome you; and to be thus overcome is better than to conquer; for you have the better if truth overcome you, and you have the worse if you overcome the truth.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

10. Is not confined to Christians.

(1385.) Lawyers contend about law, and princes about dominions, which others mind not, and religious persons strive about religion, and what wonder is this? It doth but show that they value their souls and religion, and that their understandings are yet imperfect.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1386.) Is there any of the sciences which afford not matter of controversy? If the laws of the land did yield no matter of controversy, lawyers and judges would have less of that work than now they have. And was there not greater diversity of opinions and worship among the heathens than ever was among Christians?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1387.) The differences among Christians are nothing in comparison of the differences among heathens. The truth is, religion is such an illustrious, noble thing, that dissensions about it, like spots in the moon, are much more noted by the world than about any lower, common matters. Men may raise controversies in philosophy, physic, astronomy, chronology, and yet it maketh no such noise, nor causeth much offence or hatred in the world; but the devil and the corrupted nature have such an enmity against religion, that they are glad to pick any quarrel against it, and blame it for the imperfections of all that learn it, and should practise it. As if grammar should be accused for every error or fault that the boys are guilty of in learning it; or the law were to be accused for all the differences of lawyers, or contentions of the people; or physic were to be accused for all the differences or errors of physicians; or meat and drink were culpable because of men's excesses and diseases. There is no doctrine or practice in the world by which true unity and concord can be maintained, but by seriousness in true religion. And when all contention cometh for want of religion, it is impudence to blame religion for it, which is the only cure. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

11. Absurdity of the interference of the ungodly in religious controversies.

(1388.) It would make a man's heart ache to hear wretched sinners talk of our differences about bishops, and ceremonies, and common-prayer, and holy-days, and infant baptism, and the like, that are dead in their sins, and are yet disagreed from us in the very bent of heart and life. Alas! sirs, you have other matters than these first to talk of and trouble yourselves with. A man that is ready to die of a consumption should not be taking care to cure the warts or freckles in his face. We have greater matters wherein we differ from you, than kneeling at the sacrament, or observation of days, or other ceremonies, or doubtful opinions in matters of doctrine. Let us first be agreed all to serve one master, and seek one end, and be ruled by one law, and hate known sin, and live a holy life, and then we shall be ready to treat with you about a further agreement. But to talk of small matters, when we differ in the greatest matters in the world, is as much as your souls are worth, and in matters which heaven or hell lieth on; this is but childish trifling, and whatever we may do for the peace of the Church with such, yet to ourselves that will be small advantage. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

12. Received truths not to be subjected to controversy.

(1389.) It is nowise a safe or advised course (except in case of necessary defence) to subject received opinions to the hazardous trial of a tumultuary conflict, their credit being better upheld by a stately reservedness than by a popular forwardness of discourse; as buildings stand fastest that are never shaken, and those possessions remain most secure that are never called in question.

—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

13. Its causes.

(1390.) Those subjects, which are too difficult in their very nature for our powers, are the source of very many of the unhappy controversies which agitate the Church. The mind is not capable of grasping fully the whole truth. Each side seizes a part, and building its own inferences upon these partial premises, they soon find that their own opinions come into collision with those of their neighbours. Moralists tell the following story, which very happily illustrates this species of controversy. In the days of knight-errantry, when individual adventurers rode about the world seeking employment in their profession, which was that of the sword, two strong and warlike knights, coming from opposite directions, met each other at

a place where a statue was erected. On the arm of the statue was a shield, one side of which was iron, the other of brass; and as our two heroes reined up their steeds, the statue was upon the side of the road, between them, in such a manner that the shield presented its surface of brass to the one, and of iron to the other. They immediately fell into conversation in regard to the structure before them, when one incidentally alluding to the *iron* shield, the other corrected him, by remarking that it was of *brass*. The knight upon the *iron* side of course did not receive the correction. He maintained that he was right, and after carrying on the controversy for a short time by harsh language, they gradually grew angry, and soon drew their swords. A long and furious combat ensued, and when at last both were exhausted, unhorsed, and lying wounded upon the ground, they found that the whole cause of their trouble was, that they could not see *both* sides of a shield at a time. Now religious truth is sometimes such a shield, *with various aspects*, and the human mind cannot clearly see all at a time. Two Christian knights, clad in strong armour, come up to some object, as moral agency, and view it from opposite stations. One looks at the power which man has over his heart, and laying his foundation there, he builds up his theory upon that alone. Another looks upon the Divine power in the human heart, and laying his own separate foundation, builds up his theory. The human mind is incapable, in fact, of grasping the subject—of understanding how man can be free and accountable, and yet be so much under the control of God as the Bible represents. Our Christian soldiers, however, do not consider this. Each takes his own view, and carries it out so far as to interfere with that of the other. They converse about it—they talk more and more warmly—then a long controversy ensues—their dispute agitates the Church and divides brethren from brethren; and why? Why, just because our Creator has so formed us that we cannot, from one point of view, see both sides of the shield at the same time. The combatants, after a long battle, are both unhorsed and wounded; their usefulness, and their Christian character, is injured, or destroyed. —*Jacob Abbott.*

14. What would end it.

(1391.) If we saw God, and heaven, and hell before us, do you not think it would effectually reconcile our differences and heal our unbrotherly exasperations and divisions? Would it not hold the hands that itch to be using violence against those that are not in all things of their minds? What abundance of vain controversies would it reconcile! As the coming in of the master doth part the fray among the school boys; so the sight of God would frighten us from contentions or uncharitable violence. This would teach us how to preach and pray better than a storm at sea can do, which yet doth it better than some in prosperity will learn. Did we see what we preach of, it would drive us out of our man-pleasing, self-seeking, sleepy strain, as the cudgel drives the beggar from his canting, and the breaking loose of the bear did teach the affected cripple to find his legs and cast away his crutches. I would desire no better outward help to end our controversies about indifferent modes of worship than a sight of the things of which we speak —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

CONVERSION.

I. *IN WHAT IT CONSISTS.*

(1392.) I cannot give a more just idea of the new principle which the Spirit of God imparts to us in our conversion than by comparing it with the modern invention of the compass. Before the invention of the compass, mariners in a dark night were unable with any precision to direct their course. Whilst they were in sight of land, or had a view of the sun or stars, they could proceed with some degree of certainty: but, in the absence of these, they were altogether at a loss. But it is not so with mariners at this time. By the help of the compass, they can by night steer the ship as well as in the day; having constantly at hand, as it were, a sure directory: now this is the difference between the natural and the spiritual man; the natural man has reason and conscience, which, to a certain degree, are capable of directing his path. But numberless occasions arise whereon they fail him utterly. The spiritual man has superadded to these a new and living principle abiding in him; a principle infused in him by the Spirit of God, and in exact accordance with His mind and will: and by this principle the Spirit Himself guides him in all his ways. —*Salter.*

(1393.) A man often passes through many stages before he becomes truly converted to God. When he is first awakened to serious impressions, and sees his folly of pursuing intently worldly things, to the neglect of the more durable riches, he resembles a boy emerging from his childhood, who throws aside his trifles and playthings for amusements of a higher and more intellectual kind. He now sets himself with all diligence to working out his own salvation in his own strength; multiplies his religious duties, and reforms his bad habits; yet all this while he is like one who has been employed in new-painting and varnishing a wooden statue, it has no life within. But when the Holy Spirit influences his heart, and "reveals Christ in him," he is in the state of one who has awakened from a dream (in which he has been acting a fictitious part), to live and move, and use all his faculties in reality, and enter on the great business of life.

—*Salter.*

(1394.) I passed by a piece of common which some lord of the manor or other had been enclosing, as those rascals always will if they can, to rob the poor of their rights, and filch every morsel of green grass upon which we may freely plant our feet; but I noticed that the enclosers had only railed it round, but had not dug it up, nor ploughed it, nor planted it; and though they had cut down the gorse, it was coming up again; of course it would, for it was a common still, and a bit of fence or rail could not alter it; the furze would come peeping up, and erelong the enclosure would be as wild as the heath outside. But this is not God's way of working. When God encloseth a heart that has laid common with sin, does He cut down the thorns and the briers and then plant fir trees? (Isaiah lv. 13.) No, no; but He so changeth the soil, that from the ground itself, from its own vitality, there spontaneously starts up the fir tree and the myrtle. This is a most wonderful result. You take a man and leave him at heart the same godless man. You mend his habits; you make him go to church, or to the meeting-house; you clothe him; you break

his wine bottle; you rinse his mouth out so that he does not talk so filthily; and altogether you say, "He's now a respectable man." Ah! but if these outward respectabilities and rightnesses are only skin deep, you have done nothing. At least what you have done is no great wonder; there is nothing in it to be proud of. But suppose this man can be so changed, that just as freely as he was wont to curse he now delights to pray, and just as heartily as he hated religion he now finds pleasure in it, and just as earnestly as he sinned he now delights to be obedient to the Lord; ah! then, this is a wonder, a miracle which man cannot accomplish, a marvel which only the grace of God can work, and which gives to God His highest glory. —*Spurgeon.*

(1395.) There is no difference in a piano, whether a tyro or a Beethoven plays upon it; the difference is in their power of combination: so in us, when converted we have the same old faculties. —*Beecher.*

II. *IS POSSIBLE.*

(1396.) An entire change may take place, so radical, that a man will hate what he once loved, and love what he once hated. Human character is capable of this change. It is not an uncommon, we were about to say not a difficult, step from one extreme of like or dislike to another. Who has not found himself loving the company, services, and surrounding circumstances which he once loathed? Who has not followed back with equal zest and pleasure the path he walked in the outward journey of life? A young man, who had wasted a large patrimony in a profligate life, while hanging over the brow of a precipice from which he had determined to throw himself, and for which purpose he had gone thither, formed a counter-purpose—that he would return to his home and regain what he had lost. It was all the work of a minute. The purpose he had then formed he kept. He began his new life by shovelling a load of coal into a cellar; he proceeded step by step, until he had more than regained what he had lost, and died a millionaire. In a wordly sense he was converted. This is not a solitary, but a representative, case. There are thousands like him in their resolves and efforts, if not in their success.

These facts demonstrate the possibility of a radical and sudden change of life and character. This, then, is our reply to the objection urged by so many respecting the unreasonableness and impossibility of such a change, that nothing is more common, or more necessary, in life, than a change, than a conversion from one class of feelings to another, from one state of character to another, from one condition of life to another,—from being influenced by one class of motives to being influenced by an entirely different class,—from being born once to being born again. When this conversion is commenced through religious motives, and is carried on by Divine agency, then it becomes religious, instead of social conversion. This constitutes the vital difference between the two. —*Townsend.*

III. *HOW IT IS EFFECTED.*

1. Not by eloquence.

(1397.) I admit there is tremendous power in words; they breathe, they burn, they move the soul. But there is one thing they cannot do—regenerate the soul. They are not adequate to do that. You all know that there is an invention to electrify dead bodies; by bringing the dead into contact with an electric battery, they can be made to imitate the living, they look, they stare, they move, they gesticulate; there is the semblance of life, but not the reality. And I have seen under powerful and eloquent sermons stout-hearted sinners start from their seats. I have seen them weeping; I have seen them praying. Well, are they alive? Not they—they are only the dead acting the living. Let the electric current which flows from the preacher subside, and they fall back to their former torpor and indifference. What are many of the so-called revivals? electric shocks disturbing the dead, but leaving them dead notwithstanding. Eloquence can move men, but it cannot save them. Eloquence, like the wind, moves the sea from without, but that which saves must move it from its own depth. Eloquence works *upon* the soul; that which saves must work *in* the soul. I do not disparage nicety of language and eloquence of style; but this I know, that Paul's preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom. —*J. C. Jones.*

2. Not by argument.

(1398.) It is trite and commonplace to say that argument cannot convert a soul. Conquer a man in argument, and, as a rule, you only confirm him in his error. Last Monday I was looking at a picture which bore the title, "Conquered but not Subdued." The young lad was evidently conquered by his mother. There he stood, with his face half turned towards the wall: but there was determination in the mouth, defiance in the eye, anger in the nostrils; he was conquered but not subdued. Drive a sinner in argument to a corner, so that he cannot move, yet he can sink, and sink he will to his own hell. You have all seen sheet-lightnings; they flash, they dazzle, but they never kill. And arguments after all are only sheet-lightnings—flashing, dazzling, enlightening, but not killing in the sense in which Paul says that he was slain. I say nothing against logic: have as much of it in the pulpit as you can; but, after all, logic will not save the world. God can never save you by argument; the world will defy the Almighty in a debate. There is argument in the Bible: and argument is indispensable: but it is not by argument that men are made new creatures. —*J. C. Jones.*

3. Not by intellectual power.

(1399.) All of us know by experience and observation that ideas wield immense power in the world; that brilliant thoughts exercise a kind of magic influence on those that hear them: yet we must admit that the power of ideas is not that which saves. The Bible does not claim superiority on account of its ideas. I believe, of course, that it contains the sublimest ideas, the profoundest thoughts ever clothed in human language: but it is not upon its literary or intellectual character that it rests its claim to the homage of mankind. Indeed, you may study the Scriptures for sixty years, you may be the best Biblical scholar in the land, and be at last a castaway. It is not the ideas of the Bible that save. The history of preaching abundantly proves this. Read the sermon which was preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and it will not strike you as sparkling with ideas; it will not astonish you with the profundity of its thoughts. Sermons that display

as great mental calibre had been preached before, and have often been preached since. The Sermon on the Mount, and the sermon that Paul preached on Mars Hill, stand higher on the intellectual and philosophic side; and yet they made but few converts. Why? Because the power of thought is not the power that saves. Look again from the pulpit to books. It is not the most intellectual books that have been mainly blessed to the salvation of souls. Take the "Analogy," by Butler; no book in the language perhaps displays more solid intellectual power; yet I question very much if there be twenty people now living that would point to the "Analogy" as the means of bringing them to Jesus. I may be mistaken, but this is my impression. I have heard a great many people praising it, referring to it, saying they are indebted to it; but not one ascribing his salvation to it. But read the "Dairyman's Daughter," by Leigh Richmond; or the "Anxious Inquirer," by John Angell James; and you do not find the millionth part of the mental power in them that you find in the "Analogy;" but there are thousands in England to-day who trace their conversion to these books. It is another power than that of thought which saves. I do not say that thought is not necessary; but it is not of itself adequate to bring about the desired change.

—*J. C. Jones.*

4. But by the Spirit of God.

(1400.) A smith that undertakes to open such a lock that is out of order must, of necessity, first know all the wards; else he may make a key that will not fit; he may endeavour, but not be able to turn the lock. Thus it is that, whereas there are in the heart of man so many windings, so many turnings, such a labyrinth, such a depth in it, that in the eye of human reason there is no possibility to find out the bottom thereof; how, then, is it to be imagined that the most knowing, quick-sighted man should be able fully to persuade the heart? He cannot; that is peculiar to God only. He only knows all the secret passages, all the cross-wards of the heart, to Him only belongeth that especial key of David; it is He that can best unlock the heart, answer all objections, enlighten all the corners, turn all the wheels of the soul, suit and fit the heart with such arguments as shall be effectual to persuasion.

—*Preston*, 1587–1628.

(1401.) If a ship that is launched, rigged, and with her sails spread, cannot stir till the wind comes fair and fills them, much less can the timber that lies in the carpenter's yard hew and frame itself into a ship; if the living tree cannot grow except the root communicates its sap, much less can a dead, rotten stake in the hedge, which hath no root, live of its own accord. And thus, if the Christian's strength be in the Lord (as most certainly it is) and not in himself, then the Christless person must needs be a poor, impotent creature, void of all strength and ability of doing anything of itself towards its own salvation; if a Christian, that hath a spiritual life of grace, cannot exercise that life without strength from above, then surely one void of that new life, dead in sins and trespasses, can never be able to beget it in himself or any way concur to the production of it—so helpless is the state of unregeneracy, so impotent the condition of every man by nature. —*Drexelius*, 1581–1638.

(1402.) Water may be easily dammed up, but no art or industry can make it run backward in its own channel. It was by a miracle that the river Jordan was driven back: and it is very near, if not altogether a miracle, that a man accustomed to do evil should learn to do well; that the tide of sin, which before did run so strong, should be so easily turned; that the sinner, who before was sailing hellward, and wanting neither wind nor tide to carry him, should now alter his course and tack about for heaven. To see the earthly man become heavenly, to see a sinner move contrary to himself, in the ways of Christ and holiness, is as strange as to see the earth fly upward, or a bowl run contrary to its own bias. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(1403.) If a man should sit in a dark room among snakes and toads, and think verily that it were no such matter but he were in his bed-chamber, you might persuade him long enough to come away, and tell him of the danger; but he will not stir, but laugh at you, because he doth not believe you. But if you come into the room with a light, and he sees them crawling all about him, and making at him, then you need not another word to bid him begone; he is quickly up, and leaveth them with abhorrence. We tell unconverted sinners of the hatefulness of sin, and the danger that they are in, and pray them to leave it, but they believe us not, and do but laugh at it; but when the Spirit of God bringeth in the light, and they see all this with their own eyes, that it is even worse than ever we made it, then away goes their sins without any more ado. Like a child that hath a fine yellow crab which he taketh for an apple, he will not part with it, nor let you take it from him; but when he hath set his teeth in it once and tasted it, he will throw it away without any more ado. If such a foolish child be playing with a nettle, while he taketh it for a common herb he is bold with it, but when he feels the sting, he throweth it away; or if he be playing about a nest of wasps or bees, while he takes them to be but harmless flies, you cannot call him away, but when once they have stung him, he cries and runs away of himself without another word. Even so it is with a poor sinner about his sins before conversion. We pray him to come away, and tell him that sin hath a sting, and a deadly sting, and assure him from the Word of God that it will be bitterness in the latter end, and he makes no great matter of our words, but can hear us as if we came into the pulpit to tell him a tale, and not to save his soul from hell. And therefore he can go on in his old way for all this, and take his cups, or follow the world and his fleshly lusts, and give the preacher leave to talk. But when converting grace comes, it makes him taste the bitterness and sourness of sin, and then he quickly spits it out. It makes him feel the sting and smart, and then he cries to God for help, and wishes he had never known it, and runs away from it with detestation. Grace bringeth in that light from God which shows them that which they did not see before; how all this while they have had a multitude of crawling serpents in their bosom, and they have been playing even at the brink of hell. And when they see this with their own eyes, it is time for them to take another course.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1404.) On a winter's day I have noticed a row of cottages, with a deep load of snow on their

several roofs; but as the day wore on, large fragments began to tumble from the eaves of this one and that other, till, by and by, there was a simultaneous avalanche, and the whole heap slid over in powdery ruin on the pavement; and before the sun went down, you saw each roof as clear and dry as on a summer's eve. But here and there you would observe one with its snow-mantle unbroken, and a ruff of stiff icicles around it. What made the difference? The difference was to be found within. Some of these huts were empty, or the lonely inhabitant cowered over a scanty fire; whilst the peopled hearth and the high-blazing fagots of the rest created such an inward warmth that grim winter melted and relaxed his grip, and the loosened mass folded off and tumbled over on the trampled street. It is possible by some outside process to push the main volume of snow from the frosty roof, or chip off the icicles one by one; but they will form again, and it needs an inward heat to create a total thaw. And so, by sundry processes, you may clear off from a man's conduct the dead weight of conspicuous sins; but it needs a hidden heat, a vital warmth within, to produce such a separation between the soul and its besetting iniquities, that the whole wintry incubus, the entire body of sin will come spontaneously away. That vital warmth is the love of God abundantly shed abroad—the kindly glow which the Comforter diffuses in the soul which He makes His home. His genial inhabitation thaws that soul and its favourite sins asunder, and makes the indolence and self-indulgence and indevotion fall off from their old resting-place on that dissolving heart. The easiest form of self-mortification is a fervent spirit.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(1405.) When the heart of man is fortified in his weakness, when it is desperately set in him to do evil, all that men can do is to break upon them as the sea breaks on the rocky shore. It is the sea that is sent back, and the rock that stands firm. There are scores of men who live for the flesh; who live under the dominion of the senses; and who yet live in the full light of truth. None know it better than they. There are men that have read every word of scripture; there are men that are familiar with every argument and statement in theology; there are men that have known and seen much of the power of God in revivals; but there is within them that fixed, rooted, toughened life of sin that refuses to yield itself to any power which can be wielded merely by the hands of men.

—*Beecher*.

5. Who works without impairing the freedom of the human will.

(1406.) I look upon you as a physician upon his patient, in a dangerous disease, that saith unto him, "Though you are so far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but these few things that are so hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life; but if you will not do this, you are a dead man." What would you think of such a man, if the physician and all the friends he hath cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him? This is your case. As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, and take His remedies, and your souls shall live. Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and return not to your poisonous vomit any more, and you shall do well. But yet if it were your bodies that we had to deal with we might partly know what to do with you. Though you would not consent, you might be held or bound while the medicine was poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills. There is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters. You may be condemned against your wills, because you sinned with your wills; but you cannot be saved against your wills.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1407.) When we see a casket wrenched open, the hinges torn away, or the clasp destroyed, we mark at once the hand of the *spoiler*; but when we observe another casket deftly opened with a master-key, and the sparkling contents revealed, we note the hand of the *owner*. Conversion is not, as some suppose, a violent opening of the heart by grace, in which will, reason, and judgment are all ignored or crushed. This is too barbarous a method for him who comes not as a plunderer to his prey, but as a possessor to his treasure. In conversion, the Lord who made the human heart deals with it according to its nature and constitution. His key insinuates itself into the wards; the will is not enslaved but enfranchised; the reason is not blinded but enlightened; and the whole man is made to act with a glorious liberty which it never knew till it fell under the restraints of grace.

—*Spurgeon*.

IV. *HINDRANCES TO CONVERSION.*

(1408.) One hindrance of conversion is foolish self-love, that makes men unwilling to know the worst of themselves, and so keepeth them from believing their sinfulness and misery; and causeth them to presume and keep up false deceiving hopes that they may be saved, whether they are converted or not; or that they are converted when indeed they are not. They think it every one's duty to think well of themselves, and therefore they will do so; and so, while they hope they are converted already, or may be saved without conversion, no wonder if they look not seriously after it. Like many a sick man that I have known in the beginning of a consumption, or some grievous disease, they hope there is no danger in it; or they hope it will go away of itself, and it is but some cold; or they hope that such or such medicine will cure it, till they are past hope, and then they must give up these hopes and their lives together, whether they will or no. Just so do poor wretches by their souls. They know that all is not well with them, but they hope God is merciful, that He will not condemn them; or they hope to be converted some time hereafter; or they hope that less ado may serve their turn, and that their good wishes and prayers may save their souls; and thus, in these hopes they hold on, till they find themselves to be past remedy, and their hopes and they be dead together. I speak not this without the Scripture (Prov. xi. 17; Job xxvii. 8, 9; xi. 20). There is scarcely a greater hindrance of conversion than these false deceiving hopes of sinners. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1409.) Another hindrance of conversion is unresolvedness, and half-purposes; when men will hang wavering between God and the world, and

though the light be never so clear to convince them, yet they will not be persuaded to resolve. . . . If you would be converted and saved, do not stand wavering, but resolve, and presently turn to God. If it were a doubtful business, I would not persuade you to do it rashly, or if there were any danger to your souls in resolving, then I would say no more. But when it is a case that should be beyond all dispute with men of reason, why should you stand staggering as if it were a doubtful case? What a horrible shame is it to be unresolved whether God or the world should have your hearts? Were it not a disgrace to that man's understanding that were unresolved whether gold or dung were better? Or whether a bed of thorns or a feather bed were the easier? or whether the sun or a clod of earth were the more light and glorious? It is a far greater shame for a man to be unresolved whether it be God or the world that must make him happy, and that should have his heart, and whether a life of sin or holiness be the better. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

V. *THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CONVERTED IS VARIED.*

1. In accordance with their constitutional tendencies and previous life.

(1410.) But must this change, if radical, be attended with great distress of mind, or tumult of heart and conscience, before, and with a thrilling joy which recreates the world, during and immediately after conversion? These experiences may occur, and they may not. They may, and they may not, be any part of conversion. They are dependent upon the constitutional tendencies of the man, and upon his previous life. The highwayman, arrested by God's Spirit while in the act of murder, will, most likely, have a tumultuous experience. It will differ entirely from that of the innocent child starving by the roadside. There will be discovered precisely the same differences in experiencing this change that occur in the events of practical life. No two persons will, or can, appear precisely the same under the same circumstances, whatever these circumstances may be. Take the common illustration: Two sisters lose a much-loved brother. In the bosom of each there will be a deep sense of loss and loneliness, but the amount and kind of emotion at the grave may be very different. In the one will be seen the gush of tears, while not a tear moistens the cheek of the other. The one will turn away from the silent grave with outbursting sorrow, the other in silence, but with a cold dark mountain upon her heart. One mother may never weep, whose sorrow is as intense as that of her who is bathed in tears at the slightest sickness of her child.

These manifestations are the result of constitutional tendencies. They argue nothing, one way or another, as to the soundness of conversion. Conversion is not a question of smiles and tears, of sunshine or clouds. It is not a question of this or that emotion or feeling, any more than it is one of time and place. It is a simple question of a change of character through a Divine agency, induced by religious motives, without regard to the time or the manner of its accomplishment. It is, therefore, the sheerest folly to attempt to force every religious experience into the same mould. It cannot be stereotyped. To give directions in each individual case respecting how a man must or must not feel, is the last business of the preacher. If any person waits to have a religious experience exactly like that of some one else, he will wait for ever without receiving it. There are no exact repetitions; if you find them, one is a counterfeit. Seize the hand of Christ in your own way; step forth: all will be well. —*Townsend.*

(1411.) You are too apt to feel that your religious experience must be the same as others have; but where will you find analogies for this? Certainly not in nature. God's works do not come from His hand like coins from the mint. It seems as if it were a necessity that each one should be in some sort distinct from every other. No two leaves on the same tree are precisely alike; no two buds on one bush have the same unfolding, nor do they seek to have.

What if God should command the flowers to appear before Him, and the sunflower should come bending low with shame because it was not a violet, and the violet should come striving to lift itself up to be like a sunflower, and the lily should seek to gain the bloom of the rose, and the rose the whiteness of the lily; and so, each one, disdaining itself, should seek to grow into the likeness of the other. God would say, "Stop, foolish flowers! I gave you your own forms, and hues, and odours, and I wish you to bring what you have received. O sunflower, come as a sunflower; and you, sweet violet, come as a violet; and let the rose bring the rose's bloom, and the lily the lily's whiteness." Perceiving their folly, and ceasing to long for what they had not, violet and rose, lily and geranium, mignonette and anemone, and all the floral train, would come, each in its own loveliness, to send up its fragrance as incense, and all to wreathe themselves in a garland of beauty about the throne of God.

Now God speaks to you as to the flowers, and says, "Come with the form and nature that I gave you. If you are made a violet, come as a violet. If you are a rose, come as a rose. If you are a shrub, do not desire to be a tree. Let everything abide in the nature which I gave it, and grow to the full excellence that is contained in that nature."

The popular impression is, that grace is designed to change men *from* nature. No. They are sinful simply because they have deviated from their true nature, or fallen short of it. Grace is given to bring out the fulness of every man's nature. Not the nature which schoolmen write about; but that nature which God thought of when He put forth man, and pronounced him a child of God, bearing his Father's likeness. —*Beecher.*

2. As to the time of their conversion.

(1412.) The wind bloweth where it listeth (yea, and when it listeth too), even so the Spirit, both time and place uncertain. Some are called at the first hour—that is, in their infancy or childhood, as Samuel, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist; some in the third hour—that is, in their youth, as Daniel the prophet and John the evangelist; others at the sixth hour—in their middle age, as Peter and Andrew; others at the eleventh hour—in their old age, as Gamaliel and Joseph of Arimathea; and some again, not only in the last hour of the day, but even in the last minute of that hour, as the thief upon the cross. Again, our calling is uncertain in respect of place, for God calls some from their ships,

some from their shops, and some from under the hedges, and others from the market; so that, if a man can but make out unto his soul that he is certainly called, it matters not much for the time when nor the place where, both of them being so uncertain. —*Boys*, 1560–1643.

(1413.) Men come into the kingdom of God in as many different ways as plants come to flower. Some come right up out of the earth to blossom. Some come up and grow the whole summer, and then blossom. Some grow a year, and then blossom the second year. Some grow up like trees, and do not blossom till they are three or four or five or six years old. Some put the leaves out first, and the blossoms afterward; and some put out the blossoms first, and the leaves afterward. There is every conceivable method of inflorescence.

Now, when a man is converted, he blossoms; and some persons blossom almost from the cradle. I do not doubt that God's work begins in the hearts of children three or four years old, and of persons of every age beyond that period. As "the wind bloweth where it listeth," so God's Spirit works where it pleases. It comes when it pleases, and as it pleases; and no man can tell beforehand how it will come or when it will come. The way in which the mind is affected when it blossoms into the kingdom of love and duty varies in almost all cases.
—*Beecher.*

3. As to the means employed to effect their conversion.

(1414.) Sometimes you shall have impetuous and heavy showers bursting from the angry clouds. They lash the plains, and make the rivers flow. A storm brings them, and a deluge follows them. At other times, thin gentle dews are formed in the serene evening air. They steal down by slow degress with insensible stillness: so subtle that they deceive the nicest eye; so silent that they escape the most delicate ear; and when fallen, so very light, that they neither bruise the tenderest, nor oppress the weakest flowers. Very different operations! Yet each concurs in the same beneficial end, and both impart fertility to the lap of nature. So I have known some persons reclaimed from the unfruitful works of darkness by violent and severe means. The Almighty addressed their stubborn hearts, as he addressed the Israelites of Sinai, with lightning in His eyes, and thunder in His voice. The conscience, smitten with a sense of guilt and apprehension of eternal vengeance, trembled through all her powers; just as that strong mountain tottered to its centre. Pangs of remorse and agonies of fear preceded their new birth. They were reduced to the last extremities, almost overwhelmed with despair, before they found rest in Jesus Christ. Others have been recovered from a vain conversation by methods more mild and attractive. The "Father of spirits" applied Himself to their teachable minds in "a still and small voice." His grace came down like the rain into a fleece of wool; or as these softening drops which now water the earth. The kingdom of God took place in their souls without noise or observation. They passed from death unto life, from a carnal to a regenerate state, by almost imperceptible advances. The transition resembled the growth of corn: was very visible *when* effected, though scarcely sensible *while* accomplishing. —*Salter.*

(1415.) God is sovereign; and He calls men as He pleases. Some He calls amid thunder and storm, some in a calm, some in winter, and some in summer. Some He calls as He calls flowers in spring, and some as He calls flowers in autumn. And our business is not so much to determine what is the way in which God must call us, nor the way in which we should like to come, as to get up and come to our Father, walking in whatever path our feet find. *Come*—that is the thing; with a deep experience, if you have it; without a deep experience, if you have it not; with a great tumult, if you cannot help it; without much tumult, if it please God that it should be so. It is not to come in any particular way, or with any particular experience, but to arise and come to our Father, and say unto Him: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son; make me as one of Thy hired servants." It is to come back to God, *at any rate.*
—*Beecher.*

4. As to the emotions they experience.

(1416.) If we plainly see that many are insensibly changed, and made good by pious education "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and that some who have long lived in a profane neglect and contempt of religion, are by the secret power of God's Word and Holy Spirit, upon calm consideration, without any great terrors and amazements, visibly changed and brought to a better course; it is in vain, in these cases, to pretend that this change is not real, because the manner of it is not answerable to some instances which are recorded in Scripture, or which we have observed in our experience, and because these persons cannot give such an account of the time and manner of their conversion as is agreeable to these instances;—which is just as if I should meet a man beyond sea whom I had known in England, and would not believe that he had crossed seas, because he said he had a smooth and easy passage and was wafted over by a gentle wind, and could tell no stories of storms and tempests. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(1417.) There are some whose passage from a state of nature to a state of grace has been gentle and easy. They cannot understand the measureless extent of joy which is felt by the poor castaway rescued from depths of wretchedness to peace. There is something like intoxication of delight about the conversion of certain great offenders which others, like the elder brother in the parable, are offended with; they do not recognise it as belonging to their experience: they call it enthusiasm, fanaticism; "they are angry, they will not go in." Let them not doubt the reality of it. A man who comes from a dark chamber into the bright shining light of day, experiences a dazzling brilliancy in that which to another is mere ordinary sunshine. As with their joys, so it is with their groaning and sorrows. A soldier that has been scarred and wounded in the wars shall find his wounds smart in old age and bring on premature decrepitude. And the soul that has suffered in its spiritual contests with the devil, that has long lain in the captivity of the enemy, will long mourn the wounds and scars, and weaknesses and deficiencies, that his more happy brethren will know nothing of.
—*Salter.*

(1418.) When different men are brought to Christ,

though the general result is the same, the process is not. You will hardly find two cases in which the method was the same in all particulars.

To illustrate this matter, suppose there were a vast malarial district, a great circuit of country, in which were generated all manner of diseases; suppose there were towards the centre of that district, or circuit of country, a mountain lifted up; suppose that on that mountain there was a sanitarium—an immense building to which men might go, and going to which they might rise out of the morbid influences beneath into the pure air above, where all the conditions of health were fulfilled; and suppose word should be sent out to all the sick in the region round about, "Come up hither, for here is health." Now, if a man was sent to me, as the one having charge of that sanitarium, to inquire what steps were necessary to get there, how could I tell him? For, here, on the north, is one man a little sick. If he undertake to come, he will be obliged to travel by easy stages. And the particular experiences which he will have on the road will depend in part upon the route he takes. But, whatever those experiences may be, if he persevere, and no serious accident befalls him, he will finally reach the sanitary height. On the south is another man who is sick of a certain disease, who has not left his bed in six months, and who requires a certain kind of treatment. He has heard of the sanitarium; and he says to his attendants, "Will you carry me over this road by easy stages, and get me there?" He will have to go northward, and his experiences, as regards climate at least, will be different from those of the man who goes southward. But he will recover at the sanitarium. Another man is off at the east. He has a different disease, and requires a different kind of treatment. He must go by another road, right west, and his experiences will differ from the experiences of the other men; but he will find his way to the sanitarium. Each man, whether he travel north, or south, or east, or west, will sooner or later, and with more or less difficulty, come into the enjoyment of the advantages proffered to him, and such as be on this mountain in the centre of the malarial district. They will go by short stages or by long ones; they will travel a great many miles or but a very few; they will ride, or will walk on their own feet, and if they ride, they will go by public conveyance, or by their own conveyance. These various matters will be determined by the circumstances which surround them. But they will all go to one point. They will go with different degrees of activity or speed, and with different degrees of comfort; but the destination will be the same in each case. Do you not see it?

Well, it is just so in going to the Lord Jesus Christ. When men are sick, there is this great central Mountain of spiritual refuge to which they may go for relief. But where they are, how ignorant or how wise they are, how much or how little they have given way to their appetites and passions, what their entanglements and temptations are—all these things will have an influence upon them in their journey. And what steps are necessary, and how many of them, and how hard or how easy it will be to break away from that which is evil, and take hold upon that which is good, it is impossible to say. No specific answer can be given on these points. But let me say, in one word, that this Mountain is provided for all, and that the steps which are necessary in the case of each to enable him to reach it, will be determined by his peculiar circumstances.

But we will suppose that, after these various sick persons have reached the sanitarium, they hold a conference with themselves, some calm evening, sitting on the porch. All of them feel greatly relieved. Some are almost nimble, and are exhilarant. Others, who have not been there long, say: "We are better; but still we have not the enjoyment that those people have." And they begin to talk over the question of their evidences that they are there. One man, springing up and capering about the floor, says: "Ah! I know I am here!" Another man, lifting himself up goutily, says: "I cannot jump in that way, and I am very uncertain whether I am here or not!" Another man, turning on his couch, and looking around languidly, says: "Oh, if I could sit up I should feel more sure that I was here." And so they reason, from their different sensations, as to whether or not they are in that sanitarium.

They go further. One says, talking with another, "Where did you come from?" "I came from North Perdition," is the reply. "Ah! I came from South Perdition." "What sort of a road did you travel?" "Why, I came from a region where it is winter six months of the year; and the roads were horrible. It seemed as though I never should get out of the quagmires. I did not see one flower or leaf till I got to the foot of this mountain. If it had not been for getting my health and life again, I never would have undertaken such a dreadful task." "Well, then, I am afraid I am not here." "Why; what sort of a road did you come?" "Oh, I came a most beautiful road! I travelled all the way in the midst of flowering vines, and blossoming apple-trees, and everything sweet. It seemed to me as though I was between gardens all the time; and either you are not here, or else I am not—we had such different experiences." And yet, they *are* both there.

You see how absurd this is in speaking of men in a physical, actual place; but it is just as absurd in speaking of men in spiritual experience.

I hear one man say to another: "Did you have such awful feelings as you describe? I never had any such feelings; and I am afraid I am not a Christian." The other man says: "You say that the moment you thought of religion you broke out into rapture; but I did not. I was two months without the dawn of light; and I fear I am not a Christian." Each thinks he is not a Christian because he did not feel as the other did. One thinks he is not a Christian because he did not feel joyous, and the other thinks he is not a Christian because he did not feel bad. —*Beecher.*

5. As to the definiteness with which they can trace the history and fix the period of their conversion.

(1419.) He that is locked up in a dungeon, or otherwise immured within some darksome place, may easily discover the very moment of time when either the least beam of the sun shall break in upon him; whereas he that is in the open air is very sensible that the day is broke, that the sun is up, but cannot make out any certain account of the springing of the one or rising of the other. Thus it is in the matter of our spiritual calling: it is possible

that a man may know the very time when the Day-spring from on high did visit him, when it was the good pleasure of God to dart into his soul the graces of His blessed Spirit, as in the case of St. Paul, the good centurion, the jailer, the Jewish converts, and some others; but this is not ordinary.

—*Boys*, 1560–1643.

(1420.) We have known those who, having misspent their younger times in notoriously lewd and debauched courses, have been suddenly heart-stricken with some powerful denunciation of judgment, which hath so wrought upon them, that it hath brought them within sight of hell; who, after long and deep humiliation, have been raised up, through God's mercy, to a comfortable sense of the Divine favour; and have proceeded to a very high degree of regeneration, and lived and died saints. But this is not every man's case.

Those, who, having from their infancy been brought up in the nurture and fear of the Lord, and from their youth have been trained up under a godly and conscionable ministry, and have, by an insensible conveyance, received the gracious inoperations of the Spirit of God (though not without many inward strifes with temptations, and sad fits of humiliation for their particular failings), framing them to a holy obedience; these cannot expect to find so sensible alterations in themselves. As well may the child know when he was naturally born, as these know the instant of their spiritual regeneration, and as well may they see the grass grow, as they perceive their insensible increase of grace. It is enough that the child, attaining to the use of reason, now knows that he was born; and that when we see the grass higher than we left it, we know that it has grown. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(1421.) Can Christ be in thy heart, and thou not know it? Can one king be dethroned and another crowned in thy soul, and thou hear no scuffle?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1422.) Many are prone to look for a conversion, always uniform, not only in its effects but in its operation, and also too much bordering on the miraculous. The soul must be exceedingly terrified with fear, then overwhelmed with anguish, then plunged into despair, then suddenly filled with hope, and peace, and joy; and the person must be able to determine the day on which, the sermon under which, or the providence by which, the change was wrought. But this is by no means necessarily, or generally, the case. There is a variety in the temperaments and habits of men; and in the methods employed to bring them to repentance. And we should remember that there are "differences of administration, but the same Lord;" that often He prefers to the earthquake, the wind, and the fire, the small still voice; that He can draw by the cords of love and the bands of a man that He can work as effectually by slow, as by instantaneous exertion, and that He can change the soul in a manner so gradual and mild as to be scarcely discernible to any but the glorious Author. And here, my brethren, we are furnished with evidence from analogy. In nature, some of God's works insensibly issue in others; and it is impossible for us to draw the line of distinction between them. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But who can ascertain which ray begins, or which ends the dawn? If you are unable to trace the process of the divine life, judge by the result. When you perceive the effects of conversion, never question the cause. And if perplexed by a number of circumstantial inquiries, be satisfied if you are able to say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." —*Jay*.

(1423.) The greatest powers of nature work most calmly and noiselessly. What so gentle as the day-dawn rising mutely in the brightening east, and pouring its light upon the eye so softly, that swift as are those rays, the tenderest texture of the eye endures no wrong? And what more soft than the spring's falling rain? It may come preceded by the thunder, but it is gentle itself, and when most efficacious descends almost as a spiritual presence, "as small rain on the tender herb, and as showers that water the earth."

And like to these in their operations are the Gospel and Spirit of Christ. When our Saviour came into the world it was silently and alone. All heaven was moved, and followed Him down to the threshold, but few on earth knew it. One solitary star pointed to the humble birthplace, and hymns sang of it, heard only at night by the watching shepherds. He walked our world through years softly in the bitterness of His soul; He left where the common eye beheld but an ignominious sufferer, one of three, and men became aware that the Son of God had come and gone only when the clear light began to break in the eastern sky from that great work of His, and when the open gate of mercy was thrown back, with a cross before it to call the lost and wandering home.

And as it was with His descent into the world, so it is, in general, with His entrance by the Spirit into the heart. There may be the thunder and the mighty rushing wind before it, the providences may be loud and violent, but the Spirit itself is like the rain. It moves from soul to soul among the rising generations, and there is no outward crisis to tell of the birth of souls. It is like the dew that falls at night, and in the morning it is there, and man cannot tell when it formed itself, like a celestial guest, within the flower-cup. The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation. And, even in times of revival more marked, for such times are promised and should be expected; yet even in such times, the Spirit's great work is not in the earthquake or the mighty rushing wind, but is in the still small voice. Unless it meet us there, in the secrecy of the soul, in the privacy of the closet, in the rising to seek Christ at His grave in the quiet resurrection morn when the busy world and all the guards are fast asleep, unless it bring the soul into close and secret communion with Christ Himself, it meets us not at all. In His Gospel and His Spirit, Christ is moving through the great inner world which men too much neglect, the world of souls, and there in the solitude of the heart, alone with Him, it must be ours to seek and find.

—*Ker*.

(1424.) The change sometimes takes place in such a manner that the subject only knows by the review of months, and possibly years, that he is not the man he was. It is perhaps more frequently the case that the light struggles for a season with the darkness; doubt is mingled with hope; clouds hang about the horizon, or even shut in the heavens, with

only an occasional glimmer of light. With the majority of people in a Christian land, conversion is like the dawning of the morning in the east, in which the change from deep night to commencing day can scarcely be marked. It is so gradual that you can select no points or sudden advances until the sun appears. The beholder knows it was once dark: he knows equally well that it is now light. "One thing I know," exclaimed the blind man to the hard question of the Pharisees, "that whereas I was blind, now I see." The child learning the alphabet, may not know when it is mastered. The thing of importance is, can he read?

So far as the soundness of the crisis of conversion is concerned, it makes no difference whether it is like the "torrent frozen in mid air," the "lightnings pinioned while playing across the clouds," or like the slow and gradual development of childhood into manhood. The only question that need concern us is, whether or not the heart is now devoted to God and to His service? Has there been a change of character or of citizenship? Are the chief interests transferred from this to the world to come? Have the sins with which he was laden disappeared? Does the man know that a change—a spiritual change—has actually taken place? Is the soul roused to its true dignity? If so, that is enough. The man has been converted. With no time specified, without a form to signalise it, without a whisper to proclaim it to the world, there will be joy in heaven. —*Townsend.*

(1425.) I think there are many and many persons that are Christians and do not know it.

My watch stops. Something is broken in it. I take it to the watchmaker, and he puts in a new mainspring. I do not know anything about it, except that he does it. And when it is repaired he lays it aside. Presently I go for my watch, and ask him if it is done. "Oh yes," he says, "but I do not know as it is going." And he takes it, and finding that it does not go, he winds it up. And then it does not go, perhaps; but he gives it a little turning shake, and it commences ticking and keeping time.

I know many persons who have a mainspring in them, and have been wound up, for that matter, but who have not been shaken yet! And there they are. If somebody would only take them up and whirl them round a few times, and say to them, "You are Christians; tick! *tick!*" they would commence keeping time, and go on keeping time. —*Beecher.*

(1426.) When the Spirit of God changes the heart, some persons want to be as much aware of it as when an arm is broken and the surgeon puts it in place: the bones crack as they go in again—some men want to feel the power of God's hand constraining them. A man feels pain and the doctor prescribes a bitter draught. He drinks it, and feels better in five minutes; he feels better and better until the attack passes away. So many feel they must have a deep and bitter conception of sin, and then come out of it all changed. Many are anxious to know when they were changed, and to be able to say, "Thursday, at nine o'clock at night, I was converted." To put their finger on that Thursday night is a great comfort which will go with them all their life long. I would not take it away from them, but if there are others who cannot say so, how is that?

A man is blind—the doctor performs an operation and puts the patient in a dark room while the eye is strengthening. He will not let a particle of light into the room till the inflammation is gone down. At first the doctor will let in just a film of light, then a little more to-morrow, and in a week he will let the room be full of a shaded and subdued light, and in a little time the man's eyesight is restored. Suppose you ask, "When did the man begin to see? Did he begin to see in one fortnight?" No. You cannot put your finger on the point where one moment the man was blind and the next he could see.

You cannot touch the dividing line, and will the man himself say, "I cannot see because I cannot say when I was healed?" He can say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," and when he can say that, he don't need to be very particular as to the moment when he began to see. —*Beecher.*

(1427.) There may be a change so gradual as to be imperceptible. When the thermometer falls forty degrees in twenty-four hours, men say, "What a change!" but when it falls forty degrees in three weeks, and only one or two degrees at a time, and it is hot to-day, and it is hot to-morrow, and the next day it is a little doubtful whether it is as hot or hotter, there is, though men do not perceive it, a time when the thermometer passes an intermediate point, on one side of which it is hot, and on the other side of which it is cold. Now, it is possible for a change to take place with such decisiveness that a man is conscious of it distinctly; and it is possible for a change to take place so quietly that a man is not conscious of it. And there are a great many men that have a religious tendency, that are blessed with Christian instruction, and that are guided by the Spirit of God to the new life, who are not conscious of the moment of time when they pass the line of decision, though they do pass it. —*Beecher.*

(1428.) Does it not strike you as being very foolish reasoning if you should say in your heart, "I am not converted because I do not know when?" Nay, with such reasoning as that, I could prove that old Rome was never built, because the precise date of her building is unknown; nay, we might declare that the world was never made, for its exact age even the geologist cannot tell us. We might prove that Jesus Christ Himself never died, for the precise date on which He expired on the tree is lost beyond recovery; nor doth it signify much to us. We know the world was made, we know that Christ did die; and so you, if you are now reconciled to God, if now your trembling arms are cast around that cross, you are saved, though the beginning was so small that you cannot tell when it was. Indeed, in living things it is hard to put the finger upon the beginning. Here is a fruit—will you tell me when it began to be? Was it at the time when first the tree sent forth its fruit-bud? Did this fruit begin when first the flower shed its exhalations of perfume upon the air? Indeed, you could not have seen if you had looked. When was it? Was it when the full-ripe flower was blown away, and its leaves were scattered to the wind, and a little embryo of fruit was left? 'Twas hard to say it did not begin before that, and equally hard to say

what precise instant that fruit began to be formed. Ay, and so it is with Divine grace, the desires are so faint at the beginning, the convictions are but the etchings upon the plate, which afterwards must be engraven with a harder instrument; and they are such flimsy things, with transient impressions of Divine truth, that 'twere difficult to say what is transient and what permanent, what is really of the Spirit of God and what is not; what hath saved the soul, or what only brought it to the verge of salvation; what made it really live, or what was really the calling together of the dry bones before the breath came and the bones began to live. Quit your fears, my hearers, upon this point, for if ye are saved, no matter when. —*Spurgeon.*

(1429.) It matters not if you cannot tell just when you became a Christian. If we sow a handful of wheat in our garden, we could not tell, though we watched it ever so narrowly, the exact moment when it germinated. But when we see the waving grain in the autumn we know it did germinate, and that is all we care for.

VI. *PROOFS OF ITS REALITY.*

1. A radical and thorough change of heart.

(1430.) There is no part of a man's nature which the gospel does not purify, no relation of his life which it does not hallow. . . . Christ did not cast six devils out of Mary Magdalene and leave one; He cast out all the seven. He did not partly cure the lame man at the pool of Bethesda; He made him every whit whole.

—*A. W. Hare*, 1784–1834.

(1431.) But, again, it is asked, "Is this birth from above such that we can always decide correctly whether the individual who makes the profession has in reality experienced the change? Will the conduct, at all times, unmistakably foreshadow it?" Go to the dress parade of a regiment. There are the soldiers,—under the same uniform, obeying the same commands, equally prompt and equally perfect in their execution. That is what appears to the eye. But one is a traitor, who will betray the command for thirty pieces of silver; another is a deserter, who leaves his companions alone in the long march and deadly encounter; another, whose outward conduct for a time is not more commendable, is a patriot, who is ready at every point and at every moment of peril to throw his blood and life into the defences of his nation.

Conversion, in many instances, may not much change the outward conduct; that depends upon what the conduct has hitherto been. But the heart-allegiance is changed. God knows—we do not—whether all those who are professing to follow Christ, who are acknowledged as Christians, are such in fact. The principle upon which He makes His decision is not that there has been a change in the outward deportment merely. He requires a radical and thorough change of the heart.

—*Townsend.*

2. Thankful acknowledgment of God's grace and mercy.

(1432.) The pardoned soul is a God-admirer; "Who is a God like Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" A man that goes over a narrow bridge in the night, and the next morning comes and sees the danger he was in, and how miraculously he escaped, he is stricken with admiration; so, when God shows a soul how near he was a-falling into hell, and how that this gulf is shut, all his sins are pardoned, he is amazed, and cries out, "Who is a God like Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?"

—*Watson*, 1696.

3. Hatred of sin.

(1433.) If friends have weapons in their hands, they will but play with them, but deadly enemies will seek the blood of one another. There is a difference between fencing and fighting for life. Though a man, that knoweth nothing of their meaning, might think a fencer is fighting in good sadness, seeing he seemeth to make as great a stir as if it were so indeed. Yet the issue will show you that it is otherwise, because you see that there is no bloodshed, nor men killed. So is it with a hypocrite in his seeming reformation; when he makes the greatest stir against his sin in confessing and prayer, and other means, yet he will not resolvedly cast it away, but he secretly useth it as his friend, while he openly abuseth it as his enemy; and he puts it into his bosom, while he calls it all to naught. He will not be brought unfeignedly to renounce it, and give it a bill of divorce, and cast it out as a man doth his vomit, with resolution never to take it in more. Oh, how sweetly doth he roll it in his thoughts in secret, when he frowneth upon it with the severest countenance! How easily is he drawn to it again and again, when he takes on him to repent of it and abhor it! But it is clean contrary with a man that is converted. Though the remnants of sin will remain in him while he liveth, yet as to the reign of it, he presently casteth it off, and biddeth defiance to it. He fighteth against it in good earnest, as knowing that either he or it must die. *Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. Holiness of life.

(1434.) A man's heart will persuade him that he is converted from a state of sin, when perhaps he is only converted from one sin to another; and that he has changed his heart, when he has only changed his vice. This is another of its fallacies, and that none of the least fatal and pernicious. A man has perhaps for a long time taken the full swing of his voluptuous humour, wallowed in all the pleasures of sensuality; but at last, either by age or design, or by some cross accident turning him out of his old way, he comes to alter his course, and to pursue riches as insatiably as formerly he did his pleasures, so that from a sensual epicure he is become a covetous miser; a worthy change and conversion indeed! But as a river cannot be said to be dried up because it alters its channel; so neither is a man's corruption extinguished, though it ceases to vent itself in one kind of vice, so long as it runs with as full and as impetuous a course in another.

Suppose among the Jews, a man had passed from the society of riotous and debauched livers, from the company of publicans and sinners, to the strictness and profession of the Pharisees, this man indeed might have been termed a new sinner, but not a new creature; he had changed his intemperance, or his extortion for the more refined sins of vainglory and hypocrisy; he had changed a dirty path for one more cleanly, but still for one in the same road. One man perhaps goes to a town or

a city through the fields, another through the highway, yet both of them intend and arrive at the same place, and meet and shake hands at the same market. In like manner, a man may pass as surely to hell by a sin of less noise and infamy as by one more flaming and notorious. And therefore he that changes only from one sin to another, is but the devil's convert, and the whole business of such a conversion is but a man's altering of the methods of his ruin, and the casting of his damnation into another model. —*South*, 1633–1716.

5. Growth in grace.

(1435.) All believers do grow in grace. And this ye know is the difference between a painted child and a living child; take a living child, and though he be but little and very weak, yet he grows bigger. But a child that is painted upon a wall grows not: and if a man come to you and say, What is the reason that this child does not grow? two or three years ago he was as big as he is now? you will easily answer, Because he is but a painted child, he is not a living child; if he were a living child he would grow. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(1436.) A violent motion is quick in the beginning, but slow in the end; a stone cast upward is then most weak when it is most high; but a natural motion is slow in the beginning, quicker in the end. If a man from a high tower cast a stone downward, the nearer to the centre the quicker is the motion. When a man at his first conversion is exceeding quick, but afterwards waxeth every day slower in the ways of goodness, his motion is not natural, but forced: otherwise, like a constant, resolved Christian, the longer he lives, and the nearer he comes to the mark, the more swiftly doth he run, the more vehemently doth he contend for that everlasting crown which he shall be sure to attain at his race's end. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(1437.) To say that personal religion is characterised by growth, is only another form of saying that the man who has it is spiritually alive. Growth in the animal and vegetable worlds is the sure sign, and the only sure sign of life. If a branch does not sprout, and put forth leaf and blossom in the spring, we know that it is a dead branch; the sap which is the life of the tree does not reach it, is not circulating through it. If an infant lives, it grows; increases in stature daily, while its features fill out gradually into that definite shape which they are to wear through life. But we need not restrict the remark to infants. The bodies of adults grow as really, though not as sensibly, as those of children. Particles of matter are continually flying off from our bodies, and being replaced by others; so that, according to a very old and often quoted computation, the whole mass of the human body undergoes an entire change; becomes, in fact, a new body once in every seven years. This constant discharge of old particles, and accretion of new ones, though accompanied with no change of feature or stature, is growth; and it is a sign of the vitality of the body. A dead body lacks the principle of life, by which alone nourishment can be taken in from air and food, and transmuted into the substance of the human frame.

Now we know that nature is everywhere a parable of grace. Its being so is the basis of all those beautiful illustrations which are called the parables of our Lord. And in the case before us, nature furnishes a most important parable of religious truth. There is no organic life without growth in nature; and there is no spiritual life without growth in grace. I say, no spiritual life, no continuous state of life, spiritual impulses there may be many. Impulses, however, are not life, though they may originate or restore life. —*Goulburn.*

VII. *NOT TO BE DELAYED.*

1. Because instant conversion is our duty.

(1438.) "But I do not know about submitting to God so suddenly. I must have time. Conversion is not a hasty but a gradual work."

How much time do you want? How much have you had? How long has God called and you refused, stretched out His hand and you have not regarded? What if you were sailing swiftly down Niagara's flood; would you ask for time to turn? What if your house were wrapped in flames; would you talk of gradual escape? What do you mean by a gradual conversion? Can a man gradually stop fighting? fire a few more guns as the war is over? gradually exchange his enmity to love? oppose God to-day, only not so violently as yesterday, and with less and less bitterness as time rolls on? What would become of the soul, he dying in process? Whose would it be, God's or Satan's? Sinner! God now commands you to repent. As the Roman ambassador drew a circle around the captive princes and bade them accede to his terms before they had passed its bounds, so God now requires an immediate accession to His overtures of mercy.

—*John Marsh.*

(1439.) When men grow virtuous in their old age, they only make a sacrifice to God of the devil's leavings. —*Pope.*

2. Because our position is so perilous.

(1440.) Consider but what a case you are in while you thus delay. Do you think you stand on dry ground, or in a safe condition? If you knew where you are, you would sit as upon thorns, as long as you are unconverted; you would be as a man that stood up to his knees in the sea, and saw the tide coming towards him, who certainly would think that there is no standing still in such a place.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1441.) While you are delaying, your judgment doth not delay, and when it comes, these delays will multiply your misery, and the remembrance of them will be your everlasting torment. As a man that is in a coach on the road, or in a boat on the water, whatever he is speaking, or thinking, or doing, he is still going on, and hastening to his journey's end or going down the stream: so whatever you think, or speak, or do, whether you believe it or mock at it, whether you sleep or wake, whether you remember it or forget it, you are hastening to damnation, and you are every day a day nearer to it than before; and it is but a little while till you shall feel it. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1442.) If thy dead heart were but well awakened to consider and feel thy own condition, thou wouldst be quickly affrighted out of thy delay, and run as hastily from thy state of sin, as thou wouldst out of a house all on fire over thy head, or out of a boat sinking under thee. What, hast thou not yet served

the devil long enough? Hast thou not yet sufficiently abused Christ, not oft enough rejected the grace of God! Hast thou not yet wallowed long enough in the filth of sin? But must thou needs have more of it? Hast thou not yet done enough to the destruction of thy soul? Not drunk in enough of that deadly poison, nor stabbed thyself sufficiently by thy wickedness, but thou must needs have more? Will sin come up easier, when it is deeper rooted? and canst thou more easily be converted, when thou hast driven away the Spirit of God that should convert thee? Wilt thou travel out of thy way till night, before thou wilt turn back again? And wilt thou drive the nail yet faster to the head, which thou knowest must be drawn out again? Oh, be not wilfully befooled by sin. Wilt thou be converted, or wilt thou not? If not, thou art a lost man. If thou know thou must, why not to-day rather than to-morrow? What reason have you for any longer delay? Is a state of sin, or a state of grace better? If sin be better, keep it, and make the best of it: but if grace, and happiness, and holiness be better, why then should you delay? If you were sick, you would not care how soon you were well: and if you had a bone broken, you care not how soon it were set, and when your soul is in a state of sin and misery, are you afraid of being safe and happy too soon? —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1443.) You may put God to it to fetch you in by some sharp affliction, and send out so churlish a messenger to call you home as may make you wish you had hearkened to a more gentle call; when the sheep will straggle, the dog must be sent to affright them home. Many foolish sinners make light of the gentle invitations of grace, and they stand hovering between their sins and Christ; and sometimes they have a mind to turn, and the next temptation they are off again, and then they come on again coldly and with half a heart; and thus they stand trifling with the God of heaven till He is fain to take another course with them, and resolves to use some sharper means; and when He layeth them under His rod, and they can neither fly from, nor resist Him, but see that their lives and souls are at His mercy, then they begin to look about them and see their folly, and change their minds. You can tarry, and delay, and dally with the dreadful God in the time of your prosperity, and we may ask you over and over, whether you will turn before we can have a hearty answer; but what will you do when God shall begin to frown, and when He takes you in hand by His irresistible power, and lets loose upon you the terrors of His wrath? Will you then make as light of His mercy as you do now? Have you not read how small an apparition of His anger did make a carousing king look pale, and his joints to tremble in the midst of his joviality? (Dan. v. 6.) A Manasseh will bethink himself and come in when he is laid in irons, though he could set light by God before. (2 Chron. xxxiii. 13.) If Jonah will run away from God, He can send a boisterous messenger to arrest him, and cast him as it were into the belly of hell, and make him cry for mercy to Him whom he disobeyed. So if you will stand trifling with God, and will not by fair means be persuaded to yield and come away, you may shortly look to hear from Him in another manner; for He hath a voice that will make the proudest face look pale, and the most stubborn heart to tremble. If an idle, stubborn child will not learn nor be ruled, the master or parent will teach him with the rod, and give him a lash, and ask him, "Will you yet learn?" and another lash, and ask him, "What say you now, will you yet obey?" So will God do by you, if He love you, and means to save you; when He hath taken away your wealth, your friends, your children, will you then hearken to Him or will you not? When you lie groaning on your couch, and all your parts are overwhelmed with pains, and death begins to lay hands upon you, and bids you now come and answer for your rebellions and delays before the living God, what will you do then? Will you turn or not? Oh, the lamentable folly of sinners, that put themselves to so much sorrow, and great calamity for themselves. When sickness comes, and death draws near, you beg, and cry, and groan, and promise: when you feel the rod, what Christians will you then be! And why not without so much ado? You then think God deals somewhat hardly with you, and why will you not turn then by gentler means? You might spare yourselves much of this misery if you would, and you will not. Is it a seemly thing for a man to be driven to heaven by scourges? Is God so bad a Master, and heaven so bad a place, that you will not turn to them and mind them, and seek them, till there be no remedy, and you are, as it were, driven to it against your will? Is the world such an inheritance, and sin so good a thing, and the flesh or devil so good a master, that you will not leave them till you are whipped away? What a shameful, unreasonable course is this?

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

3. Because life is so uncertain.

(1444.) To all who seek Him through a Redeemer, He is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath, abundant in goodness and in truth. Our highest interests, therefore, our present, and future, and eternal happiness, lie in yielding implicit and immediate obedience to the call, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." How does the lapse of years, the close of every day, enforce it? The setting sun; the clouds that, like the infirmities of age, gather round his sinking head; the fading light; the workman wending homeward, the peasant leaving his plough in the furrow, the weaver his shuttle on the loom; the larks that have dropped out of silent skies; the birds sitting mute on the branches; the flowers with their eyes closed and leaves folded up; the tenants of lone cottages and crowded city retiring to rest; and by and by the silence of a world wrapped in darkness and sleep—these are suggestive to a thoughtful mind of the close of life, the sleep of death, and our bed beneath a grassy sod. And each night that sun, whose lines go throughout all the earth, and his words to the ends of the world, with the heavens for his pulpit and the world for his audience, seems as he leaves us to say, "Work while it is called to-day, seeing that the night cometh when no man can work." —*Guthrie.*

4. Because the work will never be less difficult.

(1445.) A man that waits for a more convenient season for thinking about the affairs of his soul, is like the countryman in Æsop's fable, who sat down by a flowing river, saying, "If this stream continues to flow as it does now for a little while it will empty itself, and I shall walk over dry-shod." Ah, but

the stream was just as deep when he had waited day after day as it was before. And so shall it be with you. —*Spurgeon.*

5. Because delay multiplies its difficulties.

(1446.) Dost thou not find by experience that the longer thou delayeth, the farther thou wanderest from God and holiness, and the more unfit thou art for, and the more unwilling unto, the work of conversion? Is it not time therefore to turn with speed, when continuance in sin insensibly hardeneth thy heart, and gradually indisposeth it more to the work of repentance? As the ground, so is thy heart, the longer it lieth fallow, not ploughed up, the harder it will be. Wilt thou go one step farther from God, when thou must come back every step, and that by Weeping-cross all the way, or be damned for ever? The purchase of heaven is like buying the Sibyl's prophecies, the longer thou holdest off, the dearer. A stain which has been long in clothes is not easily washed out; a house that hath long run to ruin will require the more cost and labour for its reparation; diseases that have been long in the body are cured, if at all, yet with much difficulty. The devil which had possessed the man from his infancy was hardly cast out, and not without much renting and raging (Mark ix. 21–26). Satan thinks his evidence as good as eleven points at law, now he hath once got possession; and the longer he continueth commander-in-chief in the royal fort of thy heart, the more he fortifieth it against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. All the while thou delayest, God is more provoked, the wicked one more encouraged, thy heart more hardened, thy debts more increased, thy soul more endangered, and all the difficulties of conversion daily more and more multiplied upon thee, having a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1447.) It is true indeed there is in every man a moral indisposition to a spiritual renovation, but the indisposition is greater when the habits of sin are more than ordinarily strengthened. The more the soul is frozen, the harder it will be to melt. A body dead some few hours is a subject more capable of having life breathed into it than when it is putrefied and partly mouldered to dust. A young tree may more easily be taken up and transplanted than a strong old oak, which has spread its roots deep into the earth. The more rooted the habit of sin, the harder the alternation of the soul. Every sin in an unregenerate man is an adding a new stone to the former heap upon the grave to hinder his resurrection. It is a fetter and bond (Acts viii. 23); bond of iniquity, and the more new chains are put upon thee, the more unable wilt thou be to stir. The habits of sin will become the more natural to the soul, and fortify themselves with new recruits.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(1448.) The longer you stay, the more leisure you give the devil to assault you, and to try one way when he cannot prevail by another, and to strengthen his temptations: like a foolish soldier that will stand still to be shot at, rather than assault the enemy.

And the longer you delay, the more your sin gets strength and rooting. If you cannot bend a twig, how will you be able to bend it when it is a tree? If you cannot pluck up a tender plant, are you more likely to pluck up a sturdy oak? Custom gives strength and root to vices. A blackamoor may as well change his skin, or a leopard his spots, as those that are accustomed to do evil can learn to do well (Jer. xiii. 23). —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1449.) Men are apt to persuade themselves that they shall find it an easy matter to grow virtuous as they grow old. But it is a way of arguing highly irrational and fallacious. For that is a maxim of eternal truth, and nothing grows weak with age but that which will die at length with age, which sin never does. The longer a blot continues, the deeper it sinks. And it will be found a work of no small difficulty to dispossess and throw out a vice from that heart where long possessions begins to plead prescription. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(1450.) There is less hope for us each year and day we live in sin. Every hour we are drifting out to sea—the helpless, helmless barque is leaving the lessening shore farther and farther behind. Our disease becomes incurable. Like those stones which, though soft as clay on being raised from the quarry, grow hard as flint through exposure to the weather, our hearts are growing harder day by day.

—*Guthrie.*

(1451.) Sin is like the descent of a hill, where every step we take increases the difficulty of our return. Sin is like a river in its course; the longer it runs it wears a deeper channel, and the farther from the fountain it swells in volume and acquires a greater strength. Sin is like a tree in its progress; the longer it grows, it spreads its roots the wider; grows taller; grows thicker; till the sapling which once an infant's arm could bend raises its head aloft, defiant of the storm. Sin in its habits becomes stronger every day—the heart grows harder; the conscience grows duller; the distance between God and the soul grows greater; and, like a rock hurled from the mountain's top, the farther we descend, we go down, and down, and down, with greater and greater rapidity. How easy, for example, is it to touch the conscience of childhood; but how difficult to break in on the torpor of a hoary head! A child, with few sins on his young head, will tremble at the idea of death and judgment; while the old man lies on his dying bed, and whether you thunder in his ears the terrors of a broken law, or, holding up the cross before his dim eyes, tell him of the love of Jesus, no tears run down these furrowed cheeks, nor prayers move lips, whose oaths are recorded in the books of judgment.

I know that God, bending stubborn knees, and breaking the hardest heart, can call at the eleventh hour. Is anything too hard for Me? saith the Lord. He saves at the very uttermost. But I would say to him who tries how near he may go to hell, and yet be saved—it is a dangerous experiment—a desperate venture. It provokes God to recall His Spirit, and leave you to your fate, saying, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone." —*Guthrie.*

(1452.) Not without the strongest reason does the wise man address himself to the young, saying, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" for the difficulty of resisting the bad and corrupt passions of our nature grows with man's growth, and strengthens with his strength. Some

things become weak, and wear away by use; but not the power of sin. Like the muscles of a blacksmith's brawny arm, the more it is used the stronger it grows; and thus all sinners, as well as "seducers, wax worse and worse." The dead become twice dead; the dry bones more dry. Every new act of sin casts up an additional impediment in our way of return to virtue, and to God; until that which was once only a molehill swells into a mountain that nothing can remove, but the faith at whose bidding mountains are removed, and cast into the depths of the sea. —*Guthrie.*

(1453.) There is a sense in which the difficulties of conversion increase with years—every year adding strength to our sinful habits; deepening, as by the constant flow of water, the channels in which they run. —*Guthrie.*

(1454.) Who, wishing to give a sapling a peculiar bend, would wait till the nursling had become a full-grown tree, or stood in its decay, stiff and gnarled, hollow in the heart and hoar with age? None but a fool. Yet, with folly greater still, we defer what concerns our conversion, a saving change, and our everlasting welfare, till long years have added to the power, and strengthened the roots of every wicked, worldly habit! —*Guthrie.*

(1455.) It is painful now to tear the world from our hearts—when the love of it has grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength, when it has spread its roots wider, and struck them deeper, to tear it up will demand a mightier effort, and inflict a greater pain. If sin has already so seared the conscience, that we can hear another St. Paul reason of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment," nor tremble in our seats as the Roman trembled on his throne, in what state shall our conscience be when the sins of future years have passed over it like a hot iron—searing, till, all sensibility destroyed, it becomes as hard as horn; like callous flesh, which the knife finds it difficult to penetrate, and impossible to pain? This is no exaggeration. Of all tasks, we know none so difficult as to touch the feelings, and rouse the conscience of godless old age. —*Guthrie.*

6. Because delay is so foolish.

(1456.) In other cases, common sense prompteth men to proceed otherwise; for who, having rendered one his enemy that far overmatcheth him, and at whose mercy he standeth, will not instantly sue to be reconciled? Who, being seized by a pernicious disease, will not haste to seek a cure? Who, being fallen into the jaws of a terrible danger, will not nimbly leap out thence? And such plainly is our case; while we persist in sin we live in enmity and defiance with the Almighty, who can at His pleasure crush us; we lie under a fatal plague, which, if we do not seasonably repent, will certainly destroy us; we incur the most dreadful of all hazards, abiding in the confines of death and destruction; God frowning at us, guilt holding us, hell gaping for us: every sinner is, according to the wise man's expression, "as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast." And he that is in such a case, is he not mad or senseless, if he will not forthwith labour to swim out thence, or make all speed to get down into a safer place? Can any man with comfort lodge in a condition so dismally ticklish? —*Barrow,* 1630-1677.

7. Because late conversions are so rare.

(1457.) A pious old age, following a youth of vice and a manhood of worldliness and indifference to religion, is not the rule, but the exception—and a rare exception. There is a close analogy here between the phenomena of the material and the spiritual world; conversions in old age, or advanced manhood, being as uncommon as a fine afternoon with cloudless skies and a glowing sunset, unless the rain ceases, and the weather clear before twelve o'clock. —*Guthrie.*

(1458.) Judging by results, old age is, of all the ages of life, the least fitted for the work of salvation. No doubt we have read of hoary sinners becoming as little children, and turning to God; but in the experience of more than thirty years we have never met with one such case.

At the close of a dark and stormy day, we have seen the sun break forth at his setting, to bathe the whole landscape in a flood of glory, and having painted a rainbow on the storm-cloud, to sink to rest amid the odours of flowers, and the joyful songs of groves and skies. But whatever others may have done, we have met nothing corresponding to this in the realm of spirits; not one old man who lived the life of the wicked, and died the death of the righteous. I am not speaking of those who, in circumstances that were more their misfortune than their fault, had no opportunity of knowing the truth till they were old—who, like the penitent thief, perhaps received their first as well as last offer of a Saviour at death; never had Christ in their offer, as Simeon never had Him in his arms, till their eyes were dim, and their heads were gray with age. I speak of those who have gone Sabbath after Sabbath to the house of God, whenever Christ was brought forward, to reject Him, and cry, like the Jews of old, "We will not have this man to rule over us." —*Guthrie.*

8. Because the reality of late conversions is always doubtful.

(1459.) The possibility of conversion at the eleventh hour I do not deny; still, its reality is exceedingly doubtful.

Take the case, for instance, of a convicted thief. You find him where silver-plate, gold, and jewels glitter temptations on his eye. Alarmed, you reckon up your money, examine your treasures, to be agreeably disappointed. They are safe; and you naturally conclude that he has turned over a new leaf, and become an honest man. But, however, willing to judge charitably, how would your confidence in him vanish on discovering that his hands were shackled, and that, though it was in his heart, it was not in his power to rob you? So far as many gross vices are concerned, such is exactly the position of hoary-headed sinners. Age has frozen their passions, and unfitted them for pleasures after which they once "ran greedily;" and so many infirmities have come with years, that a regard to health, and to life itself, forcing them to refrain from debauchery, produces an apparent reformation. A boat rotten in every plank, and gaping at every seam, has to avoid the seas and swell that others brave; and it were death to old men to venture on debaucheries in which others indulge. Thus the decorum which

in some cases marks the closing years of such as had been notorious for vice, may be due to other causes than an inward, saving, and gracious change. The lion has not become a lamb when he has lost his teeth. —*Guthrie.*

(1460.) Here is a hoary penitent. Poor old man, he trembles to hear of death and judgment; his aged limbs carry him to what he once neglected—the house of God; the glasses through which he scans his Bible are bedewed and dimmed with tears; bitterly lamenting his sins, he warns others; and on knees unused to bend, pours forth prayers for pardon in tones of deepest earnestness. It seems cruel to entertain doubts of such a case. But what is it we doubt? Not that he is sorry for his sins, after a fashion; not but that he would give a world, which he must any way soon part from, to be saved. In this case we may cling to the hope that He who can save to the uttermost, has called him at the eleventh hour; still this sorrow may only correspond to what the felon feels for crimes which have brought him to the gallows, cut short a mad and guilty career. Sorrow for sin and wishes to be saved? What death-condemned man does not feel these? does not bitterly lament the hour he embrued his hands in blood? does not petition the crown to spare his life? would not give the world for a file to cut his chain; for a key to unlock his prison? Repentance for crimes at the foot of a gallows is not more open to suspicion than repentance for sins on the brink of a burning hell. —*Guthrie.*

(1461.) Solemn warnings have come from scaffolds: but no one standing on the brink of time, with the white cap on his head, and his feet trembling on the drop, as he made his last speech to the awe-struck crowd, ever uttered voice so full of warning as the recorded experience of the chaplain of a large gaol in England. With the death-bell slowly tolling, he had accompanied many to the scaffold, and also prepared not a few for execution who were unexpectedly reprieved. Of these a large number seemed to be converted. Their repentance appeared sincere; and had they suffered the penalty of their crimes, he and others would have believed that, whom earth rejected, Heaven in its mercy had received for the sake of Christ's righteousness; acquitting at its bar those whom man had condemned at his. But they were spared to lead a new life? Alas, no! Thrown back into the world, the reality of their conversion was put to the test. The glittering coin was tested, exposed to a fiery trial; and what deceived others, deceived perhaps themselves, proved counterfeit. With hardly an exception, all who seemed to be converted within the prison, under the shadow of the gallows—in circumstances to be condemned corresponding with old age and the closing days of life, returned to their former courses; went back like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. A melancholy fact! What a dark suspicion does it cast on late conversions? In these cases the sun that sets on this world may rise to shine in the better; but dark clouds obscure such a close of life; and so long as men will risk their souls on these desperate ventures, however trite the remark, it cannot be too often, or too loudly, or too solemnly repeated, that the Bible, which ranges over a period of four thousand years, records but one instance of a death-bed conversion—one that none may despair, and but one that none may presume. —*Guthrie.*

VIII. *IN WHAT SENSE IT IS INSTANTANEOUS.*

(1462.) When you are weighing things in the balance you may add grain after grain, and it makes no turning or motion at all till you come to the very last grain, and then suddenly that end which was downward is turned upward. When you stand at a loss between two highways, not knowing which way to go, as long as you deliberate you stand still; all the reasons that come into your mind do not stir you; but the last reason which resolves you sets you in motion. So it is (most often) in a sinner's heart and life; he is not changed (but preparing towards it) while he is deliberating whether he should choose Christ or the world. But the last reason which comes in and determines his will to Christ, and makes him resolve and enter a firm covenant with Him, this makes a greater change than even is made by any work in the world. For how can there be a greater than a turning of the soul from the creature to the Creator? So distant are the terms of this change. After this *one turning act* Christ hath that heart, and the main heart and endeavours of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new end, a new guide, and a new master. Before the flesh and the devil were his masters, and now Christ is his master. So that you must not think so meanly of the turning, determining, resolving act of grace, because it lieth but in a gradual difference naturally from common grace. If a prince should offer a condemned beggar to marry her, and to pardon her, and to make her his queen, her deliberation may be the way to her consent, and one reason after another may bring her near to consenting. But it is that which turns her will to consent, resolve, covenant, and deliver herself to him, which makes the great change in her state. Yet all the foregoing work of common grace hath a hand in the change, though only the turning resolution do effect it: it is the rest with this that doth it: as when the last grain turns the scales, the former do concur. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

IX. *MUST BE THOROUGH.*

(1463.) As a man purposing to destroy a tree, yet doth no more than lop off certain boughs, leaving the stump and root behind, deceiveth himself: even so, likewise, so long as concupiscence doth live in men. They may seem in the eyes of men to be great converts, if, of ignorant idiots, they are become such as have gotten some skill or knowledge; or as if, of drunkards, ruffians, adulterers, and such like, they have become sober and modest and of good behaviour—all this may be done before men, and yet the heart nothing altered before God; for there be many causes which may move men to seem outwardly to be godly, when the heart within is fraught with loathsome lusts, which make them still altogether abominable before God, and thus they have hereby gained nothing.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(1464.) If you do not go through with the work when you are upon it, you may make it more difficult than it was before you meddled with it, and make it a very doubtful case whether ever it will be

done. As it is with a wound: if you tamper with it with salves that are not agreeable to it, or are disorderly applied; or if you skin it over before it be searched to the bottom, it must be opened again, and will cost you double pain before it be cured. Or as I have seen it with some that have had a bone broken, or out of joint, and it hath been set amiss at first: Oh, what torments were the poor creatures fain to undergo, in having it broken, or stretched and set again, which might have been spared, if it had been thoroughly done at first. So, if you will shrink, and will not go to the quick, you will make your conversion much more difficult; you must be brought to it again, and fetch your groans yet deeper than before, and weep over all your former tears; your doubts will be multiplied; your fears and sorrows will be increased; and all will go sorer with you than at first. Oh what a case will you be in, when your sores must be lanced a second time, and your bones, as it were, broken again! Then you will wish you had gone through with it at the first.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1465.) That scholar is never like to read well that will needs be in his grammer before he is out of his primer. Cloth that is not wrought well in the loom will never wear well, nor wear long; so that Christian that has not a thorough work of grace begun deeply in his heart, will never wear well; he will shrink in the wetting, and never do much service for God. —*Mead*, 1629–1699.

X. *IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.*

(1466.) Conversion may be the work of a moment, but a saint is not made in an hour. Character—Christian character—is not an act, but a process; not a sudden creation, but a development. It grows and bears fruit like a tree, and, like a tree, it requires a patient care and unwearied cultivation.

(1467.) No man was ever converted to Christianity at one flash. No man ever built a house at a single blow, except in a summer dream. When we shut our eyes, and are architects of reverie, we can build worlds; we can multiply the dew-drop till it swings like a crystal sphere in the realms of space. We can create cities, we can cause millions of troops to spring up, we can populate heaven and earth, by reverie; but no man ever did anything worth doing—anything complex, large, noble—by reverie. Many suppose that when a man is converted by the power of God, the Spirit of God acts as the lightning acts—instantaneously. But suppose it does, did you ever know the lightning to strike a mountain and instantly clear away all the dross and leave nothing but pure gold, in the shape of coin, with the superscription of the government upon it, and waiting for men to use it? When you see the metal in a mountain set free by a stroke of lightning, you may expect to see a man set free from the circumstances of life by conversion with overpowering suddenness.

The conversion by which the Spirit of God starts a man, just starts him—that is all. It turns him away from the wrong direction. It turns him toward the right model. It gives his heart an inspiration for things higher, and then says to him, "Work out your salvation." —*Beecher.*

(1468.) Men wish to be converted so that the whole field shall be cleared, and so that they will have nothing to do but to go right forward in the new life. They believe, as it were, that if God will only touch the rock, and let the springs of sanctified affection gush out, then, just as soon as they have found their channel, their life will be like the running of a brook out of the mountains and through its channel, down to its destination, unchecked and undisturbed. They think that if they are once converted, they are converted for all time. It used to be taught that, once a deacon, always a deacon; once an elder, always an elder; once a minister, always a minister; and, according to this general scheme, once converted, always converted. And so men feel that when God takes hold of a man's heart, when the man is regenerated, when by the power of the Holy Ghost he is translated from the kingdom of Satan and darkness into the kingdom of light and of God's dear Son, it is a work that is completed. I say it is not a completed work.

Here is a man who has been lying around, a lazy vagabond, sucking his substance from those to whom he is related, and he is taken to the great West, put upon a hundred and sixty acres of ground, and told to work out his own living. He has his ground; he owns it; he is no longer one of the lazzaroni; and he goes to work on his farm. It is not converted yet. It has on it thorns and briers and weeds, and it brings him in nothing, at first; but he goes to work, and by his industry and application begins to develop its resources. He is an honest yeoman, he is the owner of property, and he has been converted from a street-beggar into a man of means and respectability; but his own conversion is not complete, any more than the conversion of his farm is complete, which he has begun to cultivate, but which needs much tilling to bring it to a state of perfection. When a man is converted, he has a new start—that is all. The work of his conversion is not carried through.

Now, no man was ever taken from darkness to light so that he saw clear through to the kingdom of glory at one glance. When a man is taken out of the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, the angel comes to him as he did to Peter, knocks off his chains, opens the door, and says, "Rise up and go out." And when he has risen up and gone out, he has to find his own way to his friends, and has to get his living as best he can.

In regard to religious things, men are under precisely the same necessity of drill and education, and of the application of means to ends, that they are in any other sphere of life. If a man, therefore, expects that there is any labour-saving conversion, he is greatly mistaken. —*Beecher.*

XI. *ITS RESULTS.*

(1469.) There are two classes of circumstances by which we are all surrounded. Temporal circumstances comprise the outward accidents of man's present life; spiritual circumstances consist of the relations in which he stands to eternity and God. The temporal surroundings are but as the little garden, with its gates and rails, around a shepherd's cottage, while the spiritual are as the everlasting mountains, that gird the horizon and touch the heavens—or as the grand march of the seasons, now bathing the windows with warm sunlight, now pelting the roof with rain or snow. Changes take place in the outwardly temporal

It is just like altering the tiny garden; the spiritual landscape all around is the same—the same dark hills, and the same cloudy heavens. Men rise from poverty to wealth, from obscurity to honour, but remain condemned by God's law, and subject to His righteous displeasure.

On the other hand, the outwardly temporal remains as it was. The dimensions of the seed-plot by the cottage door continue unchanged, but summer has followed winter, and the snows on the mountain have melted, and all nature has become another self, are seen in the golden and purple light of autumn's morning or eventide. And so a man may remain poor as he ever was—as neglected as he ever was; but God is no longer angry with him. His anger is turned away, and the whole universe to him has become changed—life's prospects, and especially eternity's, are completely different. —*Stoughton.*

XII. *WHY CONVERSIONS ARE SO RARE.*

(1470.) There are many in the community who stand quite disconnected from any true religious work, or any useful occupation of beneficence or of mercy, and are perpetually finding fault with churches, and with ministers, and with all the varied institutions which have sprung up under the gospel of Christ. And they would fain make us believe that the reason why they are not better, is that these things are so poor. But, after all, the reason why men are not truly spiritual and Christian, is not the incompetence of external institutions; it is not the poorness of preaching; it is not the imperfections of the Church; it is not the unadaptations in the external institutions of the religious world. It is that men have at heart an indisposition to conform to that by which they might go out of the animal and lower life, into the spiritual life. The trouble is in the men themselves, and not in the institutions that surround them. They are like sick children. Whatever the nurse may bring, whether it be of food, or of drink, or of some object of amusement, the child pushes it pettishly away. Nothing suits the child. It is not because the picture is not beautiful; it is not because the drink is not cooling and palatable; it is not because the food is not good: it is because the irritable nerve is such that nothing seems good, no matter how good it may be, and nothing seems desirable, no matter how attractive it may be. And there are hundreds of men in every community who refuse to bow down the pride of their nature, and who refuse to accept the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of the heart that they carry in them, although the reasons which they allege are reasons of exterior religion. —*Beecher.*

XIII. *HISTORY OF A CONVERSION.*

(1471.) While spending a week lately in the society of a great number of faithful pastors from the Canton of Vaud, one of them, at a public meeting, related to us the recent conversion of a lady in his parish. She was one of those who lived only for this world; the thoughts of her sins had never caused her uneasiness; she was careful and troubled about many things, but neglected the one thing needful. One night, while alone in her room, she saw the lamp which lighted it suddenly go out. Although she was alone, she said aloud, (thinking only of the accident which left her in the dark), "There is no oil in the lamp!" The words thus spoken, echoed in the room and sounded in her ears, but with a new sense. She recalled the parable of the five foolish virgins who had no oil, and whose lamps had gone out at the coming of the bridegroom; and from that moment, day and night, that word of God remained in her soul, as an arrow remains in the side of a stag who flies away from the hunters. It recurred to her constantly: "No, I have no oil in my lamp! My God! what will become of me? I have not Thy grace in my heart!" She was filled with fear; then she began to pray, and continued in prayer until God answered her favourably, and gave her His peace.

CONVICTION.

1. Its nature.

(1472.) Conviction of sin denotes something beyond the common views of the mind concerning its sins; and is always a serious, solemn, heartfelt sense of their reality, greatness, guilt, and danger. There is a total difference between merely seeing or understanding a subject, and feeling it. A man may contemplate, as a mere object of speculation and intellect, the downward progress of his own affairs towards bankruptcy and ruin, and have clear views of its nature and consequences, and still regard it as an object of mere speculation. Should he afterwards become a bankrupt, and thus be actually ruined, he will experience a state of mind entirely new, and altogether unlike anything which he experienced before. He now feels the subject; before he only thought on it with cool contemplation, and however clear his views were, they had no effect on his heart. His former views never moved him to due efforts for the prevention of his ruin; those which he now possesses would have engaged him, had they existed at the proper time for this purpose, in the most vigorous exertions. Just such is the difference between the common views of sin, and those which are experienced under religious conviction. What before was only seen, is now realised and felt. —*Sailer.*

2. The commencement of the Divine life in the soul.

(1473.) If a man be quite out of his way, what must be the first means to bring him in again? Why, a despair of ever coming to his journey's end in the way that he is in. If his home be eastward, and he be going westward, as long as he hopes he is in the right, he will go on; and as long as he so goes on hoping, he goes further amiss: therefore, when he meets with somebody that assures him that he is clean out of his way, and brings him to despair of coming home, except he turn back again; then he will return, and then he may hope and spare not. Why, sinner, just so is it with thy soul: thou art born out of the way to heaven; and in that way thou hast proceeded many a year; yet thou goest on quietly, and hopest to be saved, because thou art not so bad as many others. Why, I tell thee, except thou be brought to throw away those hopes, and see that thou hast all this while been quite out of the way to heaven, thou wilt never return and be saved! Who will turn out of his way while he hopes he is right?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1474.) Conviction is very necessary, and an excellent preparative to conversion; as ploughing fits the ground for sowing, so does this fit the heart for grace: and therefore the first work of the Spirit is to "reprove the world of sin."

—*Thomas Hall*, 1659.

3. Its design.

(1475.) As in a dangerous storm, the mariner will cast silk and satin overboard, and the most valuable things, rather than perish; even so God raises a storm of conviction in the man's conscience, that threatens everlasting shipwreck, that he may cast away his confidence and legal righteousness: that what things were gain to him, these he may count loss for Christ. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(1476.) Sir James Thornhill was the person who painted the inside of the cupola of St. Paul's, London. After having finished one of the compartments, he stepped back gradually to see how it would look at a distance. He receded so far (still keeping his eye intently fixed on the painting), that he was got almost to the very edge of the scaffolding without perceiving it: had he continued to retreat, half a minute more would have completed his destruction, and he must have fallen to the pavement underneath. A person present, who saw the danger the great artist was in, had the happy presence of mind to suddenly snatch up one of the brushes, and spoil his painting by rubbing it over. Sir James, transported with rage, sprang forward to save the remainder of the piece. But his rage was soon turned into thanks, when the person told him, "Sir, by spoiling the painting I have saved the life of the painter. You had advanced to the extremity of the scaffold without knowing it. Had I called out to you to apprise you of your danger, you would naturally have turned to look behind you, and the surprise of finding yourself in such a dreadful situation would have made you fall indeed. I had, therefore, no other method of retrieving you but by acting as I did." Similar, if I may so speak, is the method of God's dealing with His people. We are all naturally fond of our own legal performances. We admire them to our ruin, unless the Holy Spirit retrieve us from our folly. This He does by marring, as it were, our best works; by showing us their insufficiency to justify us before God. When we are truly taught of Him, we thank Him for His grace, instead of being angry at having our idols defaced. The only way by which we are saved from everlasting destruction, is by being made to see that "by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified." —*Salter.*

4. How it is effected.

(1477.) As in the night, by reason of the darkness, we cannot discern the spots we have on our faces, but when the light beginneth to appear, and we take a glass to behold ourselves therein, then they are discovered: even so, likewise, during the time that we are covered with the darkness of ignorance, the vices that dwell in us are hidden there; and oftentimes we think, being leprous and deformed, that we are beautiful and perfect, but our eyes being open and illuminated by the Spirit of God, and taking the glass of the law, therein to behold the state of our nature and our life, then we begin to know the grievous imperfections that are in us, and we at once lose the opinion which we had conceived of our own righteousness, and perceive what danger we were in before.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(1478.) Let me illustrate my way of convicting persons of sin. How would I attempt to convict a person of ignorance? If a little sprig of a fellow comes where I am, thinking that he knows everything, and that he is going to teach me everything, it is not necessary for me to say to him, "You are a popinjay, sir; you are a conceited fool!" One of the best ways to deal with him is to assume that he knows everything. I introduce one subject, and assume that he is familiar with it, and question him upon it till he begins to say to himself, "I do not know quite as much as I thought I did." I at once pass from that to another subject, and assume that he knows something on that, and push him along till he begins to boggle, and feel that he is not half so wise as he thought he was. And by the time I have swamped him on half-a-dozen subjects, he will be quite crestfallen, and have some idea of his ignorance.

And if a man comes to me and says, "I cannot see that I am a sinner," I say, "Then you do not need any change nor repentance. But you ought to act like a Christian, if you cannot see that you are a sinner. Do you pray?" "Well, I—yes." "Do you enjoy prayer?" "I cannot say that I do." "But why not?" "Well, my thoughts wander, and I do not seem to be speaking to anybody, and nobody seems to hear me." "Ha! you do not think that you are sinful; but the moment you attempt to speak to God He is nothing to you, and you are nothing to Him. You are from Him; and your breath is from Him; the bounties that every day shower upon you are from Him; and yet, according to your own admission, nothing is so foreign to your nature as communion with Him; and when you address a few words to Him, your thoughts are roving from one end of the earth to the other!" "And how is it," I say, "in respect to Christ, His sacrifice, His resurrection, and His ascension? What are your feelings towards Him?" "Well, I want to love the Saviour." "*Do* you love the Saviour?" "I cannot say that I do." "You profess to have no sense of sinfulness, and yet you admit that you have no love toward the Saviour who died for you, and who, having ascended to heaven, there intercedes in your behalf!" But I say still further, "Take the idea of a Christian life as the rule of your conduct, and attempt to govern yourself by the law of gentleness, meekness, and love for one day." The moment he does this he finds himself in difficulty; and at the end of the day he comes back and says, "Oh, I broke it here, and I broke it there. I found myself unequal to the task." I do not care which one of the fundamental precepts of Christ a man undertakes to follow, he needs undertake to follow it but one day to have revealed to him the barrenness of his spiritual life and the sinfulness of his nature. —*Beecher.*

5. Should instantly lead to action.

(1479.) The sooner we turn to the ways of God, the better we speed. How so? Partly in this, that the work goes on the more kindly as being carried forth in the strength of the present influence and impulsion of grace; whereas, if the heart grow cold again, it will be more difficult. A blow when

the iron is hot does more than ten at another time when it grows cold again : so when thy heart grows cold, thou wilt not have that advantage as when thou art under warm conviction.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(1480.) Of all things in the world, do not wait to see if your convictions will not do something of themselves. When the dairyman brings in his overflowing pail from the yard, and pours the milk into the pans, and sets them on their various shelves, there is nothing better than that these pans should stand still, that the cream may rise; and many people seem to treat their hearts as though they were pans of milk, which should stand still while the cream rises on them. But nothing comes from involuntary life. "*Work out*," says God, "your *own* salvation." It is not passivity, but *activity*, that befits the nature of that which you carry within yourselves. Therefore, if you have a yearning desire for something, carry it forward and ratify it.

Do you ask what you shall do? One of the first things I exhort every man to do is this: Look and see what sin, what hindrance, what entanglement, what yoke or bondage, there is in you. *Begin* that way, but do not feel that the work is accomplished when you have done that. That is only the preparation. As, when a person that is working in mortar or clay is summoned to go and see a friend, he begins by throwing off his working-clothes and washing his hands as a preliminary step to getting ready, so a man who is going to see God should begin to prepare himself by breaking off his outward sin. If it is love of liquor, if it is any dishonest trait, if it is any cherished hatred, if it is any bitter animosity, if it is any illicit attachment, if it is an entanglement of any kind, the first step for you is to cut loose from it. If it requires you to break with companions that are leading you on in sin, break with them at once. Nothing will test a man's earnestness quicker than this. If you do that, you are in a state in which, even though you are not a Christian, there is much hope for you.

—*Beecher.*

(1481.) My friends, consideration is a good thing; but if I were in a railway car, and had gone over a cliff, and were rolling down, and down, and down, and the stove had begun to pour its coals out, and the flames were beginning to take hold of everything that was combustible, and I saw that there was a chance to get out, I should lose no time in attempting to escape; and if a man should pull me by the skirt and say, "Consider, my friend, consider," I would say, "Let me get out first, and then I will consider." Suppose, finding your dwelling in flames, and yourself in imminent danger of being consumed or suffocated, you should make haste to escape, and a man should say to you, "It is all right to be concerned about yourself, but consider." Consider? What! when a man stands under an avalanche, and hears the crash coming down, and runs to get out of its way, and some one says to him, "Stop, consider," which is the fool under the circumstances? When a man sees that there is danger before him, and that he is moving toward it, there is an instinct of self-preservation which is aroused, and which should not be disregarded. And there is a self-preserving instinct given to the spirit as much as to the body. And such a time is a time, not for consideration, but for action. When your soul is in danger, flee. Flee for your life. Do not wait, nor even look back. The very object of haste is to rescue men before the fascination of evil, which has been broken, shall return.

There are bays along rocky coasts. Where promontories stretch out, a bay runs in. When the tide is out, it is charming to walk about on the sand. But when the tide comes in there is danger, unless one is on the alert. For it comes stealing in almost imperceptibly, and often shuts off the promontories long before it runs up into the bay. And if a man is amusing himself there with no heed and no outlook, the insidious tide, which comes in sweet as the blossoming of a flower, but with all the power of the ocean behind it, will overtake him. If he does not flee before the promontories are shut off, he will never flee. It is *now or never* with him. There is many and many a man hemmed in between two promontories which invite the tide and the ocean. Now is your time to escape. If you wait till the tide comes in, you will be drowned. If there are any here in whom the tide of appetite, or the tide of passion, or the tide of infatuation for gambling, or the tide of corruption, is out, now is the time for you to flee. Do not wait for it to come back again. Be precipitate, and save your souls. —*Beecher.*

(1482.) A man who feels that he is sinful in such a sense that he needs God's forgiving mercy, and that sinfulness in him is of such a nature that he needs God's help to overcome it, has a sense of sin that is deep enough for practical exigencies. How strongly must he feel who has this sense of his sin, and of his need of the influence of the Divine nature in his character and conduct? In other words, how intensive must be that conviction? It must be intense enough to lead him to make exertion, and the needed exertion, to escape from the evil, and go toward the good. How heavy must the wind blow to take a man out of the harbour of New York? Must it blow twenty knots an hour? Well, that will take him out easily. Fifteen knots? Yes, that will take him out. Ten knots? That will take him out too. Five knots? Yes, he will get out with that. But suppose the wind blows but one knot an hour? Well, it is better to go out with one knot an hour than not to go out at all.

How much must a man feel the hatefulness and malignity of sin? How much must he feel the danger of sin? What stress of conviction must a man have in order that that stress may carry him away from lethargy, and indifference, and neglect, and low desires? Not so much as many suppose. If it does carry him away from these things, it is sufficient. It would be easier if the outflow were strong. Nevertheless, the lowest measure of religious experience is enough, if a man avail himself of it, and flee from selfishness and pride, and take the help of God which is proffered to him.

—*Beecher.*

6. Should lead us to Christ.

(1483.) Suppose one of your children has offended you, and you say to him, "Come, my dear, I freely forgive you; come and give me a kiss, and it is all over." He shakes his head, and says, "No, father, I cannot kiss you;" and he runs away upstairs and shuts himself up. You knock at the door, and say,

"Come, my child, come and kiss me, and it is all forgiven." But he shakes his head and says, "No, never." He shuts himself up there all alone, and he thinks he is doing more to put away your anger by so doing than by obeying your command. You say to him solemnly, "My child, I will chasten you again for disobedience if you do not come and accept the forgiveness which I offer to you if you will but kiss me." The child sullenly says, "No, father, I will do something else that is more humbling;" and then you feel in your soul that that is an unhumbled child or else he would at once do what his father told him, without thinking whether it would be a humiliating thing or not. It would be a humbling thing because his father told him to do it, and if he were a right-minded child he would do it from a spirit of obedience. Now, you may think it very humble on your part to want to feel a great deal of conviction, and to shed a great many tears, and to pray a great many prayers, but the most lowly thing you can do is to perform what the Master tells you. "Trust me," saith He; "do not go over there to weep; come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." —*Spurgeon.*

(1484.) I will tell you a little anecdote which I have often told before; it brings to your mind more clearly than any other means your right to believe in Christ. I am speaking to those who say, "I have no right to trust Christ." But if Christ commands you to do it, and if, moreover, He tells you, "you are condemned already because you do not believe." You certainly have a right to believe. Sitting one day in court with a judge interesting myself with some trials that were going on, there was wanted a witness. I am not clear about his name, but I think it was Brown. So it was said from the bench that Brown was wanted next. The usher down in the court cried out, "Brown!" Some one near the door cried, "Brown!" and I could hear them calling out in the street two or three times, "Brown! Brown! Brown!" The court was very crowded. By-and-by there came in at the court door, with a great deal of difficulty, a little, ugly, mean-looking creature. He came pushing and elbowing his way. There was a fine, tall gentleman standing in the court, looking on. He did not like to be pushed about, and he said in a very peremptory manner, "Who are you?" "Brown," said the man, "I am Brown." "Well, but," said the other, "who is Brown?" "Nobody," said he, "only I was told to come." It was wonderful how everybody made way for Brown, because he was told to come. They just cleared a lane for him, and I do not suppose for my lord and duke they would have made room, they were so tightly packed; but Brown must come in anyhow, because he was wanted. It did not matter how poor he looked, how ragged, how greasy, how dirty, Brown was wanted and he had a right to come. So now, God commands you to trust Christ. But you say, "There is a big sin standing up." And He says, "Who are you?" You say, "A poor sinner." "And what is a poor sinner?" says He. "Nothing at all," you say; "but Jesus Christ told me to trust in Him. If He is wrong I leave the blame with Him, I will not keep back from Him." —*Spurgeon.*

7. Saving conviction is thorough.

(1485.) As knives and lancets must first be used to open that wound which is full of corruption, even to the bottom, and then sharp and bitter salve to draw out the corruption and to eat out the dead flesh thereof, before there come any healing plaster near it, the nature whereof is to close up and skin the upper part of the wound, which, if any corruption remain, afterwards breeds much inconvenience and makes the wound far more dangerous: even so it fareth with all those who are wounded with the venomous dart of self-love, which wound, being choked with the corruption and dead flesh of covetousness and pride, they yet will use no other medicine for the curing thereof than that pleasant healing salve of the Gospel, which, if they knew in truth how little the same did profit them before such time as the sharp lancing knife of God's law had opened the wound, and the bitter salves of His judgments and sharp threatenings had eaten out the rottenness thereof, they would go another way to work, and use a more suitable course for the obtaining of health, although it be very tedious and sharp at the first. —*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(1486.) The soul in this great work is convinced and sensible, as of the evil of sin, so of its own misery by reason of sin. They who before read the threats of God's law, as men do the whole stories of foreign wars, or as they behold the wounds and the blood in a picture, or piece of arras, which never makes them smart or fear: now they find it is their own story, and they perceive they read their own doom, as if they found their names written in the curse, or heard the law say, as Nathan, "Thou art the man." The wrath of God seemed to him but as a storm to a man in a dry house, or as the pains of the sick to the healthful stander-by, or as the torments of hell to a child that sees the story of Dives and Lazarus upon the wall; but now he finds the disease is his own, and feels the pain in his own bowels, and the smart of the wounds in his own soul. In a word, he finds himself a condemned man, and that he is dead and damned in point of law, and that nothing was wanting but mere execution to make him most absolutely and irrecoverably miserable. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1487.) This conviction is not by mere argumentation, as a man is convinced of the verity of some inconcerning consequence by dispute; but also by the sense of our desperate misery, as a man in famine of the necessity of food; or a man that had read or heard his sentence of condemnation, is convinced of the absolute necessity of pardon; or as a man that lies in prison for debt, is convinced of the necessity of a surety to discharge it. Now the sinner finds himself in another case than ever he was aware of; he feels an insupportable burden upon him, and sees there is none but Christ can take it off. He perceives that he is under the wrath of God, and that the laws proclaim him a rebel and an outlaw, and none but Christ alone can make his peace: he is a man pursued by a lion, that must perish, if he find not present sanctuary. He feels the curse doth lie upon him, and upon all he hath for his sake, and Christ alone can make him blessed: he is now brought to this dilemma, either he must have Christ to justify him, or be eternally condemned; he must have Christ to save him, or burn in hell for ever; he must have Christ to bring him again to God, or be shut out of His presence everlastingly; and now no wonder if he cry as the

martyr Lambert, "None but Christ! none but Christ!" It is not gold, but bread, that will satisfy the hungry; nor anything but pardon that will comfort the condemned. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

8. Abortive convictions.

(1488.) What makes convictions prove abortive? Wherein is the defect?

1. They are not deep enough: a sinner never saw himself lost without Christ; the seed that wanteth depth of earth withered. These convictions are like blossoms blown off before they come to maturity.

2. These convictions are involuntary; the sinner doth what he can to stifle these convictions; he drowns them in wine and mirth; he labours to get rid of them: as the deer when it is shot, runs and shakes out the arrow; so doth he the arrow of conviction: or as the prisoner that files off his fetters, and breaks loose; so a man breaks loose from his convictions. His corruptions are stronger than his convictions.

3. Men have some kind of humiliation, and have shed tears for their sins, therefore now they hope the kingdom of grace is come into their hearts. But this is no infallible sign of grace; Saul wept, Ahab humbled himself. —*Watson*, 1696.

9. The duty of those who are under conviction.

(1489.) When a man is under conviction of sin, and is on the point of deciding for Christ, it is a perilous thing for him to throw himself where pleasures may entice, where indulgences may solicit, where anything may come in to unsettle his purpose. It takes very little to carry down the scale when it stands at equipoise. Very often the least thing will do it.

I say this because I have been so long a time dealing with men that I know what their feelings are, and I know that such warning is often needed when men are serious-minded; when they are very near to the kingdom of God—as near as some of you are to-night—so near that it would take the merest pressure of the hand to bear them over the line, and within the sacred precinct. Men ridicule us sometimes, who do not well consider what they say, and who do not understand the nature of moral qualities, when we say to a man, "Withhold yourself even from lawful pleasures; do not go into company which at other times you might properly keep; God's Spirit strives with you; your heart is brought into such a temper, and under such influences, that that which would be perfectly allowable at another time, is not wise at this crisis." As, when a person is sick, diet which in health is perfectly right is bad for him; so when a man is coming back to himself and to his Saviour, there are many things which he ought not to do, because in such critical hours and moments little things go so far.

When guides are taking men along Alpine stretches in the forenoon, when the sun has begun to shine, and the vast avalanches lie above, they will not let them speak, and say to them, as they begin to make the turn, "While going round this ravine on the narrow path, let no man say a word." And so they go on in silence, one after another. Why? Because so exactly balanced, sometimes, is the avalanche, that the echo, and the vibration of the air which is produced, will be just what is necessary to break the last icicle that holds it, and down will come the avalanche. At other points in the passage they may shout as loud as they please, and it will do no harm; but there are critical points where the guide says, "Hush, and do not even whisper." It is a very little thing; but oh! does it not take hold of tremendous consequences?

A companion that is good for hours of health may be a bad companion for hours of sickness. A companion that is good for ordinary times may, at certain critical times of a man's moral history, be ruinous, not intending it. Thousands of men have been destroyed in this world, I doubt not, who never knew, nor suspected even, that it was the smallest circumstance that determined their destruction. As trains are destroyed by the movement of a switch no more than the tenth part of an inch, so little things often determine, at critical periods, men's fate for time and for eternity.

—*Beecher.*

10. Is deepened by every attempt to obey the law of God.

(1490.) The first attempt which he makes to govern himself according to the laws of God will show to him the incredible power and control which pride has gained in him. And when he undertakes to govern that pride, he will have a sense of its ungovernableness which perhaps he never had before.

There is a five-year-old colt in the pasture. I call him to me. I shake the oats in the measure. I feed him. He eats out of my hand. And I say, "Talk to me about this colt's being fractious! See how docile he is." I lead him into the yard. I put the harness on him. I undertake to drive him. Oh, how docile he is now! The moment he feels the harness how he rears and plunges! How fractious he is! He is unwilling that anybody but himself shall have the control of him. You could not bring out his spirit till you laid the harness on him.

A man thinks himself to be all right. Yes, so waters that flow almost on a level, singing and murmuring as they go, suppose they are all right. But lay across their channel an obstruction so that they cannot move just as they wish. How they begin to plunge over that obstruction, with hoarse plaints! If you let man's pride and selfishness run as they want to, they do not make any report. So long as they are undisturbed they are quiet enough. But lay upon them the law of God, attempt to bring them into subjection to the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, say to them, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself," and see how they will like that. Let them undertake to put that rule in practice. Let pride subscribe to it; let vanity subscribe to it; let avarice subscribe to it; let passion and temper, in all their vagaries, subscribe to it. Let envy and jealousy come up and submit themselves to it. When a man does that, he will find that he has a different nature to deal with. If you do it yourself, you will find how hard it is for a man to live according to the law of God. —*Beecher.*

CREATION.

1. Is at once a proof of the being, and a revelation of the character, of God.

(1491.) If there were beings who lived in the depths of the earth, in dwellings adorned with

statues and paintings, and everything which is possessed in rich abundance by those whom men esteem fortunate; and if these beings could receive tidings of the might and majesty of the gods, and could then emerge from their hidden dwellings through the open fissures of the earth to the places which we inhabit; if they could suddenly behold the earth and the sea and the vault of heaven; could recognise the expanse of the cloudy firmament, and the might of the winds of heaven, and admire the sun in his majesty, beauty, and radiant effulgence; and lastly, when night veiled the earth in darkness, they could behold the starry heavens, the changing moon, and the stars rising and setting in the unvarying course ordained from eternity, they would surely exclaim, "There are gods! and such great things must be the work of their hands." —*Aristotle:* Quoted by *Humboldt* in his *Cosmos.*

(1492) As a prisoner in a dungeon may easily, by a little beam that shineth in at a chink, conceive there is a sun, from whence that beam descendeth; or as a traveller in the wilderness, that falleth upon some channel or brook, may ascend by the same to the well or fountain: even so he that beholdeth and considereth the wonderful works of the world may thereby conceive of the wonderful Artificer or Worker that made them.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1493.) The visible world and every part of it is a book, wherein we may read some syllables of God. The heathens saw God in heaven, earth, fire, water, plants, and animals; all creatures being lines drawn from the centre. Though man has not the knowledge which Adam had, since the flaw he contracted upon his understanding, yet there being some scattered relics of this knowledge, he may, by looking near to the creatures, discern, by his purblind and dim sight, something of the attributes of God, every creature being a glass which reflects some beams of God upon his mind; for no man in his wits can conclude that the world was made by chance, but by some being more wise than any being in the world can be, or than all the wisest men in the world put together. We know the courage, conduct, and power of a general by the sight of his conquests, the skilfulness of an artificer by the excellence of his work, and the eloquence of an orator by reading his speech, though we never saw the faces of any of them. There are very few attributes but the works of creation and providence discover in some measure to us; the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. i. 20).

We may as truly conclude all this of God, by the prospect of the creation, as a man might conclude the wisdom, power, and magnificence of the Romans by sight of their pyramids, theatres, statues, buildings, and other conveniences in the city for the people; for it is a rational way of arguing, from the excellency of the effect to the excellency of the cause, and from the perfection of the creature to the perfection of God.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(1494.) The philosopher conjectured truly, who, being shipwrecked on the island of Rhodes, and come to the shore, spying some mathematical figures drawn on the sand, cried out with joy, "Vertigia hominum vides," I see the footsteps of men, and comforted his despairing companions, that they were not cast into a desert, or place of savages, but of men civil and wise, as he discovered by those impressions of their minds. And if we observe the frame of the world, the concatenation of the superior with the middle, and of the middle with the lower parts, whereby it is not an accidental aggregation of bodies, but an entire universe: if we consider the just disposing them conveniently to their nature and dignity, the inferior and less noble depending on the superior, and that so many contrary natures with that fidelity and league of mutual love embrace and assist each other, that every one working according to its peculiar quality, yet all unite their operations for one general end, the preservation and benefit of the whole, must we not strongly conclude that it is the work of a designing and most wise agent?

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

2. Its revelation of God is necessarily imperfect.

(1495.) All nature is incapable of discovering God in a full manner as He may be known. Nature, like Zaccheus, is of too low a stature to see God in the length and breadth, heighth and depth, of His perfections. The key of man's reason answers not to all the wards in the lock of those mysteries. The world at best is but a shadow of God, and therefore cannot discover Him in His magnificent and royal virtues, no more than a shadow can discover the outward beauty, the excellent mien, and the inward endowments of the person whose shadow it is. All that a shadow will inform me of, is whether it be the shadow of a man or brute. It discovers something of God, not so much of Him as to give the soul a full complacency; the fruit of it is but a thirst without a satisfaction. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(1496.) Nature discovers that there is a God, but not fully what that God is; nor does the creation furnish man with a notion of God suitable to the excellency and immensity of His nature; as a blind man who hears a discourse of the light and heat of the sun, being brought under the beams of it striking hot upon his body, feels the warmth and knows there is such a thing men call the sun, and is sensible of some effects of it, but has not a full conception of the enlightening nature of the sun, nor knows what the body of the sun is, nor what kind of shape it appears in, and if he should declare his conception of it, it would be strangely different from the true nature of the sun, a monstrous mistaken description of it, not suitable to that planet; nay, what man is there that sees the sun every day, that is able to say he fully knows the nature of it by his sight, or the constant influences which he feels from it?

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(1497.) Though the earth is crowded with proofs of the Divine beneficence, yet the worldly man sees but a glimpse of it; he is as one standing only upon the threshold of the temple which records God's goodness. But the true believer is one who has entered its sacred walls, and mingled with its worshippers. The great display, "the unspeakable gift," remains *within.* While its walls are filled

with testimonies of goodness infinite, on the altar of sacrifice he sees inscribed, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Now he can exclaim, "Herein is love!" It is he that can say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." —*Salter.*

3. It is all "very good."

(1498.) Every one of God's works is so profitable, that, as the aromatic fruit, not only is the kernal a nutmeg, but the skin of it is mace. As in a fair suit of arras, though the hangings never appear to their full advantage, but when they are opened in all their dimensions, and seen together, yet a small shred may assure you of the excellency of the colour and the richness of the stuff; so, though the Divine perfections would appear most in their beauty and glory, if we were able at one view to behold the whole world in its several eminences and beauties, yet a little part of it may speak the worth and richness of the whole.
—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1499.) We can never neglect the meditation of the creatures without a blemish cast on the Creator's wisdom. As every river can conduct us to the sea, so every creature points us to an ocean of infinite wisdom. Not the minutest of them but rich tracts of this may be observed in them, and a due sense of God result from them.

The whole world is like a looking-glass, which whole and entire represents the image of God, and every broken piece of it, every shred of a creature, doth the like. His name is glorious, and His attributes are excellent in all the earth, as the glory of the sun is in every beam and smaller flash; He is seen in every insect, in every spire of grass.
—*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

(1500.) If God be the Creator and cause of all, then we must remember that all His works are good; and therefore nothing must be hated by us that He hath made, considered in its native goodness. God hateth sin, and so must we: for that He made it not (Rev. ii. 6; Ps. xlv. 7; Isa. i. 14). And He hateth all the workers of iniquity as such (Ps. v. 5); and so must we, but we must love all of God that is in them, and love them for it. That is somewhat good and amiable in every creature; yea, all of it, that is of God. Though toads and serpents are odious to us, because they are hurtful, and seem deformed in themselves, yet are they good in themselves, and not deformed as parts of the universe; but good unto the common end. The wants in the wheels of your watch are as useful to the motion as the solid parts. The night is part of the useful order of the creation as well as the day. The vacant interspace in your writing is needful as well as the words; every letter should not be a vowel, nor every character a capital; every member should not be a heart, or head, or eye; nor should every one in a commonwealth be a king, or lord: So in the creation the parts that seem base are useful in their places, and good unto their ends. Let us not, therefore, vilify or detest the works of God, but study the excellences of them, and see, and admire, and love them as they are of God.
—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1501.) He that considers how little our constitution can bear a remove into parts of this air not much higher than we breathe in, will be satisfied that the All-Wise Architect has suited our organs and the bodies that are to affect them, one to another.
—*Locke.*

4. Its inequalities are not imperfections.

(1502.) God determined His power by His wisdom, and although His absolute power could have made every creature better, yet His ordinate power, which in every step was regulated by His wisdom, made everything best for its designed intention. A musician has a power to wind up a string on a lute to a higher and more perfect note in itself; but in wisdom he will not do it, because the intended melody would be disturbed thereby if it were not suited to the other strings on the instrument; a discord would mar and taint the harmony which the lutinist designed. God in creation observed the proportions of nature; He can make a spider as strong as a lion, but, according to the order of nature which He has settled, it is not convenient that a creature of so small a compass should be as strong as one of a greater bulk. God's power is always regulated by His wisdom and will, and though it produces not what is most perfect in itself, yet what is most perfect and decent in relation to the end He fixed. —*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

(1503.) It is true, indeed, that there are degrees of perfection in the creatures, and God is not equally good to all of them. Those creatures which are of more noble and excellent natures, and to which He hath communicated more degrees of perfection, they partake more of His goodness, and are more glorious instances of it; but every creature partakes of the Divine goodness in a certain degree, and according to the nature and capacity of it. God, if He pleased, could have made nothing but immortal spirits; and He could have made as many of these as there are individual creatures of all sorts in the world; but it seemed good to the wise Architect, to make several ranks and orders of beings, and to display His power, and goodness, and wisdom, in all imaginable variety of creatures, all of which should be good in their kind, though far short of the perfection of angels and immortal spirits.

He that will build a house for all the uses and purposes of which a house is capable, cannot make it all foundation, and great beams and pillars; must not so contrive it, as to make all rooms of state and entertainment; but there must of necessity be in it meaner materials, rooms and offices for several uses and purposes, which, however inferior to the rest in dignity and degree, do yet contribute to the beauty and advantage of the whole. So in this great frame of the world, it was fit there should be variety and different degrees of perfection in the several parts of it; and this is so far from being an impeachment of the wisdom or goodness of Him that made it, that it is an evidence of both.
—*Tillotson*, 1630-1694.

5. In what spirit it is to be studied.

(1504.) You must carefully note, that the dependence of the creature on God, is not to be fully manifest by the dependence of any creature upon another. The line is locally distant from the centre; and the streams are locally distant from the spring, though they are contiguous, and have the dependency of an effect. But God is not local, and so not locally distant from us. The nearest similitude is that of the

body's dependence on the soul (which yet doth fall exceeding short). In God both we and every creature do live, and move, and have our being. As no man of reason will talk to a corpse, nor dwell and converse with any man merely as corporeal, without respect to the soul that doth animate him, nor will he fall in love with a corpse; so no man that is spiritually wise (so far as he is so) will once look upon any creature, much less converse with it, or fall in love with it, barely as a creature, conceiving it as a thing that is separated from God, or not positively conceiving of God as animating it, and as being its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and end, its principal efficient, and ultimate final cause, at least. For this were to imagine the carcase of a creature, and to conceive of it as such a thing as is not in being. For out of the God of nature the creature is nothing, nor can do anything; for there is no such thing; even as out of Christ the Lord of spiritual life and grace the new creature is nothing, and we can do nothing; for there is no such new creature.

You have here the very difference between a carnal and a spiritual life. The carnal man doth see only the carcase of the world, and is blind to God, and seeth not Him, when he seeth that which is animated by Him. But the spiritual man seeth God in and by the creature, and the creature is nothing to him, but in God. As an illiterate man doth look upon a book, and seeth only the letters, and taketh pleasure in their shape and order, and falls a playing with it as children do; but he seeth not, nor understands the sense; and, therefore if it contained the most noble mysteries of the greatest promises, even such as his life did depend upon, he loveth it not in any such respect; nor doth he for that delight in it: but let a learned man have the perusing of the same book, and though he may commend the clearness of the character, yet it is the sense that he principally observeth, and the sense that he loveth, and the sense that he delighteth in; and, therefore, as the sense is incomparably more excellent than the character simply considered, so it is a higher and more excellent kind of knowledge and delight which he hath in the book, than that which the illiterate hath. And indeed it is an imaginary annihilation of the book, and of every character of it formally considered, to conceive of it as separated from the sense; for the very essence of it is to be a sign of that sense; and, therefore, as the illiterate cannot see the sense of words and letters, the wood for trees, so the literate can see no such thing as words without sense, nor would regard the materials but for this signifying use.

I have expressed the similitude in more words than I use in such cases, because it much illustrateth our present matter. It was never the mind of God to make the great body of this world to stand as a separated thing, or to be an idol. He made all this for Himself. The whole creation is one entire volume, and the sense of every line is God. His name is legible on every creature, and he that seeth not God in all, understandeth not the sense of the creation. As it is eternal life to know God, so this God is the life of the creature which we know, and the knowing of Him in it is the life of all our knowledge. The illiterate world doth gaze upon the creatures, and fall in love with the outside and materials, and play with it, but understandeth not a creature. By separating it in their apprehensions from God, the sense, they do annihilate the world to themselves, as to its principal use and signification. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1505.) When I was in the galleries of Oxford, I saw many of the designs of Raphael and Michael Angelo. I looked upon them with reverence, and took up such of them as I was permitted to touch as one would take up a love token. It seemed to me these sketches brought me nearer the great masters than their finished pictures could have done, because therein I saw the minds' processes as they were first born. They were the first salient points of the inspiration. Could I have brought them home with me, how rich I should have been! how envied for their possession! Now, there are open and free to us, every day of our lives, the designs of a greater than Raphael or Michael Angelo. God, of whom the noblest master is but a feeble imitator, is sketching and painting every hour the most wondrous pictures—not hoarded in any gallery, but spread in light and shadow round the whole earth, and glowing for us in the overhanging skies. —*Beecher.*

(1506.) I have in my house, a little sheet of paper on which there is a faint, pale, and not particularly skilful representation of a hyacinth. It is not half as beautiful as many other pictures I have, but I regard it as the most exquisite of them all. My mother painted it; and I never see it that I do not think that her hand rested on it, and that her thought was concerned in its execution.

Now, suppose you had such a conception of God that you never saw a flower, a tree, a cloud, or any natural object, that you did not instantly think, "My Father made it," what a natural world would this become to you! How beautiful would the earth seem to you! And how would you find that nature was a revelation of God, speaking as plainly as His written Word! And if you are alone, in solitude, without company, desolate in your circumstances, it is because you have not that inner sense of the Divine love and care, which it is your privilege to have, and which you ought to have.
—*Beecher.*

6. "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him!"

(1507.) It is probable that there may be some peculiar manifestations of the character and government of God in each one of the worlds that He has made. I mean, that, in the countless numbers of worlds which He has called into existence, there may be that to be learned about God on any one of them which could be learned on no other; that each has its own history, its own vegetable, animal, or mineral arrangement; and perhaps that each may have some one great lesson to teach to all other worlds about the moral government of the Creator. There are indeed certain great lessons which would be common to all—for all make known the same God; but in the endless variety everywhere manifested, it is to be presumed that new views would be unfolded in different parts of the universe respecting the Creator. In the floral department of the kingdom of nature on our own globe, for example, there would be everywhere discerned proofs of the existence of the same God, and of the same attributes of wisdom, power, and goodness, but, in travelling from pole to pole,

through the various zones, on hills and through valleys, in lawns and meadows, in journeying in Persia, at the Cape of Good Hope, on the prairie, in the profused and varied vegetation of the tropics, or in the cold of the north, where the lonely flower springs up beside the bank of snow, how varied is the view; how new are the lessons taught; how the mind is kept intensely active in its admiration of a God who is "wonderful in working." A similar thing on a much grander scale, it is probable, occurs in the endless variety of worlds which God has strewed over the heavens.

—*Barnes*, 1798-1870.

CURIOSITY.

1. Its folly.

(1508.) It is a great sign of knowledge not to be curious about everything, nor to wish to know all things. And if you will allow me, I will explain myself by an example.

Let us suppose a river, or rather rivers (I ask no allowance, I only speak of what rivers really are), all are not of the same depth. Some have a shallow bed, others one deep enough to drown one unacquainted with it. In one part there are whirlpools, and not in another. It is good, therefore, to forbear to make trial of all, and it is no small proof of knowledge not to wish to sound all the depths; whereas he who would venture on every part of the river is really most ignorant of the peculiar nature of rivers, and will be often in danger of perishing, from venturing into the deeper parts with the same boldness with which he crossed the shallows.

So it is in the things of God. He that will know all things, and ventures to intrude into everything, he it is that is most ignorant what God is. And of rivers, indeed, the greater part is safe, and the depths and whirlpools few, but with respect to the things of God, the greater part is hidden, and it is not possible to trace out His works. Why then art thou bent on drowning thyself in those depths? —*Chrysostom*, 347-407.

(1509.) He that would comprehend all things, apprehends nothing. As he that comes to a corn heap, the more he opens his hand to take, the less he graspeth, the less he holdeth. Where the Scripture hath no tongue, we should have no ear.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(1510.) Why do we study that which is impossible to learn? What kind of fruit soever that was for which our first parents sold their birthright in Paradise, I am sure there was not juice enough in it to quench that hot thirst of forbidden knowledge which they imparted to their posterity. But that which only distempered Adam's taste is now become inherent in mankind; that the more they know, the more they desire; and the admitting them to one secret, doth but hearten them on to seek for another. We all take after Eve, and setting our shoulders to the very portals of God's privy chamber, in we must go, and be made acquainted with the Divine counsel.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(1511.) The way to make us mere fools, is to affect to know more than God would have us. Adam's tree of knowledge made him and his posterity fools. Curiosity was the bait, whereby the devil caught our first parents, and undid us all.

—*Brooks*, 1680.

2. Its perilousness.

(1512.) Men may soon be too bold with hidden mysteries; he that modestly looks upon the sun, sees a glorious torch, and receives a comfortable light; but he that fixeth his eyes too earnestly upon it, is struck blind; and because he will see more than he should, comes in the end to see nothing at all. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1513.) He that pryeth into every cloud may be stricken with a thunderbolt. —*Eliza Cook.*

3. Its injuriousness.

(1514.) (*On the sight of a fly burning itself in the candle*).—Wise Solomon says, The light is a pleasant thing; and so certainly it is; but there is no true outward light which proceeds not from fire. The light of that fire then is not more pleasing than the fire of that light is dangerous: and that pleasure doth not more draw on our sight than that danger forbids our approach. How foolish is the fly that, in a love and admiration of this light, will know no distance; but puts itself heedlessly into that flame, wherein it perishes! How many bouts it fetched, every one nearer than other, ere it made this last venture, and now that merciless fire, taking no notice of the affection of an over-fond client, hath suddenly consumed it.

Thus do those bold and busy spirits, who will needs draw too near unto that inaccessible light, and look into things too wonderful for them: so long do they hover about the secret counsels of the Almighty, till the wings of their presumptuous conceits be scorched; and their daring curiosity hath paid them with everlasting destruction.

O Lord, let me be blessed with the knowledge of what Thou hast revealed: let me content myself to adore Thy Divine Wisdom, in what Thou hast not revealed. So let me enjoy Thy light, that I may avoid Thy fire. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(1515.) Nothing wraps a man in such a mist of errors as his own curiosity in searching things beyond him. How happily do they live that know nothing but what is necessary! Our knowledge does but show us our ignorance. Our most studious scrutiny is but a discovery of what we cannot know. We see the effect, but cannot guess at the cause. Learning is like a river, whose head being far in the land, is, at first rising, little and easily viewed; but still, as you go, it gapes with a wider bank: not without pleasure, and delightful winding; while it is still on both sides set with trees, and the beauties of various flowers; but still, the further you follow it, the deeper and the broader it is; till, at last, it enwaves itself in the unfathomed ocean. There you see more water; but no shore, no end of that liquid, fluid vastness. In many things we sound nature, in the shallows of her revelations: we may trace her to her second causes; but beyond them we meet with nothing but the puzzle of the soul and the dazzle of the mind's dim eyes. While we speak of things that are, that we may dissect, and have power and means to find the causes, there is some pleasure, some certainty; but when we come to metaphysics, to long-buried antiquity, and unto unrevealed divinity, we are in a sea which is

deeper than the short reach of the life of man. Much may be gained by studious inquisition; but much more will ever rest, which man cannot discover. —*Felltham*, 1668, *p.* 66.

(1516.) I think that faith and much thinking do not dwell well together; not in religion alone. I do not think it does to think too much in friendship. Let a child think about all the things he sees his father and mother do, and see if he loves them any better after that. Let a friend go about insisting upon reducing all feelings and instincts to thoughts, and strive to understand the nature of emotion by thinking—let him, instead of giving liberty in his heart, go to applying his philosophy to his friends, and see if he will stand nobler in friendship or not. Let him go out into the realm of thinking about eternal things, and it would be just as foolish. Let a man begin to study the relations of the race to God's government, and all the mutations of government, all natural and civil law, and all the ten thousand questions that rise up before the mind that thinks and is inquisitive of such thoughts as these, and the fact is that idea, stars, land, sea, everything—the more a man thinks upon them, the less is he strong, and the more is he enervated. The great depths give up their mists, and these banks of white silver hue are hid in the fog. There are hours when it seems as though everything is swept away from us; that there is no heaven, that it is all fancy and a dream; that there is no responsibility; that there is no such thing as sin and virtue; that we are all so many animals, we are all following the instincts and circumstances that press without us; there is no God, or He would speak, or certainly He would give us some token in our extremest anguish that He is near; there would be some dawn of light. There are a great many men who strive to explain these doubts by reference to the natural laws, but no man has followed this line of thought to any satisfaction. There are a great many happy, genial, and hopeful theologians that think at last they have got up early enough to find out God, and so in every generation you will find a man that explains everything. He does until the next man kicks it, and it all goes back to dust again. When you shall chain the waves of the sea that they shall not rise any more; when you shall fasten in the tops of the forest the winds that rock them, that make them sigh their dirges in winter and sing their anthems in summer; when you shall stay the courses of the stars and bind the earth that it shall not roll in its orbit, then you may take these great questions, and, by the bands of your thought and by the cords of your philosophy you may fasten them; but so long as you cannot do that, so long will they have free course. And so with the thoughts of man. There must needs come hours when a man finds himself quite drifted away from his old thoughts. Contagious hours they are, hours of great trouble, awakening hours of philosophy and of doubt.

In such hours as this there is nothing for it but to run, and there is but one way to run, and that is Godward. A man in these hours that does not run for God, should run for the lunatic asylum. There is but one way in which a man can find any rest, and that is to say blindly but desperately, "There is a Thinker, there is a Controller, and if men have not drawn His lineaments right, and if the portraiture of the books is not right, one thing I know, my soul proclaims there is goodness and wisdom, there is control. Whatever it is I seize it, I hold by an anchor to that blessed hope." The very moment a man begins to hold by that, sometimes, as by an electric touch, the clouds fade away, the sweet beaming face of Christ shines again, and all the mists have gone as sometimes you have seen them in the morning disappear, you know not how; we are bright again and have joy in Christ, and in all the blessed promises of His Word; and the miracles recorded there are not half as marvellous as the miracles wrought in the sweet experience of Christians every day. —*Beecher.*

4. Its sinfulness.

(1517.) As the Egyptian who carried somewhat wound up in his napkin, answered unto him that demanded what it was, that he had covered it to the end that no man should see it: so, likewise, must we learn, that if there be anything hidden and laid up in the works of God it is of purpose kept from us, to the end that we should not be too curious to inquire after it, that it is far better to be utterly ignorant herein than to have all the knowledge thereof that may be. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1518.) As there is a foolish wisdom, so there is a wise ignorance; in not prying into God's ark, not inquiring into things not revealed. I would fain know all that I need, and all that I may: I leave God's secrets to Himself. It is happy for me that God makes me of His Court though not of His Council. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

CUSTOM.

1. Defined.

(1519.) It is to be observed that at the present day it is common to use the words "custom" and "habit" as synonymous, and often to employ the latter where Bacon would have used the former. But, strictly speaking, they denote respectively the *cause* and the effect. Repeated acts constitute the "custom;" and the "habit" is the condition of mind or body thence resulting. For instance, a man who has been *accustomed* to rise at a certain hour will have acquired the *habit* of waking and being ready to rise as soon as that hour arrives. And one who has made it his *custom* to drink drams will have fallen into the *habit* of craving for that stimulus, and of yielding to that craving; and so of the rest. —*Whately.*

2. Reveals character.

(1520.) A man is known by his custom and the course of his endeavours what is his business. If a man be constantly, easily, and frequently carried away to sin, it discovers a habit of soul and the temper of his heart. Meadows may be overflowed, but marsh ground is drowned with the return of every tide. A child of God may be carried away, and act contrary to the bent and inclination of the new nature; but when men are drowned and overcome with the return of every temptation, and carried away, it argues a habit of sin.
—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

3. Not the standard of right.

(1521.) "Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself." Therefore it is no

excuse for him to say, "I do but as others do." He is to reckon his hours by the sun, not the town clock; to take God's direction, not the vice of the multitudes, as one of their stamp and at liberty to comply with their fashions.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(1522.) Custom in moral practices becomes law to men, by pressing upon their modesty, and by outfacing truth and piety. So that unless the custom have warranty from the law, it has the same effect against the law as for it; and, therefore, in such cases, is at no hand to be trusted, but at every hand to be suspected, lest it make it necessary that men become vicious. The customs of the German and neighbouring nations so expound the laws of Christ concerning temperance, that if by their measures it be defined, it looks so like intemperance as milk to milk. And the common customs of the world so expound all the laws of the blessed Jesus, so as to be truly obligatory at no time, but in the danger, or in the article of death. But certainly it is but an ill gloss that evacuates all the holy purposes of the commandment; and at the day of Judgment, when we shall see numberless numbers of the damned hurried to their sad sufferings, it will be but an ill apology to say, "I did as all the world almost beside me, by whose customs I understood the laws of the gospel to a sense of ease and gentleness, and not by the severity of a few morose preachers." Poggius tells us of a Neapolitan shepherd, that against Easter, going to confession, he told his confessor with a tender conscience and great sorrow of heart, that he had broken the holy feast of Lent, by chance indeed, but yet with some little pleasure; for when he was pressing of a new cheese, some of the whey start from the vessel and leaped into his mouth, and so went into his stomach. The priest, smiling a little at the phantasmic conscience of the man, asked him if he was guilty of nothing else. The shepherd saying, "he knew of nothing else that did or ought to trouble him;" his confessor knowing the customs of those people upon the mountains of Naples, asked him if he had never robbed or killed any stranger passengers. "Oh yes," replied the shepherd, "I have been often at that employment; but that we do every day, and always did so, and I hope that is no sin." But the cheese, the forbidden cheese stuck in his stomach, because every one did abominate such meat upon fasting-days; only the custom of killing and stealing had hardened his heart and forehead, till it was not perceived. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

4. No excuse for sin.

(1523.) It is said of a prisoner, that, standing at the bar, indicted for felony, he was asked by the judge what he could say for himself. "Truly, my lord," says he, "I did mean no hurt when I stole; it is an evil custom that I have gotten; I have been used to it ever since I knew anything." "Why, then," says the judge, "if it be thy custom to steal, it is my custom to hang up thieves." So, if it be any man's custom to swear upon every slight occasion, it is God's custom not to hold them guiltless that take His name in vain. Is it any man's custom to whore and be drunk, it is God's custom to judge them. Whatsoever the sin be, there is no pleading of custom to excuse it—as, that they meant no harm, it was against their will. &c. All the fig leaves that can be gathered, and sewed never so close, will not hide their nakedness from the eyes of heaven; God will certainly bring them to judgment. —*Fawcet.*

(1524.) Our business is not to look to what men do, but to what God speaketh. It is highly derogatory to the Supreme Being to make the examples of men, and not His commands, the rule of our lives. The examples of murderers, thieves, drunkards, swearers, are of as much force against the good and wholesome law of a prince, as the irreligious examples of any men are against the holy and righteous laws of God. A judge would deride the malefactor's plea that should say, "It is true I have broken the king's laws, but have done no more than such an esquire, or knight, or lord; I have but imitated them therein." Or that should say, "I was guilty of such treasons, but I joined with many other traitors; I had good store of company with me." And dost thou think, reader, the Judge of quick and dead, when He shall arraign thee for thine unchangeable estate, and demand of thee why thou omittedst the duties He enjoined thee, will accept thy plea when thou shalt say, "It is true, Lord, I did live without Scripture or prayer in my family, but such and such great men who lived near me did so as well as I; I wrote after their copies, and thought it would be well enough to do as they did." Or when thou shalt say, "Lord, though I neglected Thy worship and service, I followed therein almost all the town and parish where I lived, and I judged it best to imitate the most." Canst thou imagine that such a silly, simple excuse will bear any weight? Thou wilt not take such a pitiful plea from any child or servant in thy family. If thy child, when reproved by thee for drunkenness, or thieving, or disobeying thy commands, should excuse himself and say, "Sir, other men's sons are as bad as I; such a gentleman's sons are worse; the children of very many meet and join with me in all my drinking, stealing, and debauched courses. How ill would such an answer sound in thine ears! Or what wouldst thou think if thy servant, instead of doing the work appointed him, should run from alehouse to alehouse, and spend his time in carding and dicing, and then excuse it to thee that he did as others did; there were many beside himself, and some of quality who were examples to him? Consider how poor, how pitiful, how irrational a plea it is to excuse thy disobedience to God by thy imitation of irreligious men; and do not think that the great God will take that excuse from thee which thou wilt not from a child or servant.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1525.) "Follow not a multitude to do evil." Examples are not our warrant, but precepts. Neither will it procure a man a discharge, because he had a precedent in his sin. *Adam* indeed said the woman gave him the apple, but it did not excuse him from paying the reckoning with her; she was indeed first in the transgression, yet both met in the punishment. Wouldst thou eat poison, because another dares be so bold to be thy *taster*? Surely his example cannot make the poison less deadly to thee that dost pledge him.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1526.) Remember, I beseech you, that your custom is the aggravation of your sins, and not

any just excuse. What, if you had taken a custom of spitting in the face of your own father or dearest friend, or any way abusing him, would you think it good excuse for you to continue it, because you are accustomed to it? Why, the oftener you have sinned, the oftener you have wronged God; and the oftener you have wronged Him, the more should you now bewail it, and not therefore go on to wrong Him more. If you had oftentimes hurt yourselves by falls, or cut your fingers by negligence or carelessness, will you do so still to keep a custom? What greater madness can there be than to plead custom for sinning against the living God, and hastening your own souls to everlasting perdition? You shall have custom for suffering then, as you have for sinning now, and see whether you will therefore love your suffering. If you will love sin because you are accustomed to it, you shall try whether you can love hell because you are accustomed to it. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

5. Hardens men in sin.

(1527.) Look but upon a youth when he comes first to be an apprentice to some artificer or handicraft trade: his hand is tender, and no sooner is he set to work but it blisters, so that he is much pained thereby; but when he hath continued some time at work then his hand hardens, and he goes on without any grievance at all. It is just thus with a sinner: before he be accustomed to any evil way, conscience is tender and full of remorse, like a queazy stomach, ready to keck (vomit) at the least thing that is offensive; oh, but a continued custom, and making a trade of sin, that is it which makes the conscience to be hard and brawny, able to feel nothing. As it is in a smith's forge, a dog that comes newly in cannot endure the fiery sparks to fly about his ears, but being once used to it he sleeps securely: so, let wicked men be long used to the devil's workhouse, to be slaves and vassals to sin, the sparks of hell-fire may fly about them, and the fire of hell flash upon their souls, yet never trouble them, never disturb them at all; and all this ariseth from a continued custom in a course of evil. —*Sedgwood*, 1644.

6. Its blinding influence.

(1528.) We are so accustomed to see sin within and without us, that we seldom deeply feel it, or are so shocked at it as we should be were it less frequent. If an inhabitant of the Court were to walk through some of the filthy streets and alleys of the metropolis, how would he be disgusted and terrified, while the poor wretches who live in them think nothing of the matter!

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(1529.) Custom will often blind one to the good as well as to the evil effects of any long-established system. —*Whately*, 1787–1863.

7. Its power grows continually.

(1530.) Custom is a violent and treacherous schoolmistress. She, by little and little, slyly and unperceived, slips in the foot of her authority, but having by this gentle and humble beginning, with the benefit of time fixed and established it, she then unmasks a furious and tyrannic countenance, against which we have no more the courage or the power so much as to lift up our eyes.

—*Montaigne.*

8. Wrong customs should therefore be broken abruptly.

(1531.) Be not too slow in the breaking off a sinful custom. A quick courageous resolution is better than a gradual deliberation. In such a combat he is the bravest soldier that lays about him without fear or wit. Wit pleads; fear disheartens; he that would kill Hydra had better strike off one neck than five heads. Fell the tree, and the branches are soon cut off.

—*Quarles*, 1592–1644.

9. Secret of the power of social customs.

(1532.) Of all tyrants custom is that which to sustain itself stands most in need of the opinion which is entertained of its power; its only strength lies in that which is attributed to it. A single attempt to break the yoke soon shows us its fragility. But the chief property of custom is to contract our ideas, like our movements, within the circle it has traced for us; it governs us by the terror it inspires for any new and untried condition. It shows us the walls of the prison within which we are enclosed, as the boundary of the world; beyond that all is undefined, confusion, chaos; it almost seems as though we should not have air to breathe.

—*Guizot.*

10. Innocent customs should be complied with.

(1533.) There is a respect due to mankind which should incline even the wisest of men to follow innocent customs. —*Watts*, 1674–1748.

DEATH.

I. *IN RELATION TO ALL MANKIND.*

1. Its nature.

(1534.) As we have but imperfect notions of the relations and differences between life and death, our Saviour, when He was about to raise a maid to life, said to those who were present, *The damsel is not dead but sleepeth.* He did not say, "She is dead, and I will raise her to life;" but, "She is asleep:" whence it was to be inferred that she would awake. They who were not skilled in the Divine language of signs and figures *laughed Him to scorn*, as if He had spoken in ignorance what was expressed with consummate truth and wisdom: for the substitution of *sleep* for *death*, when we have it upon such great authority, has the force of a whole sermon in a single word, and is a seed from whence a tree of life may be unfolded.

—*Jones of Nayland.*

(1535.) Death is but the line at which the little stream of life merges into the great ocean of eternity. Death is but a turning point in the endless path of our existence.

2. It is our common doom.

(1536.) As many as came of the first man must lay down their necks. Death is an indifferent judge, regardeth no person, hath no pity on the fatherless, careth not for the poor, dispenseth not with the rich, feareth not the mighty, passeth not for the noble, honoureth not the aged, spareth not the wise, pardoneth not the foolish. For like as a river is poisoned in the well-spring, or fountain, so was the nature of man altogether in our first parents. And forasmuch as they themselves were maimed

through sin, they have begotten upright and mortal children. Touching this saith Paul: "By one man came death upon all men."

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(1537.) The heathen usually compared the sons of Adam to counters, the game at chess, and stage plays, because that counters have their several places and use for a time, but in the end they are jumbled into a heap. In a game at chess, some are kings, some bishops, some knights, &c., but after a while, they all go into the same bag. On the stage, one is in his rags, another in his robes; one is the master, another is the man; and very busy they be, but in the end, the play ends, the bravery ends, and each returns to his place. Such is the estate of man. The man lives not that shall not see death, be he king with Saul, a prophet with Jeremiah, a wise Solomon, a foolish Nabal, a holy Isaac, a profane Esau: be he of what rank soever, he must die—nay, let there be a concurrence of all in one, let Samuel, both a good man, a good minister, and a good magistrate, have as many privileges as are incident to a man, yet can he not procure a protection against death. —*Harris*, 1578–1658.

3. It is inevitable.

(1538.) God, to prevent all escape, hath sown the seeds of death in our very constitution and nature, so that we can as soon run from our selves, as run from death. We need no feller to come with a hand of violence, and hew us down; there is in the tree a worm, which grows out of its own substance, that will destroy it; so in us, those infirmities of nature that will bring us down to the dust. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. It is a theme of universal interest.

(1539.) The truth of it is, there is nothing in history which is so improving to the reader as those accounts which we meet with of the deaths of eminent persons and of their behaviour in that dreadful season. I may also add that there are no parts in history which affect and please the reader in so sensible a manner. The reason I take to be this: there is no other single circumstance in the story of any person, which can possibly be the case of every one who reads it. A battle or a triumph are conjunctures in which not one man in a million is likely to be engaged; but when we see a person at the point of death, we cannot forbear being attentive to everything he says or does, because we are sure that some time or other we shall ourselves be in the same melancholy circumstances. The general, the statesman, or the philosopher, are perhaps characters which we may never act in, but the dying man is one whom, sooner or later, we shall certainly resemble. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

5. Its nearness.

(1540.) There is not far from youth that hidden certainty of death. I am speaking to some that I shall never speak to again. You are marked. You are going away, and my eye shall never rest on you again. There are some of you within a handbreadth of the grave, and yet it doth not appear who it is. If I were to say that some sharpshooter, hidden, would launch the fated bullet into the midst of this assembly, with what terror would the whole of you rise? and yet death stands with bow drawn back to the uttermost, and that arrow is just on the string that will speed to some of you. —*Beecher*.

(1541.) We put far away the evil day; and therefore we are not duly impressed by the thought. But fourscore years are soon cut off, and we flee away; and how uncertain is our reaching that lonely verge of life, where the flowery meadows and the golden corn-fields slope gradually down into the bare and stony beach that fringes the eternal sea. The coast of death to most is an abrupt precipice; we are cut off in the midst of our days.

—*Macmillan*.

(1542.) In a noble passage, Isaiah tell us, how all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. And does not every week, each passing day, and fleeting hour, illustrate that solemn truth? Death lays his sharp scythe in among the grass; and to his stride and sweeping arm it falls in long, broad swathes. I have seen the reapers in the harvest-field sit down on the fallen sheaves of corn to wipe the sweat from their sun-browned brows, and, pausing from work, rest awhile; but who ever saw this grim reaper sitting on the tombstones or green hillocks of the grave, to rest himself and repair his strength? Of Death it may be said, as of God, "He sleeps not, neither is weary." See how he advances on us—every day the nearer, as before an eye that expresses no pity, and an arm that is never weary, and a scythe that never blunts, fall the tallest grass and fairest flowers! "All flesh is grass!" A few years more and these sparkling eyes shall be quenched in death; a shroud around every form; on every lip the seal of dusty death; and all of us lying beneath the grassy sod, mouldering in the grave—saved, or unsaved—the never-dying soul in heaven, or in hell.

—*Guthrie*.

6. Its period is uncertain.

(1543.) The whole foliage of a tree does not fade and pass away at one time. Some leaves droop and wither even in spring, when the rest of the foliage is in its brightest and most luxuriant beauty. Some are torn away in summer, while green and full of sap, by sudden and violent storms. The great majority fade and fall in autumn; while a few cling to the branches all through the cold and desolation of winter, and are at last pushed off by the unfolding buds of the following spring. There is no tree, however green and healthy, but has a withered discoloured leaf upon it, ready to drop off at the slightest touch of the breeze. There is no group of flowers so perfect but one or more is faded. Watch the blossoming of one of those plants whose flowers grow in spikes or racemes, and you will find that the lowest blossoms unfold and perish, one by one, as those higher up the stem are beginning to expand; so that on the same stalk, you have opening buds, perfect flowers, and brown and withered—a mixed state of things, surely deeply suggestive to every thoughtful mind. Look at the foliage of a tree at any season, and you will not fail to find the same thing—death—in the midst of life—sere and yellow decay streaking the bright greenness and beauty of health. And is it not so with every human generation? Decay and death everywhere, and always, reign. But all do not fade at the same time. Some die in the spring of life; some are cut off suddenly, by accidents and fatal diseases, in ripe manhood; some fade naturally in the autumn of old age. A few survive their generation, like the last red leaves that rustle mournfully in the winter wind on the topmost bough of the

tree, the sole relics of the luxuriant foliage that basked in the sunshine, and sang in the breeze of summer. Melancholy indeed is the lot of these aged patriots. Their tent of life is a solitary object in a dreary and lifeless desert. Pilgrims and strangers on earth, they linger alone; whilst all those who began the journey of life with them have folded their tents and gone away, and *Ichabod*, "the glory is departed," is written upon everything.
—*Macmillan.*

7. It steals upon us without warning.

(1544.) Death carries off a man who is gathering flowers and whose mind is distracted, as a flood carries off a sleeping village. —*Buddha.*

(1545.) Though we live never so long, we are still surprised: we put the evil day far from us, and then it catches us unawares, and we tremble at the prospect. —*Wake*, 1657-1737.

(1546.) All the processes of nature are silent and secret. It is God's glory to conceal a matter. As He veiled His wondrous working for the Israelites at the Red Sea with the cloud of night; and the dawn only revealed the completed miracle: so in the field of nature He reveals to us not processes, but results. Spring steals imperceptibly upon the earth, and we are startled, like men that dreamed, by the sudden revelation of green leaves and balmy skies almost amid the gloom and snow of winter. The bud expands into the full-blown rose, but the unfolding is done in secret; the star of evening sparkles like a tear in the spot where the sunset died, but no one marked its falling from the dewy eye of heaven. And as with the glory, so with the decay, of nature. We know the passage of the seasons only by their changes. The precise moment when nature has reached its culminating point, and must descend when her embroidered web has been woven—and must be unravelled—is shrouded in mystery. No boundary line separates the season of life from the season of death; the full vigour and perfection of summer from the feebleness and languor of autumn; at least, none that can be marked by the ordinary senses of man. To-day the forest is green and luxuriant; to-morrow it is faded and desolate. One by one the leaves become discoloured and drop off; but we cannot trace the insidious progress of the blight from its commencement to its consummation, and the first notice we have of the change is the hectic hue upon their surface. Some of them fade before others, but we cannot tell why; there is no mark to point them out, and when all the foliage is waving and murmuring in the summer breeze, we cannot indicate which leaf of all the rich green crowd will be the first to wear the impress of decay. Thus fades the leaf, and so silently do we all fade. The king of terrors comes with a noiseless step, shod with wool, stealthily, silently, with bated breath; he is not seen, he is not heard, he is not suspected; till all at once his cold shadow falls upon us, and his dark form stands between us and the light of the living world. We die daily, but the bark still continues fresh and the leaf green; and we know not the progress of the hidden mortality. We bear the seal of death ere we are conscious of it; and we become aware of our doom only when the gradual secret fading of the bloom on the cheek, and the brightness in the eye, and the vigour in the frame, has reached its final palpable stage. No awful handwriting appears on the wall, telling us in the midst of our rejoicings, as it told Belshazzar, its "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin;" no solemn message from the unseen world comes to us, as it once came to Hezekiah; "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." Before the work of death begins, we know not which of our friends and acquaintances will pass away soonest. It may be the old and grey-haired, who have nothing left to live or hope for in the world; it may be the sick who have lingered long on the perilous edge of death, and whose life has been endurance not enjoyment; or it may be the young and healthy, to whom death is a far-off cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, casting no shadow on their sunny horizon. It may be the fragrant rose or the thorny weed; the fruitful vine or the barren fig-tree, the heavenly-minded Christian or the worldly-hearted professor. Who is to be the first to receive the message to pass hence? We know not; an awful uncertainty rests upon that. —*Macmillan.*

8. We die daily.

(1547.) When we are born we get as it were so much life given us: we get a reservoir filled with life; day by day we draw so much from it; day by day we use up so much of it: and it is plain enough that the more we draw from it, the less is left. We know how much we have taken from that receptacle, that store of life; but we cannot tell how much remains. There may be very little there to our account: we may have got very near the end of the amount we had to start with; and some day, not long hence, we may find that we have fairly reached the end of it all. But is it not plain enough, that our dying is spread over all the time through which we are exhausting the springs of life? We speak of it as a future thing: we speak of dying as if it were all concentrated on the little point, when the last drop of life shall be drained, and the fountain fairly sunk to the ground and finished. Why, look to any piece of machinery employed by man. The very first day's use of it is so much towards its destruction. It is the daily wear that wears it out. The wearing out is not all gathered upon that closing day, when at last you find it is past working or mending, and throw it finally aside. It is not the last day the locomotive runs that wears it out: the very first on which it darted away with its train of human beings or its hundreds of tons of merchandise, did just as much towards its final wearing out as the last on which, a battered weather-beaten thing, it ran its last crazy race. Now, our bodies are just such machines; and like everything that wears out at all, it is by their daily work they wear out. Every exertion we take out of them leaves so much less behind; every pulse that beats in them is a reason against the next pulse's beating; every breath we draw makes it less likely that we shall draw another; and thus, by the daily consumption of our life, we "die daily." —*Boyd.*

9. Its terrors.

(1548.) In death itself there can be nothing terrible, for the act of death annihilates sensation; but there are many roads to death, and some of them justly formidable, even to the bravest; but so various are the modes of going out of the world, that to be born may have been a more painful thing

than to die, and to live may prove a more troublesome thing than either. —*Colton*, 1832.

(1549.) Another pang which belongs to death, we find in the sensation of loneliness which attaches to it. Have we ever seen a ship preparing to sail with its load of pauper emigrants to a distant colony? If we have, we know what that desolation is which comes from feeling unfriended on a new and untried excursion. All beyond the seas, to the ignorant poor man, is a strange land. They are going away from the helps, and the friendships, and the companionships of life, scarcely knowing what is before them. And it is in such a moment, when a man stands upon a deck, taking his last look of his fatherland, that there comes upon him a sensation new, strange, and inexpressibly miserable —the feeling of being alone in the world.

Brethren, with all the bitterness of such a moment, it is but a feeble image when placed by the side of the loneliness of death. We die alone. We go on our dark mysterious journey for the first time in all existence, without one to accompany us. Friends are beside our bed, they must stay behind. Grant that a Christian has something like familiarity with the Most High, *that* breaks this solitary feeling; but what is it with the mass of men? It is a question full of loneliness to them. What is it they are to see? What are they to meet? Is it not true, that, to the larger number of this congregation, there is no one point in all eternity on which the eye can fix distinctly, and rest gladly—nothing beyond the grave, except a dark space into which they must plunge?

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

10. Its influence.

(1550.) The darkness of death is like the evening twilight: it makes all objects appear more lovely to the dying. —*Richter.*

11. Its disclosures of character.

(1551.) Every man and woman who lives by Christian principle (that is, by faith), who sustains the life of his immortal spirit by prayer, and sacraments, and the Word of God, and resists evil watchfully and steadfastly, is a saint. He may have his infirmities, his backslidings, his periods of lukewarmness, his failings of temper, his moral cowardice, so had the Scriptural saints. And our close commerce with him in life, forcing upon us, as it does, his weakness and prejudices, while his communion with God, transacted in the depths of his own spirit, is of course screened from us, hinders for the present our fully appreciating him. We see very clearly that he is "a man subject to like passions as we are;" but we fail to see that he is Elijah. Perchance we shall see this too by and by, when he is taken from us. Sanctity in our friends and neighbours is like a star. We take no notice of the star while the sun is pouring his rays over the firmament, and the full stir of life is around us. But let the night draw her curtain over the sky, and the star in all its beauty steals out to view. So while our friends are mixed up with us in the hurry and commerce of life, we seem unable to disentangle from their infirmities the saintliness which is in them. But they die; and something comes to light about their inward life which hitherto had escaped every eye but God's, and we begin to discover that the commonest things they did were governed by Christian principle, and referred to God in prayer, and perhaps that we have been for years walking side by side with angels unawares. Death has now thrown his pall over them; they are no longer in the hubbub of life, or the strife of tongues; and the star of their sanctity begins to twinkle brightly to our eyes.

—*Goulburn.*

(1552.) Leaves fade *differently*. The autumnal foliage is very varied. It is this rich variety that gives a witching charm to the calm landscapes of October, and makes the progress of the month like the stately march of an Orient army, with the splendour of blazing banners and the wealth and pageantry of olden story. No two species of trees exhibit the same appearance. They all present a uniform greenness in the summer; but decay brings out their individual character, and shows us each of them in its true colours. One tree, draped in dull and sombre foliage, looks like a funeral pall. Its leaves are covered with brown unsightly blotches; and its whole aspect is melancholy and dreary in the extreme. Another tree looks as though the glories of the sunset had been distilled into it. Decked with glowing hues of crimson, and scarlet, and gold, it lights up the forest like a pillar of fire. It is a picture of beauty, far more exquisite than any it presented in its fresh, green, summer prime. The eye loves to dwell upon it; and the mind forgets, in the enjoyment of its loveliness, that the gorgeous display is but the prelude of death, the last brilliant flash of the candle in its socket ere it goes out in utter darkness. And are there not similar differences in the way in which men fade and die? In the hey-day of life and happiness they may seem all alike, uniformly fair and attractive, but when death comes, it shows the true character of each. Its approach makes some men gloomy and sombre. It invests them with a dark and repulsive aspect. It clothes them with despair. It discovers and displays to them, in its red, all-revealing light, the errors and follies of their life in all their hard reality, without one softening shadow. There is nothing to save them from the sting with which it is armed by sin. They are under the law, and under the curse. The righteousness of Christ is not theirs to justify them; His Spirit is not theirs to sanctify them. They have no title to heaven and meetness for it. Oh, there is nothing bright and attractive, nothing hopeful and desirable, in the dying of the impenitent and unsaved sinner! All is dark and despairing—a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. It is like the sun on a stormy evening, going down in gloomy thunder clouds, leaving no ray of light behind. It is like a green tree changing in autumn into the most sombre and repulsive aspect of decay. But how widely different is the dying of the Christian! Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints; precious and also beautiful. It is to them the most blessed of experiences. They are never so well situated to glorify God as in their dying hours. Then they can display the tenderness of His care, the truth of His promises, the supports of His everlasting love, as they can in no other circumstances. While the eye of the body is closing to the beauties of earth, the eye of the soul is opening to the glories that are to be revealed in them; while their hold of all

that life holds dear is relaxing, they cling with a firmer grasp of faith, and a closer embrace of love, to the things that are unseen and eternal in the heavens; while the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed more and more. The day of their death is indeed better than the day of their birth, for, rich with all their treasures of spiritual knowledge and experience—the growth and accumulation of a whole lifetime of discipline—they come to their last hour like the mellow fruit that gathers into itself all the life of the tree, and all the dew and sunshine of summer, and at last bends and breaks the branch from which it hangs.

—*Macmillan.*

12. Men die as they live.

(1553.) Leaves fade characteristically. The foliage that is gloomiest in its unfolding is most unsightly in its decay; and the leaves that have the richest and tenderest shade of green in April have the most brilliant rainbow hues in October. The leaf of the sad and sullen ash is the last to kindle its bud, and the first to wither and fall; and its colour, always sombre, becomes blackened and disfigured in decay. The leaf of the linden tree, on the contrary, is beautiful from first to last, softly green in spring, fragrant in summer with delicate frankincense, and musical with the hum of bees revelling in the honey-dew bloom; and gorgeous as a sunset cloud in autumn. And so is it with man. He dies as he lives. A life of godliness ends in a saintly death; and a career of worldliness and sin terminates in impenitence and despair. The law of life is, that the fruit shall be as the seed, and the end as the beginning: unless, indeed, the higher law of Divine Mercy interposes on a timely repentance. —*Macmillan.*

13. How easily the fear of it is overmastered.

(1554.) There is no passion in the mind of man so weak but it mates and masters the fear of death.

—*Bacon.*

(1555.) Of all the instances that can be given of recklessness of life, there is none that comes near that of the workmen employed in what is called dry-pointing; the grinding of needles and of table forks. The fine steel-dust which they breathe brings on a painful disease of which they are almost sure to die before forty.

And yet not only are men tempted by high wages to engage in this employment, but they resist to the utmost all the contrivances devised for diminishing the danger; through fear that this would cause more workmen to offer themselves, and thus lower wages!

The case of sailors, soldiers, miners, and others who engage in hazardous employments, is nothing in comparison of this; because people of a sanguine temper hope to escape the dangers. But the dry-pointers have to encounter, not the risk, but the certainty, of an early and painful death. The thing would seem incredible, if it were not so fully attested. All this proves that avarice overcomes the fear of death. And so may vanity: witness the many women who wear light dresses, and will even employ washes for the complexion which they know to be highly dangerous and even destructive to their health. —*Whately*, 1777–1863.

(1556.) The dread of death is universal and instinctive; and yet how many rush into its arms! Suicide is a most impressive fact in this connection. The disappointed lover, the discouraged adventurer, the suspected clerk, the child wounded in its self-love, or fearful of punishment, faces the great enemy and invites his blow. Every now and then the community is shocked by suicides so unprovoked, and so frequent as almost to persuade us that the natural fear of death is passing away. The inconsistency is easily explained. Lord Bacon says there is no passion that will not overmaster the terror of death. For passion is thoughtless; occupied wholly with an immediate suffering, it makes no estimate of any other kind of pain; absorbed in an instantaneous sorrow, it takes no other sorrow into account. The mind entertains but one passion at a time, whether it be joy or fear. But men are not always or generally under the influence of passion. Ordinary life is calm, calculating, considerate, and it is to ordinary life that death is terrible. It is the thought of death that is terrible, not death. Death is gentle, peaceful, painless; instead of bringing suffering it brings an end of suffering. It is misery's cure. Where death is, agony is not. The processes of death are all friendly. The near aspect of death is gracious. There is a picture somewhat of a frightful face, livid and ghastly, which the beholder gazes on with horror, and would turn away from, but for a hideous fascination that not only rivets his attention, but draws him closer to it. On approaching the picture the hideousness disappears, and when directly confronted with it is not any more seen; the face is the face of an angel. It is a picture of death, and the object of the artist was to impress the idea that the terror of death is an apprehension. Theodore Parker, whose observation of death was very large, has said that he never saw a person of any belief, condition, or experience, unwilling to die when the time came; and my own more limited observation confirms the truth of the remark. Death is an ordinance of nature, and like every ordinance of nature is directed by beneficent laws to beneficent ends. What must be is made welcome. Necessity is beautiful.

—*O. B. Frothingham.*

14. Is seldom realised.

(1557.) There is a difference between knowing a thing and realising it. When a poor man becomes suddenly the possessor of a fortune or of dignity, it is some time before the thing becomes so natural to him that he can act in his new sphere like his proper self; it is all strangeness at first. When the criminal hears the death-sentence in the dock, his cheeks are tearless. He hears the words, but scarcely understands that they have anything to do with him. He has not realised that it is he himself that has to die. When bereavement comes, it is not at the moment when the breath leaves the body that we feel what has been lost: we know, but yet we must have it in detail: see the empty chair, and the clothes that will never be worn again, and perceive day after day pass, and he comes not; then we realise.

Job knew that God was the vindicator of wrongs; that he said. But why did he go on repeating in every possible form the same thing: "I shall see God, see Him for myself, mine eyes shall behold Him; yes, mine and not another's"? It would seem as if he were doing what a man does when he repeats over and over to himself a thing which he

cannot picture out in its reality. It was true: but it was strange, and shadowy, and unfamiliar.

It is no matter of uncertainty to any one of us whether he himself shall die. He knows it. Every time the funeral bell tolls, the thought in some shape suggests itself. I am a mortal, dying man. That is knowing it. Which of us has realised it? Who can shut his eyes, and bring it before him as a reality, that the day will come when the hearse will stand at the door for him, and that all this bright world will be going on without him; and that the very flesh which now walks about so complacently, will have the coffin-lid shut down upon it, and be left to darkness, and loneliness, and silence, and the worm?

—*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

15. Is usually disregarded.

(1558.) Living in a country village where a burial was a rarity, I never thought of death, it was so seldom presented to me. Coming to London, where there is plenty of funerals (so that coffins crowd one another, and corpses in the grave jostle for elbow-room), I slight and neglect death, because grown an object so constant and common.

How foul is my stomach to turn all food into bad humours. Funerals neither few nor frequent work effectually upon me. London is a library of mortality. Volumes of all sorts and sizes; rich, poor, infants, children, youth, men, old men, daily die. I see there is more required to make a good scholar than only the having of many books. Lord, be Thou my schoolmaster, and "teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom."

—*Fuller*, 1609–1661.

(1559.) Meditations of death are usually very unprofitable. It is with most men as it is with a flock of sheep, which graze till the shepherd rushes in amongst them, and lays hold of one of them for the slaughter, and this presently frightens them, making them leave their food and run scattering about the fields; but no sooner is the terror over, but they flock together again, and feed as securely without thought of death or danger as before, until the slaughterer again selects his prey. So truly is it with most men, when death *suddenly* lays his hand upon some friend or relative, and arrests him amidst the crowd of thoughtless mortals. Some extraordinary circumstance in the death of others will turn their attention from their usual occupations, and call up frightful images of the grave and eternity. But these thoughts soon wear off, and they return to the same round of worldly vanity and wretched security as before, until the thunders of the Almighty are again heard, and death, this appalling monster, is again seen in pursuit, and hurrying his victim to the slaughter, when the same scene is acted over again—they tremble—the dead is interred, and the grave filled up, and the irrevocable sentence is forgotten—"'Tis appointed unto all men once to die," &c., until the pit of destruction again yawns and swallows them up.

—*Salter.*

16. We should remember that we are to die.

(1560.) Two ships meeting on the sea, the men in either ship think themselves standing still, and the other to be swift of sail, whereas they both sail onwards towards the port intended, but the one faster than the other. Even so men are as ships. See we an old man, with a staff in his hand, stooping downward: "Alas! poor old man," say we, "he cannot live long." Hear we a passing bell toll, there is one going out of the world. Visit we a sick friend, we think he can hardly live till morning. Thus, we think all other men are a-dying, and we only standing at rest; whereas, God knows it, they may go a little before, and we are sure to follow after. John outruns Peter to the sepulchre, but Peter is not far behind him. Let every man, then, be thus persuaded of himself, that he shall and must die. None can be so sottish as to be persuaded that they shall never die, yet (which is a sad thing) there is none so old but thinks he may live one year longer; and though, in the general, he say, "All must die," yet, in the false numbering of his own particular days, he thinks to live for ever.

—*Rogers*, 1594–1660.

17. Reminders of death.

(1561.) Every ache and pain, every wrinkle you see stamping itself on a parent's brow, every accident which reveals the uncertain tenure of life and possessions, every funeral bell that tolls, are only God's reminders that we are tenants at will and not by right; pensioners on the bounty of an hour. He is closing up the right of way, warning fairly that what we have is lent, not given; His, not ours. His mercies are so much gain.

—*Robertson*, 1816-1853.

18. Should be prepared for.

(1562.) This preparation ought no man to defer till another time, though he be never so whole and sound; but every one forthwith and daily to begin to make himself for death, to the intent that at all hours he may be found ready. Like as a valiant soldier, when he must be up and fight with the enemies, oversleeps not himself, but keepeth his standing, and hath his weapons and harness already upon him, so much more ought we Christians at all times to wait upon our heavenly Captain, when He bloweth the trump, that we may be ready to pass forth with Him. "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding; that as soon as he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Happy are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh shall find waiting." With this similitude doth Christ exhort every man, that at all times we prepare ourself against His coming—when He knocketh through sickness and other dangers, when He calleth us out of this life; and when He shall come again out of His heavenly palace to judge the living and the dead.

—*Vermullerus*, 1551.

(1563.) Death is half disarmed when the pleasures and interests of the flesh are first denied; for the leaving of fleshly contents and pleasures is much of the reason of men's unwillingness to die; and therefore when these are denied beforehand the reasons of your unwillingness are taken away. If you pull down the nest, the birds will be gone. Men that are loath to leave their country would willingly be gone if their houses were fired, or they were turned out of doors and their friends and goods were all sent away. This is it that makes men so unwilling to die, because they practise not mortification in their health, but, contrarily, make it the work of

their lives to feather their nests, and make provision for the flesh, and then complain that they are loath to leave those nests! Men load themselves with the lumber and baggage of the world, and then complain that they cannot travel on their journey, but had rather sit down. They fall a-building them habitations in their way, when they should have none but inns or tents; and when they have bestowed all their time, and cost, and charges on them, they complain of their hearts for being loath to leave them. Such mad doings as these are not the way to be willing to die.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1564.) Why should a man defer that which ought to be the occupation of a life, which ought to command all his powers in all their vigour? why should a man defer that to the last few abrupt moments to his departure from time to eternity? When a man is going to any distant part of the globe—say to America—what preparation there is! How much it is talked about! It is a long, a distant, an eventful journey. The man talks about it; his family talk about it; his friends prepare in every conceivable way. Oh, what infatuation, what stupidity, what folly it is for a man to make no preparation for this distant voyage—the voyage to eternity!

—*Beaumont.*

(1565.) Were any other event of far superior moment ascertained by evidence which made but a distant approach to that which attests the certainty of a life to come,—had we equal assurance that after a very limited though uncertain period we should be called to migrate into a distant land whence we were never to return,—the intelligence would fill every breast with solicitude; it would become the theme of every tongue; and we should avail ourselves with the utmost eagerness of all the means of information respecting the prospects which awaited us in that unknown country. Much of our attention would be occupied in preparing for our departure; we should cease to regard the place we now inhabit as our home, and nothing would be considered of moment but as it bore upon our future destination. How strange is it then that, with the certainty we all possess of shortly entering into another world, we avert our eyes as much as possible from the prospect; that we seldom permit it to penetrate us; and that the moment the recollection recurs we hasten to dismiss it as an unwelcome intrusion! Is it not surprising that the volume we profess to recognise as the record of immortality, and the sole depository of whatever information it is possible to obtain respecting the portion which awaits us, should be consigned to neglect, and rarely if ever consulted with the serious intention of ascertaining our future condition?

—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(1566.) It is when considered as the passage to another world that the contemplation of death becomes holy and religious; that it is calculated to promote a state of preparedness for our setting out on this great voyage,—our departure from this world to enter the other. It is manifest that those who are engrossed with the things that pertain to this life alone, who are devoted to worldly pleasure, to worldly gain, honour, or power, are certainly not preparing themselves for the passage into another; while it is equally manifest that the change of heart, of desires, wishes, tastes, thoughts, dispositions, which constitute a meetness for entrance into a happy, holy, heavenly state,—the hope of which can indeed "mate and master the fear of death,"—must take place here on earth; for, if not, it will not take place after death.

—*Whately*, 1787–1863.

II. *IN RELATION TO THE IMPENITENT.*

1. To them it is unwelcome.

(1567.) Who can without horror think of leaving this world, though full of sorrows, that hopes for no ease in the other? The condemned malefactor, as ill as he likes his smoky hole in the prison, had rather be there than accept of deliverance at the hangman's hand; he had rather live still in his stinking dungeon than exchange it for a gibbet. And greater reason hath the hopeless soul (if he understand himself) to wish he may spend his eternity on earth, though in the poorest hole or cave in it, and that under the most exquisite torment of stone or gout, than to be eased of that pain with hell's torment.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1568.) When once the Christian hath got his piece of armour on, his soul is prepared for death and danger; he sits at the feast, which God in His present providence allows him, and fears no messenger with ill news to knock at his door; yea, he can talk of his dying hour and not spoil the mirth of his present condition; as carnal men think it does, to whom a discourse of dying in the midst of their junkets is like the coming in of the officer to attack a company of thieves that are making merry together with their stolen goods about them; or like the wet cloth that Hazael clapped on the king, his master's face. It makes all the joy which flushed out before squat in on a sudden, that the poor creatures sit dispirited and all amort (as we say) till they get out of this affrighting subject by some divertisement or other; which only relieves them for the present, and puts them out of that particular fit this brought upon them, but leaves them deeper in slavery to such amazement of heart, whenever the same ghost shall appear for the future. Whereas the Christian, that hath this preparation of heart, never tastes more sweetness in the enjoyments of this life, than when he dips these morsels in the meditation of death and eternity. It is no more grief to his heart to think of the removal of these, which makes way for those far sweeter enjoyments, than it would be to one at a feast, to have the first course taken off, when he hath fed well on it, that the second course of all rare sweetmeats and banqueting stuff may come on, which it cannot till the other be gone.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

2. To them it is ruin.

(1569.) God is under an oath to procure thy destruction, if thou diest in this mind, which God forbid. Death is the trap-door which will let thee down to hell's dungeon, and when once thou art there, thou art where thou wilt have space enough to weep over thy past folly; though here thou hast neither time nor leisure to make God thy friend.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

III. *IN RELATION TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.*

1. Even the good recoil from it.

(1570.) One remarked to me the other day that very few of the people who magnify the joys and glories of heaven have any desire to depart thither —preferring, for the greater part, to stay here as long as possible. The remark is doubtless true; but the suggestion of inconsistency implied in it is not a fair one. People love to think, talk, and sing of heaven. The Apocalypse is a favourite book. Its openings of the heavenly life are exceeding sweet. But still we say, with Charles Lamb: "I would set up my tabernacle here. . . . A new state of being staggers me." When good Christians are cast down into bad sicknesses, and are brought to the brink of the world, they do not commonly exult overmuch, nor stretch forth eager hands; but cling to life, and struggle to regain a sure footing on these shores of time. In some cases there is a very ardent and constant desire to go to heaven. But with the overwhelming majority of Christians it is not so. What is the significance of this fact? Are they who thus shrink back from entering upon the "life to come" necessarily less spiritual than they who would gladly welcome at any time the summons to go home? Probably not. Some cultivated person, who has long dreamed of journeying in foreign lands, is suddenly pressed with the opportunity of realising his dream. As he wakes to meet the opportunity, there throng in upon him doubts, anxieties, and most unaccountable shrinkings. A strange aversion to going arises within him. The ocean voyage! The separation from beloved ones! The strangeness of the yonder countries! The forebodings of a timid nature! How many things combine to make it necessary that his friends shall fairly push him off and set him adrift!

A great many people pass through just this experience, and it may be somewhat thus with multitudes about going to heaven. Doubtless everything will be delightful over there, and one will find most of his solicitudes imaginary, and all his apprehensions as unreal as vague; and yet he holds back as long as possible.

In order to get to heaven one must die. Between you and Europe rolls the dreadful ocean. Some make nothing of crossing it; others cannot pluck up heart to encounter it. Between the Christian pilgrim and the Land of Promise "Jordan rolls between." The natural fear of death is much more lively in some persons than in others. They are by no means the saintlier who have little of that fear. The inimical nature of death is felt through every fibre of our frame. There is a curse mixing with it. There is a sin ever standing behind it, in its gloom. It is idle to condemn the constitutional and often quite unconquerable apprehension with which men encounter it, and which is commonly strong enough to account for the absence of a ruling desire to leave this world for one which is surely believed to be, in all respects, infinitely better.

This instinctive recoiling from death is not weak or ignoble, except as it becomes uncontrollable. Courage does not consist in having no fear, but in triumphing over fear. Our Lord experienced this fear of death, and it is abundantly proven that the finest and noblest man is not he who meets death unconcernedly. —*E. P. Parker.*

2. Yet by them it is to be desired rather than feared.

(1571.) It becometh all Christians not only to suffer, but also to commend and praise, the will of the heavenly Lord and King. Now is it His will that we die. For if the sparrows, whereof two are bought for a farthing, fall not on the ground without God the Father, much less we men, whom God Himself esteemeth to be of more value than many sparrows, yea, for whose sakes other things were created, do fall to the ground through death without the will of God. The soldier tarrieth in the place wherein he is appointed of the chief captain to fight against the enemies, and if he call him from thence, he willingly obeyeth; even so hath the heavenly Captain set us upon earth, where we have to fight, not with flesh and blood, but with wicked spirits. Therefore if He give us leave, and call us from hence, we ought by reason to obey Him. Like as one should not withdraw himself from paying what he oweth, but gently to restore the money; so hath God lent us this life, and not promised that we may alway enjoy it. Therefore is death described to be the payment of natural debt.

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(1572.) If a poor man should be commanded by a prince to put off his torn and beggarly garments, and, instead thereof, to put on royal and costly robes, it would be a great rejoicing in his heart: even so much more joyful news must this be unto all repentant sinners, when the King of heaven and earth comes unto them by death, and bids them lay down their bodies as ragged and patched garments, and prepare themselves to put on the princely robe of immortality. No tongue can be able to express the excellency of this most blessed estate. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1573.) The Christian fears not death; for he knows that it will be his happiest day, and his bridge from woe to glory. Though it be the wicked man's shipwreck, it is the good man's putting into harbour; where, striking sails and casting anchor, he returns his lading with advantage to the owner; that is, his soul to God; leaving the hulk still moored in the haven; which is unrigged, but only to be new built again, and fitted for an eternal voyage. —*Felltham*, 1668.

(1574.) Ah, foolish soul! doth every prisoner groan for freedom, and every slave desire his jubilee, and every sick man long for health, and every hungry man for food: and dost thou alone abhor deliverance? Doth the seaman long to see the land? Doth the husbandman desire the harvest, and the labouring man to receive his pay? Doth the traveller long to be at home, and the runner long to win the prize, and the soldier long to win the field? And art thou loath to see thy labours finished, and to receive the end of thy faith and sufferings, and to obtain the thing for which thou livest?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1575.) When the hen hath sat to hatch her young ones, they must leave the shell as good for nothing, and must come into a world which they never saw before. And what of that? Should they murmur at the breaking of their former habitation? or fear the passage into so light, so wide, so strange a place, in comparison of that in which they were in before? No more should we murmur at the break-

ing of these bodies, and casting the shell of flesh, and passing under the conduct of angels, into the presence of the Lord. God is but hatching us here by His Spirit, that He may bring us out into the light of glory. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1576.) Doth not the seed thou sowest die before it springs? and what cause have we to be tender to this body? Oh, what care, what labour, what grief and sorrow hath it cost us; how many a weary, painful, tedious hour! O my soul, grudge not that God should disburden thee of all this! Fear not, lest He should free thee from thy fetters: be not so loath that He should break down thy prison, and let thee go. What though some terrible earthquake go before? it is but that the foundations of the prison may be shaken, and so the doors fly open; the terror will be to thy jailer, but to thee deliverance. Oh, therefore, at what hour of the night soever thy Lord come, let Him find thee, though with thy feet in these stocks, yet singing praises to Him, and not fearing the time of thy deliverance. If unclothing be the thing thou fearest, why it is that thou mayest have better clothing put on. If to be turned out of doors be the thing thou fearest, why remember, then, when this earthly house of thy tabernacle is dissolved, thou hast "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." How willingly do our soldiers burn their huts when the siege is ended, being glad their work is done, that they may go home and dwell in houses. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1577.) The reflection that we must ere long take a final farewell of what is most capable of pleasing us upon earth, is not only tolerable, but pleasant. For we know we cannot fully possess our best friend, our chief treasure, till we have done with all below; nay, we cannot till then properly see each other. We are cased up in vehicles of clay, and converse together as if we were in different coaches, with the blinds close drawn round. We see the carriage, and the voice tells us that we have a friend within; but we shall know each other better when death shall open the coach doors, and hand out the company successively, and lead them into the glorious apartments which the Lord has appointed to be the common residence of them that love Him. What an assembly will there be! What a constellation of glory, when each individual shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father! No sins, sorrows, temptations; no veils, clouds, or prejudices shall interrupt us then. All names of idle distinction (the fruits of present remaining darkness, the channels of bigotry, and the stumblingblock of the world) will be at an end. —*Newton*, 1721-1807.

(1578.) Ah! brethren, we are not Christians about dying. We are taught that we go to heaven through the prison of death. Everybody feels that to sicken and die is to go into Egypt and into the wilderness. We are apt to think of sickness and dying as so many horrible, gloomy stages in our progress towards the future. But dying is a process as simple as the parting of the stem from the bough, or as the swinging of the door that lets one in from the wintry blast outside to the pleasant home inside. It is not hard to die. It is harder a thousand times to live. To die is to be a man. To live is only to try to be one. To live is to see God through a glass darkly. To die is to see Him face to face. To live is to be in the ore. To die is to be smelted and come out pure gold. To live is to be in March and November. To die is to find midsummer, where there is perfect harmony and perfect beauty. —*Beecher.*

3. Notwithstanding that even to them the hour of death is frequently a season of sore temptation.

(1579.) If one that is about to shoot a gun be unsteady at the letting of it go, he misseth altogether, and all that he prepared for it before is in vain; even so, at the end of this life, are devils most busy to turn us from the right mark, that our former travail and labour may be lost, forasmuch as they know that there remaineth but a very small time of life; so that if the soul escape them now, they shall afterward go without it for evermore.

Even as mighty enemies do besiege and lay assault to a city, so the devils compass the soul of man with violence and subtlety, to take possession of the poor soul and bring it to hell. When we are yet in prosperity, the devils would have us to make but a small matter of it, as though we were in no danger to God-ward, albeit we blaspheme, be drunken, &c. But in the danger of death they bring forth those wicked sins in most terrible wise, putting us in mind of the wrath of God — how He in times past here and there did punish and destroy wicked doers—to the intent that our souls might be hindered from repentance and faith, and never perceive any way to be delivered; and by reason thereof wholly to despair, and to become the devil's portion. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(1580.) We think of an aged Christian as of one seated on the bank of Jordan, enjoying the calm evening of a busy, holy, useful life—looking back on the past without any other regret than what springs from the recollection of his sins, and looking forward on the future without the shadow of a fear; as a servant with his task done, waiting to receive his wages, and the welcome summons that calls him home. We fancy him by the eye of faith piercing the mists that hang over death's dark flood; and as he descries the shining ones on the other shore, stretching out his aged arms, and crying, as he longs to be gone and be with them, Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest.

Our fancy's picture may be beautiful. It is more beautiful than true; such cases are rare. The Christian commonly dies in harness, in the battle-field, in the thick of the battle, fighting on to the last gasp. The death-bed of the saint has been indeed the scene of his hardest work, his deepest grief, his bitterest tears, and the most terrible assaults of the evil one. "Stern all" is the cry when the monster of the deep begins his dying struggles; and then every man bends to his oar, pulling out of the sweep of that tremendous tail which, as she pours out her heart's blood, beats the billows and churns them into crimsoned foam. Not less formidable sometimes are the last, the dying struggles of sin. What says our Lord? "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force;" and it happens there as with a beleaguered city at the storming—the hardest fighting is in the breach; the battle rages fiercest just before it ceases, and

with a few more strokes, the city is entered, and the prize is won. —*Guthrie.*

4. Unwillingness to die is an evidence of defective faith and love.

(1581.) Is it possible that we can truly believe that death will remove us from misery to such glory, and yet be loath to die? If it were the doubts of our interest which made us afraid, yet a true belief of the certainty and excellency of this rest would make us restless till our interest be cleared. If a man that is desperately sick to-day, did believe he should arise sound the next morning; or a man to-day, in despicable poverty, had assurance that he should to-morrow arise a prince; would they be afraid to go to bed, or rather think it the longest day of their lives, till that desired night and morning came? The truth is, though there is much faith and Christianity in our mouths, yet there is much infidelity and paganism in our hearts which is the main cause that we are so loath to die.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1582.) As the weakness of our faith, so also the coldness of our love, is exceedingly discovered by our unwillingness to die. Love doth desire the nearest conjunction, the fullest fruition, and closest communion. Where these desires are absent, there is only a naked pretence of love. He that ever felt such a thing as love working in his breast, hath also felt these desires attending it. If we love our friend, we love his company; his presence is comfortable, his absence is troublesome. When he goes from us, we desire his return; when he comes to us, we entertain him with welcome and gladness; when he dies, we mourn, and usually overmourn. To be separated from a faithful friend, is to us as the rending of a member from our bodies; and would not our desires after God be such, if we really loved Him? —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1583.) Is it not a far likelier sign of hatred than of love, when the thoughts of our appearing before God are our most grievous thoughts? and when we take ourselves as undone because we must die and come unto Him? Surely, I should scarcely take him for an unfeigned friend, who were as well contented to be absent from me, as we ordinarily are to be absent from God. Was it such a joy to Jacob to see the face of Joseph in Egypt, and shall we so dread the sight of Christ in glory, and yet say we love Him? I dare not conclude that we have no love at all when we are so loath to die; but I daresay, were our love more, we should die more willingly. Yea, I daresay, did we love God but as strongly as a worldling loves his wealth, or as an ambitious man his honour, or a voluptuous man his pleasure, yea, as a drunkard loves his swinish delight, or an unclean person his brutish lust; we should not then be so exceeding loath to leave the world, and go to God. Oh! if this holy flame of love were thoroughly kindled in our breasts, instead of our pressing fears, our dolorous complaints, and earnest prayers against death, we should join in David's wilderness lamentations:—"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

5. How the fear of it is to be overcome.

(1584.) Like as he that is to pass over some great and deep river must not look downward to the stream of the water, but if he would prevent fear he must set his foot sure and cast his eye to the bank on the further side: even so he that draws near death must, as it were, look over the waves of death, and directly fix the eye of his faith upon eternal life. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1585.) Familiarise the thoughts of the evil day to thy soul; handle this serpent often, walk daily in the serious meditations of it, do not run from them because they are unpleasing to flesh, that is the way to increase the terror of it. Do with your souls, when shy of, and scared with the thoughts of affliction or death, as you use to do with your beast that is given to boggle and start as you ride on him; when he flies back and starts at a thing, you do not yield to his fear and go back, that will make him worse another time, but you ride him up close to that which he is afraid of, and in time you break him of that quality. The evil day is not such a fearful thing to thee that art a Christian, as thou shouldst start for it. Bring up thy heart close to it, show thy soul what Christ hath done to take the sting out of it; what the sweet promises are that are given on purpose to overcome the fear of it, and what thy hopes are thou shalt get by it. These will satisfy and compose thy spirit, whereas the shunning the thoughts of it will but increase thy fear, and bring thee more into bondage to it.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1586.) "When you are afraid of death or would find more willingness to die, look up to the blessed souls with Christ, and think that you are but to pass that way, which all those souls have gone before you, and to go from a world of enmity and vanity, to the company of all those blessed spirits." And is not their blessed state more desirable than such a vain, vexatious life as this? There is no malice, nor slandering, nor cruel persecuting; no uncharitable censures, contentions, or divisions; no ignorance, nor unbelief, nor strangeness unto God, nothing but what is holy, amiable, and delightful. Join yourselves daily to that celestial society: suppose yourselves spectators of their order, purity, and glory, and auditors of their harmonious praises of Jehovah. Live by faith in a daily familiarity with them: say not that you want company or are alone, when you may walk in the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, and there converse with the prophets and apostles, and all the glorious hosts of heaven. Converse thus with them in your life, and it will overcome the fear of death, and make you long to be there with them: like one that stands by the river side, and seeth his friends on the further side, in a place of pleasure, while his enemies are pursuing him at his back, how gladly would he be over with them! And it will embolden him to venture on the passage, which all they have safely passed before him. Thus death will be to us as the Red Sea, to pass us safe to the land of promise, while our pursuers are there overthrown and perish. We should not be so strange to the world above, if we thus by faith conversed with the blessed ones. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1587.) 1. When fear cometh from natural averseness to die, and strangeness to the state of separated souls, and to some unrevealed things of the unseen world, it is wisdom to cast those dark and unknown

frightful things quite out of our thoughts, and quietly to shut our eyes against them. When I was young, I was wont to go up the Wrekin Hill with great pleasure (being near my dwelling), and to look down on the country below me, and see the villages as little things; but when I was weak with age and sickness, the last time I went up, if I did but cast my eye downwards, my spirits failed, and I was ready to fall down in sudden death. Were I chained fast to the top of a high spire steeple, I am sure that I could not fall, and yet I am confident that one look down would suddenly kill me. What then should I do? As on the hill I fixed my eyes on the earth at my feet till I came down; so I would in such a height either look only upwards, or shut my eyes, and take heed of looking down to the earth: so do here. If faith and reason tell you that death is not to be so feared, and that all your hope and comfort must be beyond it, and that you are safe in God's promise, and in the hand of Christ; but yet the thoughts of a grave and the separation from the body, and of all that is unknown to us in the next world, is frightful to you, shut your eyes, and think not on those things; wink, and say, they belong not to my thoughts.

But then join the other remedies. (2.) Look upwards, and dwell on the delightful thoughts of all that revealed joy and glory, which is ready to receive us, and of the company that is there, that hope and desire may conquer fear.

(3.) And especially trust Jesus Christ with your departing souls, and trust Him quietly and boldly.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1588.) Let us live like those who expect to die, and then we shall find that we feared death only because we were unacquainted with it.
—*Wake*, 1657–1757.

(1589.) If you think of death as a slave, looking upon it as going into servitude under a hard master, then it may weaken you, and take away the comfort that you have; but if you think of it, as every child of God has a right to think of it, as going to your Father's house, where a rich banquet is prepared for you, and where you shall enjoy the companionship of saints and angels, it will be a source of comfort and strength to you. We can afford to take trouble here for the sake of gaining such an inheritance. What would I care for being poor, if I knew that at the end of one year I should have ten millions of dollars? Men would toil hard, and unremittingly, and without complaint, if they could be assured that the boundary of their toil was within their computation, and that all beyond was to be enjoyment and the amplest wealth. Men do endure everything in the hope of securing wealth and enjoyment. How will they pursue laborious industry in the chilling regions of the North, or how will they plunge into the heat of the tropics, encountering sickness, and the malaria of every delta that has commerce in it, in the hope that they may return to their father's house, or the village or neighbourhood of their birth, and spend the few closing days of their life in pleasure and comfort. And if such is the strength of the hope of a short period of earthly peace and rest, how much greater must be the strength of that man's hope who expects, after a few years (he cares not how few, so that God s will be done) he shall rise out of this world of trouble, and care, and vicissitudes, into the land of glory,—God's land of freedom, of nobility, of purity, of truth? —*Beecher.*

6. The secret of peace in death.

(1590.) Of the great number to whom it has been my painful professional duty to have administered in the last hour of their lives, I have sometimes felt surprised that so few have appeared reluctant to go to "the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns." Many, we may easily suppose, have manifested this willingness to die from an impatience of suffering, or from that passive indifference which is sometimes the result of debility and bodily exhaustion. But I have seen those who have arrived at a fearless contemplation of the future, from faith in the doctrine which our religion teaches. Such men were not only calm and supported, but cheerful, in the hour of death; and I never quitted such a sick-chamber without a hope that my last end might be like theirs. —*Sir Henry Halford.*

(1591.) "Can I do anything for you?" said an officer in one of our gory battles in America, during that awful conflict, to one of the lads in blue, whose life was trickling away upon the green sward. "Nothing," said the dying soldier, "nothing!" "Shall I get you a little water?" "No, thank you, I am dying." "Is there nothing I can do?" said the officer; "shall I write a letter to your friends?" "No, I have no friends that you can write to. But there is one thing I should be much obliged to you for. In my knapsack you will find a Testament; open it at the 14th chapter of St. John, and near the end you will find a passage that begins with the word 'Peace;' please read it." The officer took up the blood-stained haversack, took out the Testament, and turned to that chapter that your pastor and myself have read so often, or held up so often as a lamp in the valley of the shadow of death, the matchless 14th chapter of John; and he read: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Thank you, sir," said the dying man; "I have got that peace; I am going to that Saviour." And winging its way from the poor bleeding body, the spirit ascended; and, as Noah stretched out his hand to the dove, the infinite Love grasped him and drew him in. For him to die was Christ; for him to die was gain—gain everlasting! —*Cuyler.*

(1592.) A hope that is built on acceptance of the truth, on degrees of knowledge and obedience, on sincerity of purpose or effort, and not on the merit and intercessions of a personal Redeemer, is, and must be, a timid and inconstant feeling. There is a reason why ignorant Christians are always hopeful. It is not because they have less knowledge, but because, having less, their faith is less diverted from its proper and sublime object. They literally know nothing but "Jesus, and Him crucified;" and on Him they rely with an unquestioning faith. He is their all-in-all: He, and He alone, is their hope of glory. And what a hope theirs is! I have seen such die. They were poor, unlettered, destitute of ideas; they had had no traffic in the great commerce of the world's thought; it were easy for wit to mock them, and for culture to pity their ignorance: but they died as the sun comes out of an eclipse, their natures revealing great glory as they moved from behind the shadow of their mortality. No crying out, no shrinking back as from an untried fate, no knitting up of courage as for a mighty effort, no

grasping of mortal hands as if for help, no swift and anxious dialogue with the onlooking pastor, no doubt and trembling when they came to die; but with hands folded for rest, with eyes uplifted to heaven and full of joy, with countenances lighted as is the face when it answereth to the face of a friend, with a sigh like the last long breath of weariness passing into sleep, they gently breathed their lives out in the arms of Jesus. He was no myth to them. They saw Him, not through form and ceremony, through type and symbol, through theologic treatise and verbal memorising of the catechism: they saw Him as the patient sees the physician; as the lamb sees the Eastern shepherd when it lies in the folds of his vestment; they saw Him as the uplifted eye of love sees the face of answering love above it; and, seeing this, doubt being unknown in the perfection of their faith, fear being cast out by the perfectness of their love, they closed their eyes as flowers close at the setting of the sun, and gently "fell on sleep." —*Murray.*

(1593.) On his way to Sweden, the celebrated Grotius was overtaken by mortal sickness, and when the clergyman, Quinstorp, reminded him of his sins on the one hand, and on the other, not of his services and world-wide reputation, but the grace of God in Christ Jesus, with a reference to the publican, "I am that publican," replied Grotius, and then expired. Rowland Hill remarked, "People talk about looking back on a well-spent life. I look up to Him who spent His life gloriously to redeem the life of my precious soul; and there alone I dare to look. I thank God who has kept me from grosser sins of the world; but there is not a prayer more suitable to my dying lips than that of the publican: 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'" Archbishop Usher often said he hoped to die with this language of the publican in his mouth. His wish was fulfilled, for his last words were: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Dr. Woods, of Andover, the night before his death, replied to a friend who asked if he should pray with him: "There is no prayer that meets my case but that of the publican: 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'"

7. Grandeur of the Christian's death.

(1594.) "Death swallowed up in victory." Earth presents not a spectacle of equal grandeur to that of a Christian who has power to wrest the dart of the king of terrors from his hand on the very confines of an eternal world. His calm but lofty tone is the language of the conqueror, though in the midst of infirmity, death and judgment. It is like the half hour before sunset—in the midst of nature's grandest and most majestic scenery—when there is not a breath to agitate the frailest leaf, or ripple the glassy smoothness of the water's surface—it is the sublime of tranquillity. —*Salter.*

8. In death the saints are perfected.

(1595.) Fear not death, then; let it do its worst. It can give thee but one deadly gripe that shall kill itself, and prove thy life; as the wasp that leaves its sting behind, and can sting no more. It shall but snuff the candle of thy life, and make it shine brighter when it seems to be put out; it is but an undressing, and a gentle sleep. That which thou couldst not here attain by all our preaching, and all thy prayers, and cares, and pains, thou shalt speedily attain by the help of death. It is but the messenger of thy gracious Lord, and calleth thee to Him, to the place that He hath prepared.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1596.) Death is the time when sin shall gasp its last, and so far our physician will perfect the cure; and our greatest enemy shall follow us no further. It is the door by which the soul must pass to Christ in paradise.

If any papist shall hence plead that therefore all men must be perfect without sin before death, or else go to purgatory to be cleansed, because as we die, so Christ will find us; or if they ask how death can perfect us? I answer them, "It is Christ our physician that finisheth the cure, and death is the time in which He doeth it." And if He undertake then to do it, it concerns not us to be too inquisitive how He doeth it. What if the patient understand not how blood-letting cureth the infected blood that is left behind? Must he therefore plead against his physician, and say, "It will not be done," because he knoweth not how it is done? We feel that here we have our sinful imperfections. We have for all that a promise that we shall be with Christ when death hath made its separation; and we are assured that no sin doth enter there. And is not this enough for us to know?

But yet I see not why the difficulty of the objection should trouble us at all. Death doth remove us from this sinful flesh, and admits the soul into the sight of God. And in the very instant of its removal it must needs be perfected, even by that removal, and by the first appearance of His blessed face. If you bring a candle into a dark room, the access of the light expelleth the darkness at the same instant; and you cannot say that they exist together one moment of time. So cold is expelled by the approach of heat. And thus when death hath opened the door, and let us into the immortal light, neither before nor after, but in that instant, all the darkness and sinful imperfections of our souls are dissipated. Throw an empty bottle into the sea, and the emptiness ceaseth by the filling of the water, neither before nor after, but in that instant.

If this should not satisfy any, let it satisfy them, that the Holy Ghost in the instant of death can perfect His work.

So that we need not assert a perfection on earth (which on their grounds must be the case of all that escape hell and purgatory), nor yet any purgatory torments after death, for the deliverance of the soul from the relics of sin; seeing, at the instant of death, by the Spirit, or by the deposition of the flesh, or by the sight of God, or by the sight of our glorified Redeemer, or by all, this work will be easily and infallibly accomplished. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1597.) So many impurities and imperfections cleave to the best of us, that it seems to me a change must take place at death only second to what took place at conversion. The holiness of the holiest man, how far short it is of the holiness of heaven! A great deal of sin is in every case left behind with the body, to be, thank God, for ever buried in its grave; and could we see the spirit at its departure, as Elisha saw his ascending master, we should see a mantle of impurity and imperfection dropped from the chariot that bears it to the skies. In the very hour of death, therefore, the Spirit of God must crown all His other labours with a rapid.

and extraordinary work of sanctifying. How that is done is a mystery which we cannot fathom; but it would seem as if grace, like that species of *cereus* which opens its gorgeous flower only at midnight, bursts out into fullest beauty amid the darkness of a dying hour. It is enough for us to know that God will perfect that which concerneth us; that He will bring us safely home; and that no vessel, chartered for glory, shall be lost at the harbour's mouth. It takes one whole summer, with its showers and sunshine to ripen the fields of corn; it takes five hundred summers to bring the oak to full maturity; but He at whose word the earth sprang into being, bearing on its bosom loaded orchards, and golden harvests, and clustering vines, the tall palm, and the gigantic cedar, woman in full blown charms, and man in his perfect manhood, He with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, is able in the twinkling of an eye to complete and crown the work of His grace. He will do it. He that began a good work in you will carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus; and thus apparelled in the righteousness of His Son, and wholly sanctified by the power of His Spirit, His saints shall appear before Him—"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

—*Guthrie.*

(1598.) "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." He leaves his cross, and direct, as on a summer evening I have seen a lark with outspread wings drop singing into her nest, he goes up singing to his crown. —*Guthrie.*

(1599.) "What a poor grovelling thing I am!" said a caterpillar to itself one day, as it toiled along over the rough road of the path-field. "Oh, how close to the earth I keep and creep!

"How I seem to envy those fluttering creatures which with spread wings rise in the air, course over the meadow, and fly or alight according to will. It must be a glorious life to live, of which a poor worm like me can form no just conception.

"Stay, though; I ought not to indulge in thoughts that might lead unto melancholy repining, and worse rebellion, and I am not the only little being whose 'habitation is in the dust.'"

And so the caterpillar lived its little history, which admitted of various changes; till enveloped in a hard shell provided by nature, it remained in a chrysalis state a while till it seemed to awake into a new existence; threw off its load, and was a beautiful butterfly.

And now, it no longer crept into the earth and was confined unto the dust. Wings of brilliant hues enabled it to rise on high, to skim over fields and gardens, to luxuriate amongst fragrant flowers, and to sip honey out of their dewy cups.

"Oh, what a wondrous change, and happy life this is!" it exclaimed; "how unlike to my original condition, when I only crept about the earth; and how strange, that from that inactive, unconscious state when I was rolled up in my hard shell, I am transformed into the light, bright-winged creature I am, never more to be what I was!"

And so, too, the Christian feels himself being by nature of the earth, earthly. How often he mourns saying, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust" (Ps. cxix. 25). How he longs to cast off the ties that bind him down to corruption, as the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And how ardently he craves after "the wings of a dove, to fly away, and to be at rest." Then he sleeps in his grave, till the morning of the resurrection; and clothed with a new body, ascends to enjoy for ever the life of glory in the Paradise of heaven; of which the poet sings,

> "There shall I see, and hear, and know,
> All I desired, or wished below;
> And every power find sweet employ,
> In that eternal world of joy."
>
> —*Bowden.*

(1600.) It does not seem to me, as I look at men in the whole round of their condition and stage of development, that on dying they can be expected to enter upon a perfected state. There is in them so much that is not developed at all, so much that is deaf and dumb, so much that is comparatively paralysed, so much that is shrunk; there is in them so low an average of development on every side, that it seems to me impossible that anything short of a miraculous touch of re-creation can bring them in a moment, though they are set free from the body, to the attitude of perfect beings.

We enter the kingdom of heaven, in more senses than one, as little children. I take it that we leave this world to go on with our stages of discipline—not the same which we have here, but what will, in our changed conditions and circumstances, be equivalent to what discipline is in our earthly relations. But it does not seem to me rational that we shall be trudging, trudging, trudging, clear up to the moment of death, and that then we shall start up absolutely different. There will be another climate, another soil, and a nobler growth; but there will be *growth*. That which you have not learned here, you must learn there. That which you have left undone in this world, you must do in the world to come.

In Labrador, the missionary, at the beginning of a short summer, sows the seed of the vine. It comes up, and gets a little start, and is taken out of the soil and husbanded during the winter, to be put out again when the next brief summer sets in. But in the course of the ten years of this missionary's life in that cold region, the vine does not get more than three or four feet high, and never shows any symptoms of bud or blossom, or cluster. The soil is too cold, and the summer is too short. At length, the missionary is recalled to his native land, and he takes this vine, the pet of his leisure, and brings it down to our southern latitudes, and plants it. It is now the same vine; it has the same root; but it is not the same sky that is over it. Look long, O Summer! Look warm, O Sun! Search and find where the hidden things in the vine are. Behold, how it begins to shoot up! See what a stately growth it is having! Look at the branch upon branch which it is throwing out! Observe the smell in the air! See the blossoms, and after the blossoms, the clusters which the autumn shall see hanging impurpled and ripened! But it took another soil and another sun to produce it. It never would have reached that state in Labrador.

—*Beecher.*

9. How the early Christians regarded it.

(1601.) There are those who look upon death as a separation from things desirable in this world. The future is hardly thought of. It is what is being left, it is letting go, it is being "unclothed"—to use the apostle's phrase—that is thought of. But there is no evidence that in the primitive Church,

and among the early disciples, there were any of these thoughts or feelings. Dying, to the early Christians, was going to see the Lord.

A child that has been penned up in narrow quarters, with few playthings, and in constrained circumstances, has a grandmother and a grandfather living in the country. There is the farmhouse, full of rude abundance; there are the ample grounds; there is the brook, with fish in it; there is the big barn; and there are all manner of things in the barnyard. The child has been out there once; and he had such liberty, and found his grandma such a dear old grandma, and his grandpa such a kind old grandpa, that the days were not long enough. He had so much sport, and was made so much of, and was never scolded, and never sent to school, and had nothing to do or to think of but to play, play, play all the time, that he would have liked to abide there. But he has been taken back to the city, and he lives in a narrow house, and has to go to school, and has to do this thing and that, which are irksome to him, and is put through all the paces which are thought necessary for his education and development; and he longs for his country experience again. When spring comes round once more, the father and mother say to the little fellow, "Now, if you are a good boy, next June we are going to take you out to grandpa's." The idea of going out of the city to grandpa's! The child's mind is filled with all manner of delights. Ah, what perfect ecstasy he feels! He dreams about going, and rejoices in the thought. He does not analyse the intermediate steps, nor thinks much about them. His grandpa's is the place where, to his thought and affection, centres everything that is most heavenly—for a boy on earth, that is.

I suppose that comes nearer to representing the feelings which the primitive disciples, the early Christians, had about dying, than any other illustration that you could well make. It was to go and be with the Lord. It was to be for ever with the Lord. It was the coming of the Son of Man. It was a thought that was never dashed by an uncertainty. You can scarcely find a passage that indicates that the apostles had any doubt. There is but a single allusion in the whole of the Apostle Paul's writings which conveyed any doubt (and that was not really doubtful) on the point of death. That was in reference to his unfaithfulness in his ministerial duty. He feared that he had not fulfilled his whole duty as a preacher of the gospel of Christ, and that he should be cast away. In regard to death, I do not recollect a single instance in which there was expressed, by the early Christians, any uncertainty, or any other feeling than that of exhilaration and ecstasy. —*Beecher.*

10. Is still longed for by holy men.

(1602.) You will say that child is willing that calls to be put to bed; some of the saints have desired God to lay them at rest in their beds of dust; and that not in a pet and discontent with their present trouble, as Job did; but from a sweet sense of this peace in their bosoms. "Now let Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," was the swan-like song of old Simeon. He speaks like a merchant, that had got all his goods on ship-board, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail, and be gone homewards. Indeed what should a Christian, that is but a foreigner here, desire to stay any longer for in the world, but to get this full lading in for heaven?
—*Gurnall.*

11. Is not to be impatiently desired.

(1603.) I account this body nothing but a close prison to my soul; and the earth a larger prison to my body. I may not break prison, till I be loosed by death; but I will leave it, not unwillingly, when I am loosed. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(1604.) A dutiful child is ever looking forward to the holidays, when he shall return to his father; but he does not think of running from school before. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(1605.) There are times, I suppose, in which the most zealous would, if it were God's will, be glad to die—to retire from the battle of life—because they think it will make no difference whether they live or die. They have such a consciousness of imperfection, of inferiority, of unfitness in themselves, that they feel that it could scarcely be worse, and that it might be much better, if they were out of the world, and their places filled by others.

What is a drop of water of itself? What can be more harmless? What is weaker? What is less potent for any effect? It is mist, invisible. It rises through the imperceptible paths of the air, and hangs unseen in the heavens, till the cold strikes it, and it congeals into clouds, and falls in the form of rain, perhaps on the mountain's top, and is sucked up by the greedy earth. Still sinking through the earth, it reaches the line of the rocks, from whose sides it oozes out and trickles down, when, finding other drops as weak as itself, they unite their forces; and the sum of the weakness of all these drops goes to make the rill; which flows on, making music as it flows, until it meets counter streams. These, combined, form the river; the rivers form the estuaries; and the estuary the ocean itself. And now, when God has marshalled the sum of the weakness of myriad drops together, they lift the mightiest ship as if it were but a feather, and play with the winds as if they were mere instruments of sport. And yet, that very drop, which a man could bear upon the end of his finger, is there, and has its part and lot in the might of the whole vast, unbounded sea.

We in our singleness, in our individuality, in our own selves, are weaker than a drop of water, and more unstable; but as gathered together in the great ocean of life, as kept together by the mighty currents which God's providences make, we attain, working together with Him, under the inspiration of His Spirit, to a might that makes life not ignoble, but sublime. It is most worthy of remark that the things that have called forth the most strength and endeavour of life have been things that we have most utterly failed in doing; while the things that seem to draw about themselves only the endeavours of weakness, have been the things that God has established most. —*Beecher.*

(1606.) Death is not a thing to be desired: it is not a blessing, but God's curse on account of sin. Sometimes indeed it is ignorantly longed for. Overwhelmed by misery, not a few who are without God and without hope in the world anticipate its period, and prematurely and violently terminate their earthly career. But no one can be so mistaken

or so unhappy as the suicide. In their moments of despair, even good men have desired to be in the grave, whereas Job so pathetically says, "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;" where the prisoners rest together, and hear not the voice of the oppressor; where are the small and great, and where the servant is free from his master. But, like Job himself, when they have returned to calmness and confidence in God, each has said: "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change come." No good man will ever deliberately wish merely to die.

The true servants of God will never dishonour Him by proclaiming that the task He sets them is so intolerable, that it were better to be as the clods of the valley than engaged in its performance.

The true soldiers of Christ, who have been placed by Him in positions of especial difficulty, danger, and hardship, that they may peculiarly distinguish themselves, and win for Him peculiar glory, will never long merely for the ending of the campaign. They will not be perpetually contrasting the privations of war with the comforts of peace, and moaning and complaining because the conflict is prolonged. Victory, not ease, will be the supreme object of their desire. They will hate the wish to desert their post, just as they would actually to desert. Until the Captain of their salvation summons them to Himself, they will cheerfully endure hardness as His good soldiers.

Even those of Christ's followers, to whom life seems one prolonged furnace of affliction, will never forget that God placed them in it and that His eye is upon them, that He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver watching them with most anxious care, that His only desire is to purge them as gold and silver from all dross and defilement, and that as soon as the perfect reflection in them of His Image proclaims that the work is done, the scorching fire shall be removed, and each of them shall be fashioned into a vessel of honour for the Master's use: and not one of them would wish to have the fire quenched before their heavenly Father Himself sees fit to do so.

But it is not wrong for the servants to wish for the successful accomplishment of their task, nor for the soldiers to desire the victory and triumph of which they are assured, nor for those who are in the furnace to long for the moment when their purification shall be complete. And so as Paul says, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life:"—not merely that we may be eased of our burden, and like the horse or ass end at once our labours and our life, but that we may attain to that more exalted state of being which God has promised us in His Word. —*R. A. Bertram.*

12. Sudden death.

(1607.) Lord, be pleased to shake my clay cottage before Thou throwest it down. Make it totter awhile before it doth tumble. Let me be summoned before I am surprised. Deliver me from "sudden death;" not from sudden death in respect to itself, for I care not how short my passage be, so it be safe. Never any weary traveller complained that he came too soon to his journey's end. But let it not be sudden in respect of me. Make me always ready to receive death. Thus no guest comes unawares to him who keeps a constant table.

—*Fuller*, 1637–1701.

(1608.) To a man awakened by grace, sudden death will be sudden glory.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(1609.) I have always been peculiarly subject to sea-sickness. When I was going abroad, and all the wonders of the Continent were dazzling my imagination, I used to lie in my berth scarcely able to stir, wilted and worthless. I knew there were ten days between New York and Liverpool, and I used to say to myself, "Well, are you willing to take these ten days of nausea and universal disgust for the sake of the three months of exquisite joy which you are going to have on the Continent?" I never was so sea-sick but that I was deliberately willing to pay the price. I said, "This is about as bad as anything can well be in this world; but for the sake of that which is beyond it I will take even this." Returning, we had a passage of seventeen days. We came with a water-logged steamship. She was loaded down deeper by many feet than she should have been. She had contraband goods to land at Halifax, which I had the pleasure of riding upon all the way across the sea. It was stormy from shore to shore, without a single fair day. But the place to which we were going was my home; there was my family; there was my church; there were my friends who were as dear to me as my own life. And I lay perfectly happy in the midst of sickness and nausea. All that the boat could do to me could not keep down the exultation and joy which rose up in me. For every single hour was carrying me nearer and nearer to the spot where was all that I loved in the world. It was deep, dark midnight when we ran into Halifax. I could see nothing. Yet, the moment we came into still water I rose from my berth, and got up on deck. And as I sat near the smoke-stack while they were unloading the cargo, upon the wharf, I saw the shadow of a person, apparently going backward and forward near me. At last the thought occurred to me, "Am I watched?" Just then the person addressed me, saying, "Is this Mr. Beecher?" "It is," I replied. "I have a telegram for you from your wife." I had not realised that I had struck the continent where my family were. There, in the middle of the night, and in darkness, the intelligence that I had a telegram from home—I cannot tell you what a thrill it sent through me!

Brethren, we are all sailing home; and by and by, when we are not thinking of it, some shadowy thing (men call it death), at midnight, will pass by, and will call us by name, and will say, "I have a message for you from home; God wants you; heaven waits for you." —*Beecher.*

13. Its revelations.

(1610.) Alexander of Russia used often to ride in a plain carriage, incognito. A man on the road asked if he might ride with him. He got into the carriage, and after awhile was inquisitive as to the name of the man with whom he was riding. He said, "Are you a lieutenant?" "No," said the king. "Are you a major?" "No," said the king. "Are you a general?" "No," said the king; "but I am something higher than that." The man said, "Then you must be the emperor," and was overwhelmed with his company. In this world God appears to us in strange ways. He takes us up in the chariot of His providence to ride with Him, and we know Him not. At death the disguise

will be gone, and for the first it will be known to us that we have been riding with the King.
—*Talmage.*

IV. *ENCOURAGEMENTS FOR THE FEARFUL.*

1. Christ has abolished death.

(1611.) The death of the faithful seemeth indeed to be like unto the death of the unbelievers; but verily this is as great a difference as between heaven and earth. Our death is even as a death-image made of wood, which grinneth with the teeth, and feareth, but cannot devour. Our death should be esteemed even as Moses' brazen serpent, which having the form and proportion of a serpent was yet without biting, without moving, without poisoning. Even so, though death be not utterly taken away, yet through the grace of God it is so weakened and made void, that only the bare proportion remaineth. —*Wermullerus*, 1557.

(1612.) A pardoned soul needs not fear death. He may look on death with joy, who can look on forgiveness with faith. To a pardoned soul death hath lost his sting. Death to a pardoned sinner, is like the arresting a man after the debt is paid; death may arrest, but Christ will show the debt-book crossed in His blood. A pardoned soul may triumph over death, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"
—*Watson*, 1696.

(1613.) For them that are His, Christ has "abolished death." Death is to them a messenger, inviting them to exchange their tabernacles of clay for palaces not made with hands; a deliverer from the fetters of time; a summons to His soldiers to lay aside their armour, and to put on the chaplet of victory; an escort to conduct home his bride, that the espousals may be consummated; a chariot to convey them from this famine-stricken land to the Goshen of perpetual plenty; a ferry to carry them once for all over the flood that rolls between this wilderness of sighs and the happy valley, whence sorrow and sighing have for ever fled. It is true their earthly stars pale and fade, but it is before the dawning of undying day.

To die is for the Christian "gain," because to him "to live is Christ." Death is the development of his life; the flower drops, and the fruit expands.
—*R. A. Bertram.*

2. Death is God's angel.

(1614.) The angel of sleep and the angel of death wandered in fraternal unity over the world. It was evening. They rested on a hill not far from the habitations of man. A placid calmness prevailed everywhere; even the sound of the curfew ceased in the distant hamlet.

Calmly and silently, as is their wont, the two beneficent angels of mankind held each other embraced until night approached. Then the angel of sleep arose from his mossy seat, and strewed with noiseless hand the invisible seeds of slumber.

The evening breeze carried them to the quiet dwellings of the tired country people, and sweet sleep descended on the dwellers in their rural huts, from the old man with his crutch to the babe in the cradle. The sick once more forgot their pains, the troubled soul her grief, and poverty her cares; for every eye was closed.

Now, his task being done, the beneficent angel of sleep returned to his graver brother "When the light of morning arises," he exclaimed with innocent joy, "then mankind will praise me as their friend and benefactor. What a blessing to do good in secret! How happy are we, the invisible messengers of the good Spirit! How beautiful our silent calling!" Thus spoke the gentle angel of sleep.

The angel of death gazed at him with a look of soft melancholy, and a fear, such as immortal beings shed, glistened in his large dark eye. "Alas!" said he, "would that I could enjoy cheerful gratitude like thee! The world calls me her enemy and disturber!"

"O my brother," replied the angel of sleep, "will not, at the awakening, the good man acknowledge thee as his friend and benefactor, and gratefully bless thee? Are we not brethren and messengers of one Father?"

When he spoke thus, the eye of the angel of death glistened brightly, and the fraternal spirits embraced with renewed tenderness.
—*Krummacher.*

3. It touches the body only.

(1615.) The egg-shell, though it be goodly and fair-fashioned, must be opened and broken, that the young chick may slip out of it. None otherwise doth death dissolve and break up our body, but to the intent that we may attain unto the life of heaven. —*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(1616.) In proportion as the body falls into ruin, the spirit is disengaged and renewed; like a pure and brilliant flame, which ascends and shines forth with additional splendour in proportion as it disengages itself from the remains of matter which held it down, and as the substance to which it was attached is consumed and dissipated.
—*Massillon.*

(1617.) If a miserable prisoner were taken out of his dungeon to a palace, in order to receive a kingdom, you would not say that he ceases to be a man; you would not say that he discontinues to abide; you would say—"Nothing has happened to him but an advantageous change in his manner of living." So I say of this man—"Nothing has happened in death to injure *him!* Nothing has happened but a glorious change in his manner of living!" —*Cecil*, 1748-1810.

(1618.) We are only "delivered from this body" by the act of dying; and when Christ is with us, this is all that we mean by dying. That part of our nature which believes in Jesus can never die. Sickness cannot dissolve—nor fever waste—nor fracture mutilate—thought, fidelity, and love. "Strike on, strike on; thou canst not touch Anaxarchus!" So said the sage to the executioner, who was commanded to destroy him with the strokes of an iron mace; and so we may challenge death. The ship may be broken on the rocks, but the passenger will live and reach the shore; the tent may be levelled to the dust, but the tenant will survive; the believer, when he drops the burden of the flesh, though "absent from the body," is "present with the Lord." —*Stanford.*

(1619.) Not long ago, a group of Alpine villagers were engaged, in early summer, weeding their crops close to their native hamlet. Above them rose

mountain piled upon mountain, crested with jagged peaks of everlasting snow. A low, murmuring, crushing sound was heard at eventide, high up among these cliffs; a sound too familiar to be mistaken by experienced ears. It was the awful messenger of wrath and destruction. A fragment of rock loosened in the topmast crags, became the nucleus and feeder of the avalanche. Down came the terrific invader, sweeping all before it, and burying the handful of huts in a common ruin. The villagers escaped themselves unhurt. Disentangling their mutilated furniture from the midst of the broken pine, rafters, and stones, and thankful for their providential escape, they moved to the opposite slope of the valley, and reared their dwellings anew.

Death is that avalanche! "At such a time as we think not!" It may be in smiling spring, or in a radiant summer, or hoary winter—down it comes, destroying all that is fair and lovely and beauteous—rooting up tender flowers, budding blossoms, trellised vines, primeval forests,—overwhelming "the house of the earthly tabernacle," and leaving it a mass of dilapidated walls, and shattered timbers. But what of the inmate? What of the immortal inhabitant? The house is dissolved, but the tenant is safe. A new home is reared for it. The soul quits the wreck bodily frame-work, and seeks the "building of God, eternal in the heavens." The same idea is beautifully expressed by a Christian poet of the land of Luther in one of their funeral hymns—

"Here in an inn a stranger dwelt,
Here joy and grief by turns he felt:
Poor dwelling, now we close thy door,
The task is o'er,
The sojourner returns no more!

"Now of a lasting home possest,
He goes to seek a deeper rest.
The Lord brought here; He calls away,
Make no delay,
This home was for a passing day."

—*Macduff.*

4. Even the body shall rise again.

(1620.) If an old silver goblet be melted, and new-fashioned after a beautiful manner, then is it better than before, and neither spilt nor destroyed. Even so have we just cause to complain of death, whereby the body being delivered from all filthiness, shall in his due time be perfectly renewed.

—*Wermullerus*, 1557.

(1621.) Is it the taking down of thine earthly tabernacle which troubles thee? Why, dost thou not know that death is the workman sent by the Father to pull down this earthly house of mortality and clay, that it may be set up anew, infinitely more lasting, beautiful, and glorious? Didst thou believe how rich and splendid He intends to make it, which cannot be unless taken down, thou wouldst contentedly endure the present toil and trouble, and be thankful to Him for His care and cost. He takes down thy vile body, that He may fashion it like to the glorious body of His own Son, which for brightness and beauty excels the sun in its best attire far more than that doth the meanest star.

Is it the untying of the knot betwixt body and soul which perplexeth thee? It is true they part; but, as friends going two several ways, shake hands till they return from their journey, they are as sure of meeting again as of parting; so thy soul shall return laden with the wealth of heaven and fetch his old companion to the participation of all his joy and happiness. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1622.) If in good sadness you believe the resurrection, what cause is there for so much fear of death? You can be content that your roses die, and your sweetest flowers fall and perish, and the green and beauteous complexion of the earth be turned into a bleak and withered hue, because you expect a kind of resurrection in the spring. You can boldly lie down at night to sleep though sleep be a kind of death to the body, and more to the soul, and all because you shall rise again in the morning; and if every night's sleep (or one at least) were a gentle death, if you were sure to rise again the next morning, you would make no great matter of it. Were it as common for men to die every night, and rise again in the morning, as it is to sleep every night and rise in the morning, death would not seem such a dreadful thing.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

5. Death is our deliverance from bondage.

(1623.) If a man lie in a dark miserable prison, with this condition that he should not come forth till the walls of the tower were fallen down, undoubtedly he would be right glad to see the walls begin to fall. Our soul is kept in within the body upon earth as in captivity and bonds: now as soon as the body is at a point that it must needs fall, why should we be sorry? For by this approacheth the deliverance, when we out of the prison of misery shall be brought before the most amiable countenance of God, into the joyful freedom of heaven. According to this did David pray: "Bring my soul out of prison, O Lord, that I may give thanks unto Thy name."

—*Wermullerus*, 1557.

(1624.) It is well known that when a jailer knocks off a prisoner's fetters, that the constant wearing them hath put him to a great deal less pain than the knocking of them off doth at the present; yet, though every blow go to the very heart of him, he never murmurs at it, but is quiet and well contented, because he knows that the pain will be compensated by the ease that he shall afterwards enjoy. Thus it is that all men here lie fettered with the irons of mortality and sin, in which case it may be, when God comes to knock off those irons by death, that they feel more pain and extremity than before; yet, because this brings to ease and everlasting rest, let them be patient in this the time of their dissolution. —*Rogers*, 1636.

(1625.) When death cuts asunder the string of the body, the soul, as a dove, flies away, and is at rest. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1626.) There is not in the compass of nature a more lively emblem of the soul, imprisoned in this mortal body, than (homely as the comparison may appear) that of a bird in the egg. The little animal, though thus confined, is in the midst of the scenes of its future life. It is not distance which excludes it from the air, the light, and all the objects with which it will so soon be conversant. It is in the midst of them, though utterly shut out from them; and when the moment for bursting its enclosure comes, will be ushered into a new world, and translated into scenes unknown before, not by the change of place, but by passing into another

state of existence. So it is with the soul. It is now, in a certain sense, *in eternity*, and surrounded with eternal things. Even the body to which it is attached stands out on the surface of this globe in infinite space. Besides, the spiritual world envelopes it on every side! It is encompassed with a cloud of witnesses; innumerable spirits encamp about it; and God is as intimately present to it, as to the highest angel that beholds his face in heaven. Nevertheless to realise to itself the nearness and the presence of these natural objects, at least to know them as it will know them hereafter, is a thing impossible, Why? Not because any tract of space is interposed between the soul and them, but because the spiritual principle, while united to flesh, is by the laws of that union so imprisoned in the body as to be denied all means of intercourse with those scenes which lie around its prison walls. The hand of death alone can unbar the door, and let the spirit out into the free air and open daylight of eternity. There is one important particular more, in which this analogy holds. Unless the embryo is vivified while in the egg, it can receive no vitalising principle after. If the shell is broken, the young bird comes out dead. Thus it is also with the soul. Unless impregnated with spiritual life before it leaves the body, it will come forth still-born into eternity, and continue for ever dead in trespasses and sins. —*Woodward.*

(1627.) Death, like the angel in Peter's dungeon, breaks the fetters of mortality, throws open the prison doors; and from the gloom of night and the crash of the earthquake leads the spirit out to gladsome day. Oh, that we would ever view it as such—the exodus of life—the outmarching of the soul from its chains and its bondage to the land of rest and liberty and peace! —*Macduff.*

(1628.) There are in many a dungeon to-day men who have been there, unsunned, for years and years, down deeper than the roots could go. There, in their unventilated prison, vermin-covered, chilled, and almost bereft of reason itself, they drag out a miserable existence. But suppose their prison-doors should be thrown wide open, and they should be called, by some liberating army, as the Italians were, to leave their dungeons, would they think it a misfortune? Would they count liberty to be a burden, and the chance to be free again a thing to be wept about? And we, that are of the earth, earthy; we that are of the flesh, fleshly; we that are infants, undeveloped; we that have a thousand germinant points, beginnings, almost none of which are grown; we that are waiting, not for the redemption of the body, but for redemption from the body—for the enfranchisement of the spirit—shall we speak of death gloomily?
—*Beecher.*

6. Death is the end of all our cares and sorrows.

(1629.) We spend our years with sighing; it is a valley of tears: but death is the funeral of all our sorrows. —*Watson*, 1696.

7. Death transforms the future.

(1630.) "To die is gain" to the Christian, because for him "death transforms the future." To all of us now the future is full of fear. We know it will bring with it changes. If we be spared, yet we shall be called to part with those we love, and to lay them in the silent tomb. Old age means solitariness. One by one the companions of youth depart. Grey hairs speak not only of multiplied years, but also of added griefs. The man who by reason of strength attains to fourscore years, finds himself a stranger amongst a strange generation, without any to sympathise with him, with no other solace than this, that soon he too must go the way of all flesh. But for the Christian, death changes all this. To him the future means re-union. Each year will bring home the dear ones. One by one they will come to complete the immortal circle.

You may have seen an emigrant vessel leave our shores. Oh, what tearful partings! What anguished cries! What heart-broken farewells! How those left behind strain their vision, and waive their tokens of love, so long as they can catch one glimpse of the departing sail! And when it has faded from their view, with what heavy hearts do they slowly seek their homes! But did you ever go with such a vessel to its destined port? Was there weeping there? Were there cries of anguish there? As the vessel hauled up to the dock, did you not behold, waiting, with warm welcomes, loved ones who had gone before? Were not eager hands held out to press yours in loving grasp? In the pure joy of that hour, were not all the pains of parting and all the perils of the voyage forgotten?

Ah, so it is with us here. Again and again we go down to the dark verge of eternity to bid farewell to departing friends. But a little way on their voyage can we see them. Sitting in our saddened homes, we behold not the shining ones waiting to receive them on the other shore. But while we weep, they rejoice. Friends for whom they mourned have welcomed them to the better land. For us they mourn not; not because they have forgotten us, but because they know that in a little while we too will join them, to part no more.
—*R. A. Bertram.*

8. Death inducts us to true joy.

(1631.) Let them fear death, who do not fear sin; but let not God's children be overmuch troubled at the grim face of that messenger, which brings them to the end of their sorrow, and the beginning of their joy. Death is yours (1 Cor. iii. 22), it is a part of the believer's inventory. Is a prince afraid to cross a narrow sea who shall be crowned when he comes to shore? Death to the saints shall be an usher to bring them into the presence of the King of glory; this puts lilies and roses into the ghastly face of death, and makes it look amiable. Death brings us to a crown of glory which fades not away: the day of death is better to a believer than the day of his birth; death is *additus ad gloriam* an entrance into a blessed eternity. Fear not death, but rather let your hearts revive when you think these rattling wheels of death's chariot are but to carry you home to an everlasting kingdom. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1632.) The safest thing that a Christian can do is to die. An Italian made a chime of bells for his native village. So sweet was the chime that he took up his abode near it. After awhile war came. The Italian was taken into exile. The bells were captured and were also taken away. Years passed on. One day the Italian exile, in a row-boat, is

being rowed up the river Shannon toward the city of Limerick, Ireland. As he comes near the wharf the cathedral tower strikes the chime; and lo, it was the same old chime of bells that had so, in other days, enchanted him. He recognised them in a moment. His emotions were too great for human endurance. He folded his arms and lay back in the boat. The rowers put down their oars and tried to resuscitate him. His face was toward the tower. But he was gone. His soul had gone out in the raptures of that hour. His life fell under the stroke of the chime of Limerick Cathedral. So may it be with us when going up from this earthly exile into the harbour of our God. May we fold our arms in peace and listen; and, while the rowers are taking us to anchorage, from turret, and dome, and palace-gate, and arch of eternal victory, may there come rippling upon our soul the music of the bells of heaven. —*Talmage.*

9. Death is the day of our espousals.

(1633.) Let thy hope of heaven master thy fear of death. Why shouldst thou be afraid to die, who hopest to live by dying! Is the apprentice afraid of the day when his time comes out? He that runs a race, of coming too soon to his goal? The pilot troubled when he sees his harbour? Or the betrothed virgin grieved when the wedding day approacheth? Death is all this to thee; when that comes, thy indenture expires, and thy jubilee is come. Thy race is run, and the crown won, sure to drop on thy head when thy soul goes out of thy body. Thy voyage, how troublesome soever it was in the sailing, is now happily finished, and death doth but this friendly office for thee, to uncover and open the ark of thy body, that it may safely land thy soul on the shore of eternity at thy heavenly Father's door, yea, in His sweet embraces, never to be put to sea more. In a word, thy Husband is come for thee, and knocks with death's hand at thy door, to come forth unto Him, that He may perform His promise which in the day of thy betrothing He made to thee; and thou lovest Him but little, if thou art not willing to be at the trouble of a remove hence, for to enjoy His blissful presence, in His Father's royal palace of heaven, where such preparation is made for thy entertainment, that thou canst not know here, though an angel were sent on purpose to inform thee. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

10. Death brings us into the presence of Christ, and into the best society.

(1634.) Death is like the waggon which was sent for old Jacob, it came rattling with its wheels, but it was to carry Jacob to his son Joseph; so the wheels of death's chariot may rattle, and make a noise, but they are to carry a believer to Christ. While a believer is here, he is absent from the Lord. He lives far from court, and cannot see Him whom his soul loves: but death gives him a sight of the King of glory, "in whose presence is fulness of joy." To a pardoned soul, death is *transitus ad regnum;* it removes him to the place of bliss, where he shall hear the triumphs and anthems of praise sung in the choir of angels. No cause hath a pardoned soul to fear death; what needs he fear to have his body buried in the earth, who hath his sins buried in Christ's wounds? What hurt can death do to him? It is but his ferryman to ferry him over to the land of promise. The day of death to a pardoned soul is his ascension-day to heaven, his coronation-day, when he shall be crowned with those delights of paradise which are unspeakable and full of glory. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1635.) Socrates, upon receiving sentence of death, said, among other things, to his judges, "Is this, do you think, no happy journey? Do you think it nothing to speak with Orpheus, Musæus, Homer, and Hesiod?" —*A. F. Russell.*

11. To die is to sleep in Jesus.

(1636.) You cannot find in the New Testament any of those hateful representations of dying which men have invented, by which death is portrayed as a ghastly skeleton with a scythe, or something equally revolting. The figures by which death is represented in the New Testament are very different. There are two of them which I think to be exquisitely beautiful. One is that of "falling asleep in Jesus." When a little child has played all day long and become tired out, and the twilight has sent it in weariness to its mother's knee, where it thinks it has come for more excitement, then, almost in the midst of its frolicking, and not knowing what influence is creeping over it, it falls back in the mother's arms, and nestles close to the sweetest and softest couch that ever cheek pressed, and, with lengthening breath, sleeps; and she smiles and is glad, and sits humming unheard joy over its head.

So we fall asleep in Jesus. We have played long enough at the games of life, and at last we feel the approach of death. We are tired out, and we lay our head back on the bosom of Christ and quietly fall asleep. —*Beecher.*

12. To die is to go home.

(1637.) A child at school, when he seeth one riding post through the streets as if he would run over him or tread upon him, crieth out; but when he perceives that it is his father's man sent to bring him home from school, all the fear is past: then he laugheth and rejoiceth. So, whilst men are in the state of nature, they look upon death as an enemy, as a spoiler, as one that would bereave them of all their worldly delights; but being once the sons and daughters of God by adoption, then they apprehend death as their heavenly Father's man, riding on the pale horse, sent to bring them home from a prison on earth to a place of perfect liberty in heaven. —*Lightfoot*, 1602–1675.

(1638.) Death is but a going *home.* A child is away at school, and the vacation is near at hand; and you may be sure that the father and mother long to see the child more than the child wants to see his father and mother. So, according to the good old custom, the father takes the carriage and wends his way to the school, perhaps with, perhaps without, intimations to the child of his coming. In the midst of his tasks on the last day, the child is suddenly greeted by the voice and presence of his father; and no sooner are the first salutations exchanged than the father says, "Are your things ready? we go to-morrow." Wine is not so sparkling as the joy in the child's heart! He can neither eat, nor sleep, nor play. The thought that his father is come, and that he is going home to see his mother, and brothers, and sisters, has quite intoxicated him.

By such glorious images as this God is pleased to represent our departure from the present life.

The Lord Jesus Christ shall come to our poor old weather-stained schoolhouse in this world, and say to us, "Come home! you are wanted."

—*Beecher.*

(1639.) "Then Abraham gave up the ghost." "The English word ghost," says an able critic and commentator, "is supposed to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon, 'an inmate—inhabitant—*guest*'—and also 'spirit.' In popular use it is now restricted to the latter meaning. But the primitive idea seems to be that of dismissing the soul or spirit as the guest of the body." In this etymological sense the reference is peculiarly beautiful. Abraham's spirit—his immortal and nobler part—was "a guest," a lodger or wayfarer in an earthly tent—a perishable dwelling. Its tent-life was not its home-life. It was like an imprisoned bird longing to soar away. And now the appointed time has come—the cage is opened—the winged tenant goes free. The tent is taken down, pin by pin—rope and stakes and canvas—and the "lodger for the night," forsaking the blackened patch in the desert—the smouldering ashes of his bivouac-fire—speeds away to "the better country,"—

"His spirit with a bound
Left its encumb'ring clay;
His tent at sunrise on the ground
A darken'd ruin lay."

—*Macduff.*

13. The way home is not an untried one.

(1640.) Suppose, dear friend, the thought of departing from this world to the glory-world should ever startle you, let me remind you that you are not the first that ever went that way. Your vessel is in the pool, as it were, or in the dock; she is going out on her voyage; oh, but you will not go alone, nor have to track your course through paths unnavigated or unknown before! When the Portuguese captain first went by the Cape of Storms it was a venturous voyage, and he called it the Cape of Good Hope when he had rounded it. When Columbus first went in search of the New World, his was a brave spirit that dared cross the unnavigated Atlantic. But oh, there are tens of thousands that have gone whither you go. The Atlantic that severs us from Canaan is white with the sails of the vessels that are on voyage thither. Fear not, they have not been wrecked; we hear good news of their arrival; there is good hope for you. There are no icebergs on the road, no mists, no counter currents, and no sunken vessels or quicksands; you have but to cut your moorings, and with Christ on board you shall be at your desired haven at once.

—*Spurgeon.*

14. Christ will be with us all the way.

(1641.) Where could you wish your lives to be better than in the hand of the most wise and gracious God? If you may rest content, or have confidence in any, it is in Him. You need not doubt of His goodness, for He is goodness and love itself. And, therefore, though you see not the world to come that you are passing to, yet as long as you know that you are in the hands of love itself, what cause have you of disquiet or distrust? Moreover you know that He is wise as well as good, and almighty as well as wise; and, therefore, as He meaneth you no harm (if you are His children), so He will not mistake, nor fail in the performance. You need not fear, lest your happiness should miscarry for want of skill in Him that is omniscient, or for want of will in Him that is your Father, nor for want of power in Him that is omnipotent. You may far better trust God with your lives than yourselves, for you have not wisdom enough to know what is best for you, nor skill to accomplish it, nor power to go through with it; nay, you love not yourselves so well as God doth love you. Did you but believe this, you would better trust Him. You can trust yourself in a narrow ship upon the wide and raging seas, when you never saw the country that you are going to; and all because you believe that the voyage is for your commodity, and that you have a skilful pilot. And cannot you commend your souls into the hands of God, to convey you through death to the invisible glory, as confidently as you dare commit your lives to the conduct of a man, and to a tottering ship in the hazardous ocean? —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

15. He who has given grace to live will give grace to die.

(1642.) Such as have had no joy in their lifetime, God puts in this sugar in the bottom of the cup, to make their death sweet. Now, at the last hour, when all other comforts are gone, God sends the Comforter; and when their appetite for meat fails, God feeds them with hidden manna. Sure, as the wicked, before they die, have some apprehensions of hell and wrath in their conscience; so the godly have some foretastes of God's everlasting favour, though sometimes their diseases may be such, and their animal spirits so oppressed, that they cannot express what they feel. Jacob laid himself to sleep on a stone, where he saw a vision—a ladder, and the angels ascending and descending; so, when the saints lay themselves down to sleep the sleep of death, they have often a vision: they see the light of God's face, and have the evidences of His love sealed up to them for ever.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(1643.) Our view of death will not always be alike, but in proportion to the degree in which the Holy Spirit is pleased to communicate His sensible influence. We may anticipate the moment of dissolution with pleasure and desire in the morning, and be ready to shrink from the thought of it before night. But though our frames and perceptions vary, the report of faith concerning it is the same. The Lord usually reserves dying strength for a dying hour. When Israel was to pass Jordan, the ark was in the river; and though the rear of the host could not see it, yet as they successively came forward and approached the banks, they all beheld the ark, and all went safely over. As you are not weary of living, if it be the Lord's pleasure, so I hope for the sake of your friends and the people whom you love, He will spare you amongst us a little longer; but when the time shall arrive which He has appointed for your dismission, I make no doubt but He will overpower all your fears, silence all your enemies, and give you a comfortable, triumphant entrance into His kingdom.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

DESERTION.

1. Its cause.

(1644.) In common conversation, we frequently speak of solar eclipses. But what is called an

eclipse of the sun is, in fact, an eclipse of the earth, occasioned by the moon's interference or transit between the sun and us. This circumstance makes no alteration in the sun itself, but only intercepts our view of it for a time. From whence does darkness of soul, even darkness that may be felt, usually originate? Never from any changeableness in our covenant God, the glory of whose unvarying faithfulness and love shines the same, and can suffer no eclipse. It is when the world, with its fascinating honours, or wealth, or pleasures, gets between our Lord and us, that the light of His countenance is obstructed, and our rejoicing in Him suffers a temporary eclipse. —*Salter.*

2. Its design.

(1645.) The nurse goeth aside from the child to teach it to find its feet and see how it will go alone; the eagle when her young ones are fledged, turneth them out of the nest, not bearing them on her wings, as at other times she was wont to do, but that she may inure them to fly, flieth from them and leaveth them to shift for themselves. Thus God seems to withdraw Himself from His children, to exercise those excellent graces of patience and confidence in Him, that, like tapers, burn clearest in the dark; to teach them to swim without bladders, and to go without crutches; as not to trust in themselves, so not to trust in the means, but in Him that worketh by them, and can work as well for them without them when they fail. —*Basil Seluciæ*, 382.

(1646.) A father solacing himself with his little child, and delighting in its pretty and pleasing behaviour, is wont sometimes to step aside into a corner or behind a door, on purpose to quicken yet more its love and longing after him, and try the impatiency and eagerness of its affections. In the meantime he hears it cry, run about, and call upon him, and yet he stirs not, but forbears to appear; not for want of compassion and kindness, which the more it grieves the more abounds; but that it may prize more dearly the father's presence, that they may meet more merrily, and rejoice in the enjoyment of each other more heartily. Conceive, then, and consider to thine own exceeding comfort, that thy Heavenly Father deals just so with thee in a spiritual desertion. He sometimes hides His face from thee, and withdraws His quickening and refreshing presence for a time, not for want of love, for He loves thee freely; He loves thee with an everlasting love; He loves thee with the very same love with which He loves Jesus Christ; and that dear Son of His loves thee with the same love His Father loves Him; but to put more heat and life in thine affections towards Him and heavenly things; to cause thee to relish communion with Jesus Christ, when thou enjoyest it, more sweetly; to preserve it more carefully, to joy in it more thankfully, and to shun more watchfully whatsoever might rob thee of it; to stir up all the powers of thy soul, and all the graces of God in thee, to seek His face and favour again with more extraordinary and universal seriousness and industry. For we find with pleasure, possess with singular contentment, and keep with special care, what we have sought with pain.

Desertions, then, and delays of this nature are fruits of thy Heavenly Father's love, and ought to be no discouragements to thee at all, holding thy integrity. —*Bolton*, 1572–1631.

(1647.) The gardener digs up his garden, pulls up his fences, takes up his plants, and, to the eye, seems to make a pleasant place as a waste piece of ground; but every intelligent man knows that he is about to mend it, not to mar it—to plant it better, not to destroy it. So God is comfortably present with us, even in our spiritual desertions; and though He seems to annihilate or to reduce His new creation, yet it is to repair its ruins and to make it more beautiful and glorious. Or, as in the repairing of a house, we see how they pull down part after part, as if they intended to demolish it quite, but the end is to make it better: so, though God take away our props, it is not that we may fall, but that He may settle us in greater strength. He batters down the life of sense to put us upon a life of grace; and when He darkens our light that we cannot see, it is but to bring in fuller light into our souls; as when a star shines not, the sun appears, repairing our loss of an obscure light with his clear bright shining beams: so, though God do forsake His people, yet it is not totally, not for ever, not ceasing the affection of love, but the acts of love for some time, and when He seems to be turning a man into a desolate and ruinous condition, yet even then He is building and preparing him to be a more excellent structure. —*Symonds*, 1658.

(1648.) When children begin to go they use to be so well conceited of the strength of their legs that they need not any help of their nurse. To let them see their folly the nurse will leave them to themselves, that so, smarting by a fall, they may better be brought to find what need they have of their nurse. The best of us all are but babes in grace, yet do we think that we can stand of ourselves; yea, and run the ways of God too. Now, God doth refute us by our own experience, and by this mistress of fools makes us better known to ourselves; but though He leaves us for a time, yet doth He not forsake us for ever, no more than a nurse doth the weakling child. She maketh use of one fall to keep the child from many, and God doth make use of our sinning to make us see how prone we are to sin, and so prevent us for the future.

—*Lightfoot*, 1602–1675.

3. Not to be hastily assumed.

(1649.) "Will the Lord absent Himself for ever, and will He show no more favour? is His mercy gone clean for ever? does His promise fail for ever? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he shut up His tender mercies wholly in displeasure? And I said this is my death, &c." Thus do the faithful cry out and complain, as if they were both without faith and feeling of any favour of God; and yet in all these distresses God is not absent from them, neither has forgotten them. Some diseases of the body are so forcible and violent, that they seem to have taken away all life and to have brought present death, yet afterwards there is a recovery contrary to the feeling of the person and judgment of the beholders; thus stands the case with many dear servants of God, who in the extremity of affliction and brunt of temptation seem to themselves and to others to have utterly lost the life of faith, and light of grace, which in former times they have felt and enjoyed. The trees in winter seem to be dead; but when spring approaches, they show by lovely effects that they had life in them. The hour of temptation with the faithful is the time of winter,

they seem benumbed for a short season; but as they gather strength, and faith begins to spring up, they shall find and feel a present operation of unspeakable comfort. —*Attersol*, 1618.

(1650.) If we be in such darkness, let us not trust to our own judgment, but let us trust the judgment of others. Oftentimes others know more by us than we by ourselves. We ought to yield much to the discerning of Christians in this kind. It is an easy matter when all things go well with us, to have comfort and to be fruitful; but when we are in our dumps, and in the hour of temptation, then it is not so easy. When a tree bears a great deal of fruit, and abounds with leaves, it is an easy matter to say, this is a fruitful tree; but when in winter the sap falls to the root, is covered with snow and frost, the leaves shaken off, and the root that is unseen lies hid, then it requires some judgment and former experience to say, This tree has life, and is fruitful, though now there appears none. So a Christian may be in such an estate, that he requires the judgment of some others to look upon him. When in such a case, he must go to former times, for God's love is constant, always like Himself. And go to the secret working of grace; when outwardly there appears little, go to the pulses. As if we would know whether a man who is in a swoon has life and breath, we go to feel the pulses to see if there be any breath remaining; so in a case of desertion, or seeming deadness of spirit, try which way the soul goes in the desires of it. Is there not a desire to please God? Are there not groans and endeavours with those desires? Are not these desires restless, and thy soul unsatisfied? Thou dost not content thyself with a little faith, but thou desirest more and more, and thou art ashamed because thou hast so little. This is the pulse's beating, and the breathing of a living soul. Yield not to Satan who tells thee there is no ground for thee to be assured of thy estate. Where we find these evidences of a living soul, we ought to believe there is true life there; which I speak to those, who, without cause, are carried to doubt of their estates.
—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(1651.) When I see my Saviour hanging in so forlorn a fashion upon the cross; His head drooping down, His temples bleeding with thorns, His hands and feet with the nails, and His side with the spear; His enemies round about Him, mocking at His shame, and insulting over His impotence: how should I think any otherwise of Him, than, as Himself complaineth forsaken of His Father? But, when again I turn mine eyes, and see the sun darkened, the earth quaking, the rocks rent, the graves opened, the thief confessing to give witness to His Deity; and when I see so strong a guard of providence over Him, that all His malicious enemies are not able so much as to break one bone of that body, which seemed carelessly neglected: I cannot but wonder at His glory and safety. God is ever near, though oft unseen; and, if He wink at our distress, He sleepeth not. The sense of others must not be judges of His presence and care; but our faith. What care I, if the world give me up for miserable, while I am under His secret protection? O Lord, since Thou art strong in our weakness, and present in our senselessness, give but as much comfort in my sorrow, as Thou givest me security, and at my worst I shall be well.
—*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(1652.) Did you ever read that Christ did finally forsake a man in whose heart and soul He still did leave His goods, furniture, and spiritual household stuff? A man sometimes goes from home, and sometimes He does not quite leave his house. There is much difference between those two. If a man leave his house and comes no more, then he carries away all his goods; and when ye see them carried away, ye say, This man will come no more. But though a man ride a great journey, yet he may come again; and ye say, "Surely he will come again." Why? Because still his goods, wife, and children are in his house. So if Christ reject a man and go away finally, He carries away all His goods, spiritual gifts, graces, and principles. But though He be long absent, yet if His household stuff abide in the heart,—if there be the same desires after Him, and delight in Him, and admiring of Him,—ye may say, "Surely, He will come again." Why? Because His household stuff is here still. When did Christ ever forsake a man in whose heart He left this spiritual furniture?
—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(1653.) A man's heart is like those two-faced pictures: if you look towards one side of them, you shall see nothing but some horrid shape of a devil, or the like; but go to the other side, and you shall see the picture of an angel, or of some beautiful woman, &c. So some have looked over their hearts by signs at one time, and have to their thinking found nothing but hypocrisy, unbelief, hardness, self-seeking; but not long after, examining their hearts again by the same signs, they have espied the image of God drawn fairly upon the table of their hearts. —*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(1654.) There is a large class who would confound nature and grace. These are chiefly women. They sit at home, nursing themselves over a fire, and then trace up the natural effects of solitude and want of air and exercise into spiritual desertion. There is more pride in this than they are aware of. They are unwilling to allow so simple and natural a cause of their feelings, and wish to find something in the thing more sublime. —*Cecil.*

4. Terribleness of the calamity.

(1655.) When the king removes, the court and all the carriages follow after, and when they are gone, the hangings are taken down; nothing is left behind but bare walls, dust, and rubbish. So, if God removes from a man or a nation, where He kept His court, His graces will not stay behind; and if they be gone, farewell peace, farewell comfort: down goes the hangings of all prosperity, nothing is left behind but confusion and disorder.
—*Staughton*, 1628.

5. Encouragements for the desponding.

(1656.) God being a Father, if He hide His face from His child, it is in love. Desertion is sad in itself, a short hell (Job vi. 9). When the light is withdrawn, dew falls. Yet we may see a rainbow in the cloud, the love of a Father in all this.

Firstly, God hereby quickens grace. Perhaps grace lay dormant (Cant. v. 2). It was as fire in the members; and God withdraws comfort, to

invigorate and exercise grace: faith is a grace that sometimes shines brightest in the dark night of desertion (Jonah ii. 4).

Secondly, When God hides His face from His child, yet still He is a Father, and His heart is towards His child: as Joseph, when he spake roughly to his brethren, and made them believe he would take them for spies; still his heart was full of love, and he was fain to go aside and weep: so God's bowels yearn to His children, when He seems to look strange. "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." Though God may have the look of an enemy, yet still He hath the heart of a father. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1657.) Sometimes God takes away from a Christian His comforting presence, but He never takes from a Christian His sustaining presence. You know the difference between sunshine and daylight. We have often daylight, but little sunlight. A Christian has God's daylight in his soul when he may not have sunlight; that is, he has enough to light him, but not enough to cheer and comfort him. Never was Jesus so forsaken by God's comforting presence as when He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and yet, never was He so strengthened by God's sustaining presence, for angels were at His service to minister to Him and to take care of Him if He needed their ministry. —*Cumming*.

6. The only consolation.

(1658.) All the world does them no good without the favour of God. As all the stars though they shine together, do not dispel the darkness of night; so no creatures can comfort us sufficiently when God hides His face. "Thou didst hide Thy face and I was troubled." They cannot find God as they were wont. As at funeral feasts, dear friends have little comfort when they miss their old friend that was wont to bid them welcome at the house; so when God is gone, what comfort can they take in their portion? Many will say, Why are you pensive and sad? you have a great many friends, a great estate. Oh, you do not know the wound of a gracious heart, and how little these things are in comparison of the favour of God.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(1659.) The wounds of conscience which are in God's people are of the quality that none but God can cure them; for the chief thing that wounds them is the loss of God's favour, not simply His wrath. For it is the glory of God and His favour, not self-love only, that makes them seek Him; therefore nothing gives peace but the restoring of His favour and the light of His countenance; the same dart that wounded must heal again: "I smote him, and I will heal him." And as one that is sick with love, when love is the disease, no physic, no persuasion of friends can cure it, nothing but only the love of the party beloved; so when a soul is wounded for the loss of God's love, not all the things in the world can cure the heart; but one word from Him, one good look, one promise from Him that we are His, stills all and only can give peace. Like to a poor child that cries for its mother; let who will dandle it, and play with it, and use it never so kindly, yet it will not be stilled till the mother comes; so it is with a poor soul that cries after God day and night.

—*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

DEVIL. THE

1. His existence not incredible.

(1660.) No man acquainted with men need have any philosophical scruple in believing in the existence of evil spirits. If there are any spirits worse than some men, I am sorry for them! No man who watches what men do to each other need have any scruple as to the belief that evil spirits are occupied in tempting men. We can conceive of nothing done by a spirit, in the way of malignant temptation, that is worse than that which we see every day among living men. And those who doubt whether a benevolent God would allow a malign spirit to tempt His creatures, surely must have lived with their eyes shut. The question is settled in every street, that God does allow men to live, whose business seems to be very largely that of pleasing themselves by injuring others. Those who have doubts on this subject cannot have considered the indisputable fact, that God does allow bad spirits in the flesh to tempt men to evil. Nor do I know why there should be any reason to suppose that He does not allow bad spirits out of the flesh to do the same thing. —*Beecher*.

(1661.) We find upon self-inspection, that our temptations, though manifold and enigmatical, evidently arise from three distinct sources, and are of three distinct kinds. There are temptations from the world: all know what they are, and have experienced them. There are also temptations from the flesh. Between the two classes we can easily distinguish. There is also a third class, which, upon strict analysis, appears to differ entirely from those of the world and the flesh. Who has not been startled at times with those evil suggestions which flash into the soul without apparent cause or connection, let fly against us like burning arrows from an unseen hand? They are "fiery darts," as the Apostle forcibly calls them. Good men have confessed that without the slightest reason, and from no recognised agency, they have felt of a sudden an impulse to commit the most horrid crimes ever perpetrated. They would tempt and ruin some victim, strike some fatal blow, or leap from some precipice upon the rocks, or into the sea. How mortifying, how humiliating, for a pure heart to encounter such experiences! It is some relief to feel that we are not the sole cause of their existence; that we are not so bad as the instigation would lead us to think we are; and that, when we drown or quench these darts of fire, no harm will befall us. The question recurs, whence this peculiar form or style of temptation—these depressions that come upon us when we have done the best and have the least occasion for them? The hardness of heart, the restlessness of aim and purpose, these and other evil suggestions, have they no cause? Are these the forms of temptation which ordinarily come to us from the world and the flesh? Every thinking man, in accounting for such personal experiences, feels that it is folly to have recourse to abstraction. It is a pigmy philosophy which does not recognise in them a producing evil force, or which attempts to ignore their existence altogether. The tempest that springs suddenly out of a dead calm, tearing

the sea from its foundations, and flinging it against the skies, must have a powerful cause somewhere; seen or unseen, a cause there must be. The frightful heaving of a burning volcano must be produced by an existing force. So also must this spiritual earthquake, this frightful sea of evil passions, which surges about and sometimes threatens to engulf us, be produced by a power not figurative, but literal. Actual force in a living spirit, as the psychological root, becomes an absolute necessity.

—*Townsend.*

2. "The prince of the power of the air."

(1662.) One thing is perfectly clear from this passage (Eph. ii. 2.), that these extra-terrestrial beings form "a power." Undoubtedly each one of them has his own distinct personality and individuality; but, in their peculiar aspects towards man, they collectively constitute "a power." Fifty thousand men standing on a plain do not necessarily constitute an army. They may be only a crowd, an assemblage of so many separate bodies.

Many things are necessary before they can become an army. Every man among them must be drilled; every man must be taught subordination; every man must be equipped with weapons, and must know not only how to use them, but he must know to fire his musket without shooting his comrades instead of the enemy. When all this is done, the fifty thousand men become an army; but even then they are not a "power."

Before this can be, there must be a head, a controlling mind, to direct all this force, and to combine the separate energies of all in one grand plan.

In this view, Satan is, "the prince of the power of the air." These dark hosts are under his direction. Under him they can act together, they can concentrate their energies in one object. Probably their misery and their ceaseless mutual recriminations would render them powerless for any undertaking except that of tormenting one another, or of blaspheming God, were it not for the superior energy of their prince, who guides their actions, and infuses a pressure of his own energy into their otherwise helpless and despairing ranks. The organisation of the Jesuits, where we see displayed such complete abnegation of self, such deliberate submission of the individual judgment to the orders of their chief, such concentration of information, such profound secrecy and clever deceit, such power of communicating the superior's will to the ends of the earth, as certainly as pulsation is communicated to the extremities of the body, may help us to form some conception of the dominion exercised by "the prince of the power of the air:" only, instead of hundreds of agents, we must conceive of millions instead of sluggish human bodies active spiritual beings; instead of a station here and there, an organisation as widely extended as humanity, not forgetting even the ship's crew on the distant and lonely sea; instead of the infirm and erring judgment of a human chief, the high and acute intelligence of one who was formerly "son of the morning," and a prince among the blessed angels.

—*L. H. Wiseman.*

3. In what sense he is "the god of this world."

(1663.) Satan obtained the world by conquest; but conquest is a cracked title. A thief is not the more honest because he was able to force the poor traveller to deliver his purse; and a thief on the throne, like Satan, is no better than a private one on the road. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. Is neither omniscient nor omnipotent.

(1664.) It must have occurred to every thoughtful reader of the Bible, that the passages in which the inferior demons are mentioned are very few in comparison of those in which their chief, Satan, is named. We are not to infer from this that they take an unimportant part in extending the empire of evil; any more than when reading that Cromwell defeated the Royalists at Marston Moor, or that Nelson routed the combined fleet at Trafalgar, we infer that the soldiers of the one, or the ships of the other, took an unimportant part in the battle.

It is needful to be aware of this, lest we unconsciously attribute to the devil powers approaching very nearly to omniscience or omnipresence. Satan may be able to move as rapidly as the electricity along the telegraphic wire, but he cannot be in more than one place at the same instant. Neither can he know everything, or do everything.

—*L. H. Wiseman.*

5. His discernment of our thoughts.

(1665.) An angler, having baited his hook, throws it into the water: the fish, having espied the bait, after two or three vagaries about it, nibbles at it, and after awhile swallows down the bait, hook, and all. The fisher sees none of all this; but, by the sinking of the cork, he knows that the fish is taken. Thus, the devil, though a most cunning angler, knows not the thoughts of men, such as are mere pure thoughts: that is God's peculiar; it is He that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins: but if we write or speak, if the cork do but stir, if our countenance do but change, he is of such perspicuity, and so well experienced withal, that he will soon know what our thoughts are, and suit his temptations accordingly. —*Holdsworth*, 1680.

6. Our adversary.

(1666.) Let us watch Satan, for he watcheth us. There is no corporeal enemy, but a man naturally fears; the spiritual foe appears less terrible, because we are less sensible of him. Great conquerors have been chronicled for victories and extension of their kingdoms; Satan is beyond them all. Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands; but Satan his millions. He that fights with an enemy, whom nothing but his blood can pacify, will give him no advantage. —*Adams*, 1653.

7. Our accuser.

(1667.) If we know that we have an adversary at the next door, that pries into all our courses, and upon the least error will sue us on an action of trespass, we will be circumspect to disable him of advantage. Satan no sooner spies our wanderings, but he presently runs with a complaint to God, bills against us in the star-chamber of heaven; where the matter would go hard with us, but for the great Lord Chancellor of peace, our Advocate Jesus Christ. —*Adams*, 1653.

8. His craft.

(1668.) Even as the fisher, when he taketh some great fish, doth not by and by violently strike and twitch it, but letteth his fishing line go at the length, until the fish do swallow down the hook and so work its own destruction; lest if, at the

first, he should twitch it too hard, the fishing line should break, and his bait and hook lost, the fish should escape: even so Satan, when he hath gotten a poor sinner fast upon his hook, and hath entangled him in the chains of some deadly sin, and hath bewitched him with the sorceries of the flesh and the world, doth not suddenly oppress and exasperate him, lest, at the first dash, playing the devil openly and roughly, the sinner should break his bands and escape his snares; but he doth cherish him and make much of him, and doth suffer him now and then both to speak and to do some things that savour of virtue, that by little and little, he being made fast and dead sure upon the hook of sin, he may by degrees work his own woe and utter destruction; so that the devil doth stretch out his angling rod, thread, and all, not that he may let the sinner escape, but that he may make him the surer and hold him the faster.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1669.) Meditate concerning the wicked one, his cunning and policy. As the eagle, when he seizes upon a carcass, will first pick out the eyes, and then feed on its flesh; so Satan first blinds the mind, and then leads them hood-winked to hell. As the eagle carries the shell-fish into the air, only that he may break them by their fall, and devour them; so the devil by his costly courtesy advances many to their destruction. As birds are caught with several baits by the fowler, some with chaff, some with corn, some with day-nets, some with a low-bell, so the arch-fowler has various ways to seduce and catch poor souls. "Ye are not ignorant of his devices." —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1670.) It is observable that a forester goeth usually in green, suitable to the leaves of the trees and the grass of the forest, so that by this means the most observant in all the herd never so much as distrusteth him till the arrow sticks in his side. And thus the devil shapes himself to the fashions of all men. If he meet with a proud man, or a prodigal man, then he makes himself a flatterer; if a covetous man, then he comes with a reward in his hand. He hath an apple for Eve, a grape for Noah, a change of raiment for Gehazi, a bag for Judas. He can dish out his meat for all palates; he hath a last to fit every shoe; he hath something to please all conditions, to suit with all dispositions whatsoever. —*Jenkyn*, 1612-1685.

(1671.) Satan chooseth the fittest season to tempt in. As a cunning angler casts in his angle when the fish will bite best; the devil can hit the very joint of time when a temptation is likeliest to prevail. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1672.) As the husbandman knows what seed is proper to sow in such a soil; so Satan finding out the temper, knows what temptation is proper to sow in such a heart. That way the tide of a man's constitution runs, that way the wind of temptation blows; Satan tempts the ambitious man with a crown, the sanguine man with beauty, the covetous man with a wedge of gold. He provides savoury meat, such as the sinner loves.

—*Watson*, 1696.

9. His diligence.

(1673.) Some there are that will go from Rome to England to make proselytes; but the devil will go from one end of the world to the other, and walk from pole to pole, till he hath put a girdle about the loins of the earth, to make a man the "child of hell like himself." —*Adams*, 1653.

(1674.) It was Hannibal's saying of Marcellus, that he had to do with him who could never be quiet, neither conqueror nor conquered; but conqueror, he would pursue his victories, and conquered, labour to recover his loss. But much rather may a man say the like of Satan, that most wrathful and most watchful enemy; who is never idle, but ever employed in sowing cockles amongst the Lord's good corn; who, though we stoutly resist him and overcome him for a while, yet will he never rest, but will be tempting again—yea, will not cease to tempt us again and again, with the same temptations, hoping at length to win our consent and so give us the foil in the conclusion.

—*Woodnoth*, 1658.

10. How he exercises his sway.

(1675.) Satan exercises his sway, in part, by direct suggestion to our minds. Some persons doubt the possibility of this. "We communicate with one another by means of the bodily organs. The eye, the ear, the touch, &c., are the only avenues to the soul. We can receive no ideas except through the medium of sensation."

Such assertions are contrary to experience. That the eye is not the only medium of sight, those of us who have seen patients in certain abnormal physical conditions must be fully convinced; and so must every one who has seen his little daughter in a dream, and heard her talk. But not to insist on this, have you never received from other persons, impulses, emotions, thoughts, without any intervention of the physical organs? What is the mysterious power in an assembly, which, in our ignorance, we vaguely call "sympathy"? By what power is one heart attracted to another heart, or repelled from it, without any word, or look, or gesture which could consciously account for it? How is it that you sometimes know the wishes or the sorrows of your friend, not from his words, not from his looks, not from mental induction, but in some way independent of all these? We can, to some extent, where there is mutual susceptibility, communicate with each other, without the intervention of the bodily organs.

But these objections are still more distinctly refuted by experience. Who is there that has not felt conscious, at some period or other, and perhaps often, that some spirit was speaking to his spirit?

An instantaneous inward warning which saves from an unperceived danger, a moral precept or a Scripture threatening spoken to the soul in the moment of temptation, an unaccountable impulse to go and see some whom, on our arrival, we found to be dying, or otherwise requiring our presence, these are familiar instances in common life.

—*L. H. Wiseman.*

11. Why his suggestions are undetected.

(1676.) There are two reasons why the suggestions of Satan may be expected to be often undetected by us: one reason exists in ourselves, the other in him.

One reason why we often fail to detect the suggestions of Satan lies in ourselves. It is that they are so comformable to our natural inclinations, that we do not easily imagine they come from without.

You can at once distinguish an Englishman from a negro; but you cannot so easily distinguish between a negro of one race, and a negro of another, they are so nearly alike. So the pure suggestions of the Holy Spirit can be traced to their celestial organ at once; we know that our sinful hearts could not have originated them: but the dark promptings of the evil one are so much like our own dark and ungodly desires, that we do not readily discern the difference. In a painting, bright figures upon a dark ground show vividly; but dark figures upon a dark ground are more obscurely seen. In leading us to carelessness and transgression, Satan has often only to quicken and keep alive desires which we should have felt without his influence, and to obscure our vision of better things. His counsels are agreeable; he swims with the stream of corrupt nature: no wonder, then, that men are often slow to perceive his influence over them.

Another reason lies with the wicked one himself. He knows that he can often work most effectually where his presence is least expected. As a perfect orator wholly forgets himself, being absorbed in his subject, so Satan, as a consummate tempter, is willing to be himself forgotten, if his desire be accomplished. Nay, he is aware that the accomplishment of those ends often requires that he should keep himself out of sight. A thief never wishes to make himself conspicuous. Accordingly, the most subtle and dangerous temptations are precisely those which we least imagine come from the devil; and Satan never has so great mastery over a man as when he denies his existence.

It is thus the prince of this world rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience; not ostentatiously, but not the less effectually. His great strength lies in secrecy, especially when intellectualism has made men despise superstition and superstitious terrors. The nineteenth century man of science laughs at the poor Irish grandmother who is in bodily fear of being bewitched, or at the heathen Sioux who lives in terror of the evil eye; for he can demonstrate the absurdity of witchcraft, and the fixity and universality of physical laws; and in his heart he laughs at the idea of the devil having anything to do with this world, and particularly with those whose minds have been trained in scientific habits. But what if we could lift the veil, and see how the devil laughs at him as he laughs at the Irish grandmother! The one believes too much, the other too little. In the one, ignorance begets terror; in the other, the conceit of knowledge leads to false security. —*L. H. Wiseman.*

12. Is a hard master.

(1677.) The devil is, after all, a hard master. Under the guise of great liberality, he extorts severe conditions; he demands a great price for everything he has to offer. Although he pretended to make over to the Lord Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, it was at no less a price than that of falling down to worship him. He ever acts thus with those who enter his service; only that the hard part of the condition is not usually named at first, but discovered by bitter experience afterwards—as the fish at first tastes only the bait, but afterwards feels the barbed hook.
—*L. H. Wiseman.*

13. Is not to be overcome by mere words.

(1678.) Satan is not such a babe, to be outfaced with a word of defiance. He can bear a few invectives, so he may be sure of the soul; like a usurer, that can endure to be railed on, so his money comes trolling in. —*Adams*, 1653.

14. Has no power to force us to sin.

(1679.) No man can justly charge his sins upon the devil as the cause of them; for God has not put it into the power of our mortal enemy to ruin us without ourselves; which yet He had done, had it been in the devil's power to force us to sin. The devil can only tempt and allure, but compel he cannot; he may inveigle, but he cannot command our choice; and no man yet ever suffered death who did not choose death: the fisher may propose, and play the bait before the fish, but he cannot force it to swallow it. And so whatsoever the devil does, he does by insinuation, and not by compulsion.

The Spirit of God assures us that he may be resisted, and that upon a vigorous resistance he will fly. He never conquers any but those who yield; a spiritual fort is never taken by force, but by surrender. And when a man is as willing to be ruined as he is to ruin him, it is that that makes the devil triumphant and victorious. How slily and creepingly did he address himself to our first parents! which surely his pride would never have let him do could he have effected their downfall by force, without temptation.

It is confessed, indeed, that the guilt of those sins that the devil tempts us to will rest upon him, but not so as to discharge us. He that persuades a man to rob a house is guilty of the sin he persuades him to, but not in the same manner that he is who committed the robbery; for it was in his power, after all the other's persuasions, to have forborne the fact, and to have maintained his innocence; for no man is a thief or a villain against his will.

In vain therefore do men shift off their sins upon the devil, whose greatest arts they may frustrate, whose strongest solicitations they may make ineffectual: for it is in their power (as I may so say) in some respects to make the devil himself innocent. But still the load of all must lie upon him; and it is not he that commits, but he that tempts to sin, that must be the sinner. It seems to be with the devil, in respect of the disorders of the soul, as it is with the spleen in respect of the distempers of the body; whatsoever is amiss, or indisposed, the charge is sure to lie there.

But howsoever men may mock themselves with such evasions, yet God will not be mocked, who knows that He left the soul in its own keeping, and made the will free, and not to be forced: and therefore these fig-leaves will fall off when He shall come to scrutiny and examination. Every man shall bear his own burden, and the devil himself shall have but what is his due. —*South*, 1633-1716.

DISCONTENT.

I. *ITS FREQUENCY.*

(1680.) Many may sit down silently, forbearing discontented expressions, yet are inwardly swollen with discontentment. Now this manifests a perplexed distemper, and a great frowardness in their hearts; and God, notwithstanding their outward

silence, hears the peevish fretting language of their souls. The shoe may be smooth and neat without, whilst the flesh is pinched within. There may be much calmness outwardly, and yet wonderful confusion and vexation within.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

II. *ITS CAUSES.*

1. The perversion of our nature.

(1681.) Oh, sirs, men fall out with their outward conditions, and are discontented at their rank and place in the world; but the fault lies more inward. The shoe is straight and good enough, but the foot is crooked that wears it. All would do well, if thou wert well; and thou wilt never be well, till thou art righteous and holy.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1682.) A bad mind lives in things and for things, or we might rather say, under things. Condition, pleasure, show, are its god. And then it follows that the worship is only another name for distemper, unreason, hallucination. It is not positively insane, but what is very nearly the same thing, unsane—a nature out of joint, poisoned, racked with pains, a cloudy, wild, ungoverned, misconceiving power. It knows nothing but things, and if things do not bless it, what can it do but fall to cursing? Being a distempered organ, it sees its distempers only in things and conditions around it. Thus when a diseased ear keeps up a nervous drumming in the brain, all sweetest music will have drumming in it. So if the taste is bittered by some dyspeptic woe, it will find that bitter savour in all most delicate things, and even in the pure waters of the spring. So also, I suppose, if the humours of the eye were jaundiced, the pure light of heaven would be yellowed also. Even the sun is smoky seen through a smoked glass. Just so we are meeting all sorts of bitter, painful, and bad things in our life, just because we are bitter, painful, bad ourselves, and cannot see that this is the root of our misery. —*Bushnell.*

2. Our lack of grace.

(1683.) As it is with a vessel that is full of liquor, if you strike upon it, it will make no great noise; but if it be empty, then it makes a great noise: so it is with the heart. A heart that is full of grace and goodness within, will bear a great many strokes and never make any noise; but an empty heart, if that be struck, will make a noise. Those that are so much complaining, it is a sign that there is an emptiness in their hearts. A man that has his bones filled with marrow, and veins filled with good blood, complains not of cold as others do: so a gracious person having the Spirit of God within him, and his heart filled with grace, has that within him that makes him find contentment.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

3. Spiritual sloth.

(1684.) Who are the men that are most discontented, but idle persons? Persons that have nothing to take up their minds, every little thing disquiets and discontents them. A man that has business of great consequence, if all things go well with his great business, he is less sensible of meaner things; but a man that lies at home and has nothing to do, finds fault with everything. So it is with the heart. When the heart of a man has nothing to do but to be busy about creature comforts, every little thing troubles him; but when the heart is taken up with the weighty things of eternity, these things that are here below, that did disquiet it before, are things now of no consideration with him, in comparison to the other; however things fall out here, they are not much regarded by him, if the "one thing" that is "necessary" be provided for.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

4. Heedlessness of the blessings of our lot.

(1685.) When we enjoy good things, we look at the grievances which are mingled with the good, and forget the good; which, when it is gone, then we remember. The Israelites could remember their onions and garlic, and forget their slavery (Num. xi. 5). So, because manna was present, they despised manna, and that upon one inconvenience it had, "it was ordinary with them" (Num. xxi. 5).

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(1686.) These complaints arise from the corrupt flesh, which is so wholly intent upon the present smart which it feels, that it utterly forgets all God's blessings, which we either have formerly enjoyed in time past, or do enjoy in and after our afflictions; and through impatiency robs us of those comforts God has given us, which if they were duly pondered in the balance of an impartial judgment, would not only counterpoise, but even much overweigh the causes of our griefs. Wherein we are not unfitly compared to flies, who leave all the sound flesh, though of far greater quantity, and seek out only sores to suck in; or to little children, who if any of their delights be taken from them, in their peevishness cast away all the rest, and fall a crying. For so, in our frowardness, if we have not all we desire, we think that we have nothing; if God cross us in any one benefit, by taking it from us, we are ready to cross ourselves in all the rest, casting them away by careless neglect, whereas they should serve as comforts to moderate our grief.

—*Downame*, 1644.

5. Forgetfulness of the greater trials that befall others.

(1687.) "I don't know," said the turnstile one day in a reflective mood,—"I don't know that I ought to have thought so ill of my lot, and to have fretted over it, as I have done.

"'Tis true, a turnstile has plenty of worry, as I have truly proved; worry and whirl all the day long!

"Nobody will ever pass without giving a turnstile a swing round; and whoever returns, ten to one but he gives the turnstile a whirling twist the other way!

"Indeed I have said that I wouldn't wish to any one, whether friend or foe, the life of a poor turnstile. No:—But then, as that old wheel of the waggon said yesterday—Mine's a pleasant life and a favoured lot compared with his! If I have to turn round, he has the same; and whilst he has the burden of the cart, there is besides the weight of the load it carries pressing on him; and I have no incumbrances.

"So, on the whole, perhaps I'd better try and be satisfied, that is, as satisfied as I can afford to be, with so many turns about as must in my situation naturally come to my lot."

Not a few of life's troubles are self made; and some will complain, who, on comparing other

people's trials with theirs, will see the lightness of their own; and should thankfully say:—"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." —*Bowden.*

III. *ITS UNREASONABLENESS.*

1. This life is a journey.

(1688.) Though we do meet with traveller's fare sometimes, yet it should not be grievous to us. The scripture tells us plainly that we must behave ourselves here but as pilgrims and strangers:—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Consider what your condition is,—you are pilgrims and strangers; do not think to satisfy yourselves here.

A man when he comes into an inn, if there be a fair cupboard of plate, is not troubled that it is not his own. Why? Because he is going away. So let us not be troubled when we see other men have great estates, but we have not. Why? *We* are going away into another country. You are lodging here but as it were for a night; if you should live a hundred years, in comparison with eternity it is not so much as a night, it is but as if you were travelling and were come into an inn: and were not this madness, for a man to be discontented because he has not what he sees there, seeing, it may be, he is to go away again within half a quarter of an hour? —*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

2. This life is a voyage.

(1689.) When you are abroad at sea, though you have not those many things that you have at home, you are not troubled at it; you are contented. Why? *You are abroad at sea;* you are not troubled at storms that arise, and though you have many things otherwise than you would have them at home, still you are quieted with that—you are at sea. Mariners, when they are at sea, care not what clothes they have then, though they be pitched and tarred; but they think when they come home, then they shall have their brave suits and be very fine. They are contented abroad upon that thought, that it shall be otherwise with them when they come home; and though they have nothing but salt meat and a little hard fare, yet when they come to their houses then they shall have anything. Thus it should be with us in this world. We are all in this world but as seafaring men, tossed up and down on the waves of the sea of this world, and our haven is heaven.

—*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

3. This life is a warfare.

(1690.) We are not only travellers, but soldiers: therefore we are to behave ourselves accordingly. The Apostle makes use of this argument in writing to Timothy:—"Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The very thought of the condition of a man that is a soldier stills his disquiet of heart. When he is abroad, he has not that accommodation in his quarters that he has in his own family; perhaps a man that has his bed warm, and curtains drawn about him, and all his accommodations in his chamber, now sometimes he must be put to lie upon straw; and he thinks with himself, "I am a soldier, and it is suitable to my conditions." He must have his bed warmed at home, but he must lie abroad in the fields when he is a soldier; and the very thought of this condition in which he stands quiets him in all things, and he goes rejoicing to think, "This is but suitable to my condition in which God has put me." So it should be with us in respect of this world. Would it not be an unseemly thing, to see a soldier go whining up and down with his finger in his eye, and complaining that he has not hot meat every meal, and his bed warmed, as he had at home? Now, Christians know that they are in their warfare; they are here in this world combating with the enemies of their souls, and they must be willing to endure hardness here. The right understanding of this, that God has put them into such a condition, is that which will content them, especially when they consider that they are certain of the victory, and that ere long they shall triumph with Jesus Christ, and then all their sorrows shall be done away, and their tears wiped from their eyes. —*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

4. Our trials bear no proportion to our comforts.

(1691.) Suppose a man has a very fair house to dwell in, and he has fair orchards and gardens, and set about with tall brave trees for ornament; what a most unreasonable thing were it for him to be weeping and wringing his hands because the wind blows off a few leaves off his trees, when he has abundance of all kinds of fruit! Thus it is with many: though they have a great many comforts about them, yet some little matter, the blowing off a few leaves from them is enough to disquiet them.

—*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

(1692.) Suppose God gives a woman a child that is very comely, and has excellent parts, wit and memory; but it may be there is a wart that grows upon the finger of the child, and she murmurs at it, and what an affliction is that to her! She is so taken up with that, that she forgets to give any thanks to God for her child, and all the goodness of God to her in her child is swallowed up in that. Would you not say, this were a folly and a very great evil in a woman so to do? Truly our afflictions, if we weighed them aright, are but such kind of things in comparison with our mercies.

—*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

5. Former prosperity is a reason, not for murmuring, but for thankful remembrance.

(1693.) Dost thou murmur because once thou wert better? Know God was beforehand with thee in the ways of mercy. Thou shouldest rather think thus, "I have lived for these many years, forty years perhaps or more, in a comfortable condition; I have lived in health, and peace, and plenty. What though the remaining part of my time has some affliction? The Lord has granted me a comfortable sunshine all the day long till towards evening, and what if at seven or eight o'clock at night it begins to rain? Let me thank God I have had so fair weather all day."

You that are going a voyage, if you have had a comfortable wind, and very fair, for many months together, what if you have a little storm when you are within sight of land? Will you murmur and repine? Oh no, but rather bless God that you have had such a comfortable voyage so long. Oh, this consideration would help us all!

What am I that the sun should always shine upon me, that I must have fair weather all my days? That which God gives to me, He gave it me as a

pledge of His love: let me return it to Him as a pledge of my obedience.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

6. We profess to be heirs of God.

(1694.) That man that hath a reward in heaven may be exceeding glad, whatsoever befall him here on earth. Will a prince be troubled for the loss of a farthing or the barking of a dog? That man that hath not clothes to his back, nor a house to put his head in, nor a good word from any about him, and yet hath assurance of living in glory with God and His holy angels, as soon as ever he is gone out of the flesh, I think is a happy man in the eye of reason itself. And he that professeth to have assurance of such a glory, and yet liveth not comfortably in every condition, I will not believe him whatsoever he profess. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1695.) If a poor man that had all his wealth about him should fall into the hands of thieves, and be robbed and rifled by them, he must needs cry out and take on pitifully, for, alas! he is quite undone, he hath nothing left at home to succour him and his poor family withal; but a rich man that hath store of money at home, safe locked up in his chest (unless he be some base, miserable wretch), will never complain much or be disquieted when he hath thirty or forty shillings taken from him. Thus for worldlings to rage and take on when they must lose their life, or their peace, or their wealth, it is no marvel; for, alas! when these things are gone, they have nothing left, they are at a desperate loss: but a Christian that knows and considers what he is born unto, and what he shall enjoy when he comes home to his Heavenly Father's house, he cares not though he be stripped of all here in this world, and rejoiceth in death that hastens him to a better possession. —*Hildersham*, 1631.

IV. *ITS FOLLY.*

1. It does nothing to remove our troubles.

(1696.) Some of Job's friends said to him, "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee, and shall the rock be removed out of his place?" So I may say to every discontented, impatient heart, "What, shall the providence of God change its course for thee? Dost thou think it such a weak thing that, because it does not please thee, it must alter its course? Be thou content or not content, the providence of God will go on. Canst thou make one hair black or white with all the stir that thou keepest?"

When you are in a ship at sea, that has all her sails spread with a full gale of wind and swiftly sailing, can you make it still by running up and down in the ship? No more can you make the providence of God change its course with your fretting; it will go on with power, do what thou canst. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(1697.) The maunderings of discontent are like the behaviour of a swine, who, when he feels it rain, runs grumbling about, and by that indeed discovers his nature, but does not avoid the storm.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

2. It does much to aggravate them.

(1698.) By discontent and repining the weight of our afflictions is exceedingly aggravated. For whereas in their own nature, they did only press us, now also they vex and gall us; like the yoke carried by the refractory ox, which by his struggling frets off the skin, whereas it might be carried with ease and without hurt if he would go quietly.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(1699.) There is a great deal of folly in discontentedness, for it makes our afflictions a great deal worse than otherwise they would be. If a mariner when a storm comes should be froward, and would not pull down his sails, is his condition the better because he is discontented and will not pull down his sails? Just so is it with a discontented heart. A discontented heart is a proud heart, and he out of his pride is troubled with his affliction, and is not contented with God's disposal, and so he will not pull down his spirit and make it bow to God in this condition in which God has brought him. Now, is his condition the better? No, certainly, abundantly worse; a thousand to one but the tempest overwhelms his soul. And thus, you see what a great deal of folly there is in the sin of discontentment.

—*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

(1700.) By impatience there is no good to be gotten. It will be but a means to make God lay heavier and harder things on us, as a discreet father, when his son shall take pet at some smaller matter that his father has crossed him in, may therefore take occasion, yea, and many times does, to give him some greater cause of discontent, to bring him hereby to know himself and his duty, and to teach him to rest content with that which his father will have. By impatience our affliction will but grow more grievous to us, as the snare is to the fowl that by fluttering and straining makes the string straighter, as the yoke is to the beast that by struggling with it has galled her neck, and yet is compelled to draw still in it. And we shall but thereby procure to ourselves the more evil; as the sick man in a burning fever, while by tossing to and fro he seeks to find ease, does but exasperate the disease and increase his own grief.

—*Gataker*, 1574-1654.

(1701.) Discontent puts an edge on troubles: to kick against the pricks exasperates the pain.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

V. *ITS HURTFULNESS.*

(1702.) The discontented man is like a watch overwound, wrested out of time, and goes false; grief is like ink poured into water, that fills the whole fountain full of blackness. Like mist, it spoils the burnish of the silver mind.

—*Fellthan*, 1668.

(1703.) Why dost thou complain of thy troubles? It is not trouble that troubles but discontent. It is not the water without the ship, but the water that gets within the leak, which drowns it. It is not outward affliction that can make the life of a Christian sad: a contented mind would sail above these waters; but when there is a leak of discontent open, and trouble gets into the heart, then it is disquieted and sinks. Do therefore as the mariners, pump the water out and stop this spiritual leak in thy soul, and no trouble can hurt thee.

—*Watson*, 1696.

VI. *ITS MISERY.*

(1704.) There are those that want impatiently; repining at God's dealing with them, and making their own impotent anger guilty of a further addi-

tion to their misery, as the distressed king of Israel, in a desperate sense of that grievous dearth : "Behold, this evil is of the Lord, what should I wait on the Lord any longer?" and those wretched ones, who when the fourth angel had poured his phial upon the sun, being scorched with the extremity of the heat, blasphemed the God of Heaven. In this kind, was that sinful techiness of Jonah. When I see a poor worm that hath put itself out of the cool cell of the earth wherein it was lodged ; and now, being beaten upon by the sunbeams, lies wriggling upon the bare path, turning itself every way in vain, and not finding so much as the shade of a leaf to cover it ; I cannot but think of that fretting prophet when, wanting the protection of his gourd, he found himself scalded with that strong reflection ; looking up wrathfully towards the sun, from whom he smarted, could say to the God that made it, "I do well to be angry, even to the death."

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

VII. *ITS SHAMEFULNESS.*

(1705.) When thou hast been a long time in the school of afflictions, thou art a very dullard in Christ's school if thou hast not learned contentment. "I have learned," says St. Paul, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." The eye is as tender a part as any in a man's body, but yet the eye is able to bear a great deal of cold, because it is more used to it. So those that God exercises much with afflictions, though they have tender spirits otherwise, yet they should have learned contentedness by this time. A new cart may creak, but after the use of it a while it will not do so. So when thou wert newly come into the work of Christ, perhaps thou makest a noise and canst not bear afflictions; but art thou an old Christian, and yet wilt thou be a murmuring Christian? Oh, it is a shame for any that have been a long time in the school of Jesus Christ to have murmuring and discontented spirits.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(1706.) Our base hearts are more discontented at one loss than thankful for a hundred mercies. God hath plucked one bunch of grapes from you ; but how many precious clusters are left behind?

—*Watson*, 1696.

VIII. *ITS SINFULNESS.*

(1707.) God counts it rebellion (Comp. Num. xvi. 14, with xvii. 10). Murmuring is but as the smoke of a fire ; there is first a smoke and smother before the flame breaks forth : and so before open rebellion in a kingdom there is first a smoke of murmuring, and then it breaks forth into open rebellion. Because it has rebellion in the seeds of it, it is counted before the Lord to be rebellion. When thou feelest thy heart discontented and murmuring against the dispensation of God towards thee, thou shouldest check thy heart thus, "Oh, thou wretched heart, what! wilt thou be a rebel against God?"

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(1708.) Suppose a man were in a family entertained by a friend, and he did not pay for his board ; it is expected that such a one should not be ready to find fault with everything in the house. If such a one should be discontented if a cup should not be filled for him as he would have it, or if he should stay a minute longer for a thing than he would, this we would account a great evil. So it is with us : we are at God's table every day, and it is upon free cost whatever we may have. Now when we are at the table of God (for so all God's administrations to us are His table) and at free cost, for us to be finding fault and be discontented is a very great aggravation of our sin.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(1709.) We would think that beggar intolerably impudent that coming to our doors to ask an alms, when we have bestowed on him some broken bread and meat or some sorry cast coat, yet like those importunate persons the psalmist speaks of, that grudge and grumble if they have not their own fill and their own will, should not be quiet and hold himself content therewith, unless he might have one of the best dishes of meat from our board, or one of our ordinary wearing suits given him. And yet this is the case of the greatest number of us. We come all as beggars to God's mercy-gate, and God gives us out abundance of many good things—life, liberty, health of body, strength and ability of limbs, food and raiment, &c., a courtesy and competency of each, as He sees to be fit for us : and yet forsooth we cannot be quiet, nor think ourselves well, unless we may fare as deliciously as Dives did, or go in silks and satins as such and such do.

—*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

(1710.) Discontent is a secret boasting of some excellency in ourselves, as if God did not govern well, or we could govern better? Shall a silly passenger, that understands not the use of the compass, be angry that the skilful pilot will not steer the vessel according to his pleasure? Must we give out our orders to God, as though the counsels of infinite wisdom must roll about according to the conceits of our fancy? —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

IX. *ITS CURE.*

1. Is not to be wrought by changes in our circumstances.

(1711.) I cannot compare the folly of men that think to get contentment with their musings about others' conditions better than to the way of children : perhaps they are gotten upon a hill, and they look a good way off and see another hill, and they think that if they were on the top of that, then they were able to touch the clouds with their fingers ; but when they are on the top of that hill, alas! then they are as far from the clouds as they were before. So it is with many that think, if they were in such a condition then they should have contentment ; and perhaps they get into that condition, and then they are as far from contentment as before.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

2. Nor by additions to our possessions.

(1712.) The reason why you have not contentment in the things of the world is not because you have not enough of them ; but the reason is, because they are not proportionable to that immortal soul of yours that is capable of God Himself. Many think when they are troubled and have not contentment, that it is because they have but a little in the world, and if they had more then they should be content. That were just thus. Suppose a man is hungry, and to satisfy his craving stomach he should open his mouth to take in the wind, and then should think that the reason why he is not satisfied is because he has not enough of the wind ; no, the reason is, because the thing is not suitable

to a craving stomach. Truly there is the same madness in the world. The wind that a man takes in by gaping will as soon satisfy a craving stomach, as all the comforts in the world can satisfy a soul that knows what true happiness means (Isa. lv. 1–3).
—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(1713.) The covetous person that is so greedy of the world and so insatiable in his desires, has not need of more to be heaped upon him, but has need rather of something to be taken away from him. He must have that discontented humour of his purged out of his head, that covetous affection of his wrought out of his heart, that is the cause of this his insatiable desire. Till then, all this world's wealth will be but as strong drink to the drunkard, that further inflames him, and increases his drought; as oil to the fire, that does not quench it, but makes it burn fiercer than at first. —*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

(1714.) When once men transgress the bounds of contentment prescribed by God, there is no stop nor stay. As the channel wears wider and deeper the more water falls into it; so the more outward things increase upon us, the more are our desires increased. Be content with such things as you have now, or you will not be content hereafter; the lust will increase with the possession.
—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

3. But by the grace of God in the heart, cleansing it from inordinate desires.

(1715.) All the rules and helps in the world will do us little good, except we get a good temper in our hearts. You can never make a ship go steady with propping of it without; you know there must be ballast within the ship, that must make it go steady. And so there is nothing without us that can keep our hearts in a steady constant way, but that which is within us; grace within the soul, that will do it. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(1716.) The men of the world, when they would have contentment, and want anything, Oh, they must have something from without to content them. But, says a godly man, let me get out that which is in already, and then I shall come to contentment. As suppose a man has an aguish humour that makes his drink taste bitter: "Now," says he, "you must put some sugar into my drink," and his wife puts in some, and yet the drink tastes bitter. Why? Because the bitterness comes from a bitter choleric humour within. But let the physician come and give him a potion to purge out the bitterness that is within, and then he can taste his drink well enough. Just thus it is with the men of the world. "Oh, such a condition is bitter, and if I could have such and such a mercy added to this misery, then it would be sweet." Now, if God should put a spoonful or two of sugar in, it would be bitter still. But the way to contentment is to purge out thy lusts and bitter humours. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not from hence, even of the lusts that war in your members?"
Burroughs, 1599–1646.

(1717.) As contentment argues much grace, so discontent argues much corruption. If a man's body be of that temper that every scratch of a pin makes his flesh to rankle and to be a sore, you will say, "Surely this man's body is very corrupt," so it is in thy spirit, if every little trouble and affliction shall make thee discontented. Or, as it is in a wound of a man's body; the evil of a wound is not so much in the largeness of the wound, and in the abundance of blood that comes out of the wound, but in the inflammation that there is in it, or in a fretting and corroding humour that is in the wound. An unskilful man when he comes and sees a large wound in the flesh, looks upon it as dangerous, and when he sees a great deal of blood gush out, he thinks these are the evils of it; but when a surgeon comes and sees a great gash, says he, "This will be healed within a few days." But there is a less wound, and there is an inflammation or a fretting humour that is in it; "and this will cost time," says he, "to cure." So that he does not lay balsam and healing salves upon it, but his great care is to get out the fretting humour or inflammation. So it is in the souls of men. It may be that there is some affliction upon them that I compare to the wound; now they think that the greatness of the affliction is that which makes their condition most miserable. Oh no; there is a fretting humour and inflammation in the heart, a murmuring spirit that is within thee, and that is the misery of thy condition, and that must be purged out of thee before thou canst be healed. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

4. By the increase of self-knowledge.

(1718.) You will never come to get any skill in this mystery, except you study the book of your own heart; and this will help you to contentment these three ways:—

1. By the studying of thy heart thou wilt come presently to *discover wherein thy discontent lies*. Many are discontented, and know not wherefore; they think that and the other thing is the cause: but a man that knows his own heart will find out presently where the root of the discontent lies, that it lies in such a corruption or distemper of the heart.

It is in this case as it is with a little child that is very froward in the house. If a stranger comes in, he does not know what the matter is: perhaps the stranger will give the child a rattle, or a nut, or such thing to quiet it. But when the nurse comes, she knows the disposition of the child, and therefore knows best how to quiet it. So it is here. When we are strangers with our own hearts, we are mightily discontented, and know not how to quiet ourselves, because we know not wherein the disquiet lies.

So a man that has a watch, and understands the use of every wheel and pin; if it goes amiss, he will presently find out the cause of it: but one that has no skill in a watch, when it goes amiss, he knows not what the matter is, and therefore cannot mend it. So indeed our hearts are as a watch, and there are many wheels and windings and turnings there, and we should labour to know our hearts well, that when they are out of tune we may know what the matter is.

2. This knowledge of our hearts will help us to contentment, because by this *we shall come to know what is most suitable to our condition*. A man that knows not his heart thinks not what need he has of affliction, and upon that he is disquieted.

3. By knowing their own hearts, *they know what they are able to manage*, and by this means they come to be content. Countrymen do observe, that if they overstock their lands, it will quickly spoil them. And so a wise husbandman, that knows how much

his ground will bear, is not troubled that he has not so much stock as others. Why? Because he knows that he has not ground enough for so great a stock, and that quiets him. So many men and women, that know not their own hearts, would fain have a prosperous estate as others have; but if they knew their own hearts, they would know they were not able to manage it.

If one of your little children of three or four years old should be crying for the coat of her that is twelve or fourteen years old, and say, "Why may I not have a coat as long as my sister's?" If she had, she would soon trip up her heels, and break her face; but when the child comes to understanding, she is not discontented because her coat is not so long as her sister's, but says, "My coat is fit for me," and therein takes content. So if we come to understanding in the school of Christ, we will not cry, "Why have not I such an estate as others have?" The Lord sees that I am not able to manage it, and I see it myself by the knowing of my own heart. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

5. By meditation upon what is consonant with our condition in this life.

(1719.) While I live in the world my condition is to be but a pilgrim, a stranger, a traveller, and a soldier. Now the right understanding of this; and being taught this, not only by rote, that I can speak the words over, but when I come to have my soul possessed with the consideration of this truth, that God has set me in this world, not as in my home, but as a mere stranger and a pilgrim, that I am travelling here to another home, and that I am here a soldier in my warfare; it is a mighty help to contentment, in whatsoever befalls one. As now to instance one of these conditions—

When a man is at home, if he has not things according to his desire he will be finding fault. But if a man travels abroad, perhaps he meets not with convenience as he desires; yet this very thought may moderate a man's spirit, "I am a traveller, and I must not be finding fault, though things be not so as in my own family."

If a man meets with ill weather, he must be content. "It is traveller's fare," we use to say, both fair weather and foul weather; and we must be content with it. If a man were at home and it should begin to drop in his house, he cannot bear it; but when he is travelling abroad, though he meet with rains and storms, he is not so much troubled. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

6. By a discovery of the interdependency of Divine providences.

(1720.) There is an infinite variety of the works of God in an ordinary providence, and yet all work in an orderly way. We put these two together, for God in the way of His providence causes a thousand thousand things one to depend upon another; there are infinite several wheels, as I may say, in the works of providence; all the works that ever God did from all eternity, or ever will do, put them all together, and all make up but one work, and they have been as several wheels that have had their orderly motion to attain the end that God from all eternity has appointed. We, indeed, look at things by pieces, we look at one particular and do not consider the reference that that one thing has to another; but God looks at all things at once, and sees the reference that one thing has to another: as a child that looks upon a clock, looks first upon one wheel, and then upon any other wheel; he looks not at all together, or the dependence that one has upon another; but the workman has his eyes upon all together, and sees the dependence of all upon one another, and the art that there is in the dependence of one upon another. So it is in God's providence.

Now observe how this works to contentment. When there is such a passage of providence befalls me, that is one wheel, and it may be if this one wheel should be stopped, there might a thousand other wheels come to be stopped by this: as in a clock, stop but one wheel, and you stop every wheel, because they have dependence one upon another. So when God has ordered a thing for the present to be thus and thus, how dost thou know how many things depend upon this one thing? God may have some work that He has to do twenty years hence that may depend upon this passage of providence that falls out this day or this week.

And here we may see a great deal of evil that there is in discontent. For thou wouldest have God's providence altered in such and such a particular? Indeed, if it were only in that particular, and that had reference to nothing else, it were not so much: but by thy desire to have thy will in such a particular, it may be that thou wouldest cross God in a thousand things that He has to bring about; because it is possible there may be a thousand things depending upon that one thing that thou wouldest fain have to be otherwise than it is. Just as if a child should cry out and say, "Let but that one wheel stop:" though he says but one wheel, yet if that stop, it is as much as if he should say, they must all stop. So in providence: let but this one passage of providence stop, and it is as much as if a thousand stopped. Let me therefore be quiet and content: for though I be crossed in some one particular, God attains His end, at least His end may be furthered in a thousand things by this one thing that I am crossed in. Therefore let a man consider, this is an act of providence, and how do I know what God is about to do, and how many things depend upon this providence? If thou hast a love and friendship to God, be willing to be crossed in some few things, that the Lord may have His work to go on in the universal in a thousand other things. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

DOING GOOD.

I. *THE DUTY OF EVERY CHRISTIAN.*

(1721.) As burning candles give light until they be consumed, so godly Christians must be occupied in doing good as long as they live.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1722.) As Apelles the painter much lamented if he should escape but one day without drawing some picture or line: so ought a Christian to be sorry if any day should pass without some good work or exercise. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

II. *POSSIBLE TO EVERY ONE.*

(1723.) What is a bud in a forest? yet is it beautiful as if alone. What is one snowflake of the mantle that wraps the mountain top? yet is it perfect as if alone, and reflects part of the early

golden light of the advancing sun. Each man is a man, and may have his individuality of work and worth. A good man among the good is as one of the drops on which God paints the rainbow; for good men are to the world its rainbow of Divine promise and hope; and the goodness of no man is lost. Every raindrop does its part in dissolving light into colour; and though we may seem to ourselves like those drops which, falling near our window, make to us no part of the bow, yet we too have our brightness and place, forming part of the arch as seen by some—that arch which "the hands of the Most High have bended." And not only has the individual good man ever due place among the many—at times his individual goodness may have a worth quite special. One man of pure, and merciful, and patient life, shall at times better represent God to us than shall the Church, or what by us is so named; even as on a drop of morning dew, lying calm and still, a more perfect image of the sun appears than on the vast sea distracted by tumultuous winds. On the sea there is a wide diffused lustre; but on the dewdrop a serene, clear brightness. We, and our work and our history, all have worth, and may have special worth.

—*Lynch*, 1818–1871.

(1724.) I know a man [Thomas Wright] who at the close of each day's work turned his steps to the prison, and with his Bible, or on his knees on the floor, spent the evening hours in its gloomy cells, seeking to instruct the ignorant and reclaim the criminal and raise the fallen. The judgment day shall show how many he restored, penitent and pardoned, to the bosom of God; but it is certain that, alone and single-handed, he rescued and reformed four hundred criminals, restoring them, honest and well-doing men, to the bosom of society.

—*Guthrie.*

(1725.) You say, "What can I do? I have no power, nor influence, nor name, nor talents, nor money!" Look at the coral-reef yonder, where it encircles the fair isles that lie, like bright gems, on the bosom of the Pacific, or, by Australian shores, stretches its unbroken wall for a thousand leagues along the sea. How contemptible the architects; yet the aggregate of their labours, mocking our greatest breakwaters, how colossal! So it ought to be, and would be, in our congregations, were every man and every woman to feel their own individual responsibilities; would each go to Christ, saying, Lord, what wilt Thou have *me* to do?—would they but rise to the height of their calling. I know that all cannot be bright and burning lights; that honour is reserved for John Baptist and a few such men. But see how that candle in a cottage window sends out its rays streaming far through the depths of night. Why should not we shine, though but like that?—shine, though it should be to illumine only the narrow walls of our country's humblest home.

Consider how the greatest things ever done on earth have been done by little and little—little agents, little persons, and little things. How was the wall restored around Jerusalem? By each man, whether his house was an old palace or the rudest cabin, building the breach before his own door. How was the soil of the New World redeemed from gloomy forests? By each sturdy emigrant cultivating the patch round his own log hut. How have the greatest battles been won? Not by the generals who got their breasts blazoned with stars, and their brows crowned with honours, but by the rank and file—every man holding his own post, and ready to die on the battle-field. They won the victory! It was achieved by the blood and courage of the many: and I say, if the world is ever to be conquered for our Lord, it is not by ministers, nor by office-bearers, nor by the great, and noble, and mighty, but by every member of Christ's body being a working member; doing their own work; filling their own sphere; holding their own post; and saying to Jesus, "Lord, what wilt Thou have *me* to do?"

—*Guthrie.*

(1726.) Many persons high in station, who would not permit an equal or a superior to speak to them on the subject of religion, will take very kindly the preaching of a person who makes no pretensions, and whose position and carriage indicate that he comes to them deferentially.

If you go to the door of a man who has great official influence or power, you will see crowds thronging thither to get access to him; and one can get in because he is the governor of a state; another because he is a senator; another, because he controls such and such pecuniary or political influences. But there is a whole swarm who cannot get in. They are not known, and are shuffled to one side. But while the door is open, and the governor and senator and influential men are going in, a little dog slips in, because he is a dog. A man would not be allowed to go in, but a dog is.

I would rather go into a great man's heart as a dog, than to be shut out because I was a man. A little man who does not put too much on himself, and is willing to go in anyhow, oftentimes gets the liberty of slipping in at the door of a man's disposition, when, if he were a great man, he would not be permitted to go in. The trouble is not that you are so humble, but that you are not humble enough. It is because, being little, you are not willing to do the work that a little man can do. If you could only forget yourself; if the thought never came up whether you were big or little; if you had a grateful sense of what Christ has done for you, and a realisation of the peril which hangs over a man's head all the time; if you carried the man in your heart night and day, and could not get rid of him, if you prayed for him, and yearned after him, and desired his good,—with that state of mind you might safely venture to go to him. Under such circumstances, do not stop to ask, "Am I fitted to undertake this work?" You will find that out when you have tried. What if you get a rebuff? It will not do you any hurt, and it may do you much good. At any rate, Christ took buffets for our sake; and we ought to be willing to take buffets, not only for His sake, but for others' sakes.

The persons that bring the most souls to Christ are not those who have the greatest overt power in the world, but those who are the most gentle, unassuming, earnest, and sincere. —*Beecher.*

(1727.) Nellie Trafton had been a sufferer almost all her life from a bad disease of the lungs. One desire little Nell had above all others; and that was, to become a missionary when she should be old enough, One day she suddenly exclaimed, "What is the use in my waiting until I am grown up before I do any good? I mean to try now!"

So Nellie planned and worked, and got up

a little sewing-society, with a young lady to help the children and direct it. At the end they had some tableaux, and sold the little things they had made. And how much do you think they earned? About one hundred dollars! Was not that something for a sick girl to do? And what do you think they did with the money? They sent it to help to support a teacher for a school of coloured children down South.

If a little girl who was sick nearly all the time could do so much, what cannot the well ones do if they try? Ah! that last word is the key to it all; only TRY!

III. *THE POWER FOR GOOD THAT LIES LATENT IN EVERY CHURCH.*

(1728.) In looking over some vast assembly, with its sea of human faces, one reflection naturally suggests itself—in a few years they shall be all mouldering in the dust. There is another and yet more solemn thought;—our minds are carried forward to that day, when the graves of a thousand generations having given up their dead, all eyes, instead of being turned on a poor mortal man, shall, some beaming with joy and others black with despair, be fixed on the great white throne and Him that sits crowned thereon. But there is a third thought that presses on me whenever I cast my eyes over some such great assembly, and see all these human faces; it is this,—What power is here! what an immense moral power!

You may smile at him who, standing by the cataract of Niagara, as gathering her waters from a hundred lakes she rolled them over with the roar of a hundred thunders, instead of being filled with sublime admiration of the scene, began to calculate how much machinery that water-power would turn. You may smile at that utilitarianism. But it is a serious, solemn, stirring thought to think how much moral machinery all this power now before me could turn for good, were every scheming brain, and busy hand, and willing heart, engaged in the service of God. I hope many of you are active, zealous Christians. But were all of us so,—were all Christian men and women so, what honour would accrue to God! what a revenue of glory to Jesus Christ, and what invaluable service to religion! Thousands on thousands might be saved!

It is impossible to overestimate, or rather to estimate, the power that lies latent in our churches. We talk of the power latent in steam—latent till Watt evoked its spirit from the waters, and set the giant to turn the iron arms of machinery. We talk of the power that was latent in the skies till science climbed their heights, and seizing the spirit of the thunder, chained it to our service—abolishing distance; outstripping the wings of time; and flashing our thoughts across rolling seas to distant continents. Yet what are these to the moral power that lies asleep in the congregations of our country, and of the Christian world? And why latent? Because men and women neither appreciate their individual influence, nor estimate aright their own individual responsibilities. They cannot do everything; therefore they do nothing. They cannot blaze like a star; and therefore they won't shine like a glow-worm; and so they are content that the few work, and that the many look on. Not thus are the woods clothed in green; but by every little leaf expanding its own form. Not thus are fields covered with golden corn; but by every stalk of grain ripening its own head. Not thus does the coral reef rise from the depths of ocean; but by every little insect building its own rocky cell.

—*Guthrie.*

IV. *DEMANDS SELF-DENIAL.*

(1729.) Christ did not redeem and save poor souls by sitting in majesty on His heavenly throne but by hanging on the shameful cross.

V. *DIFFICULTIES ARE NOT TO DETER US.*

(1730.) It is poor water that will not run down hill. The person who will not do good when it is easier to do good than not to do it I call a very poor Christian indeed. Doing good under such circumstances does not amount to much either. That is a poor engine that can only drive water through hose or pipes down hill. A good engine is one that can lift large quantities of water up steep acclivities. Those vast giants of iron at the Ridgewood Water-works, which supply this city, day and night, easily lifting a ton of water at every gush, so that all the many thirsty faucet-mouths throughout our streets cannot exhaust their fullness,—those are the engines that I admire.

There are many Christians that can pump down hill; and they are very conceited frequently, and say, "See what I am doing. See the pulsations of my heart. Stand out of the way!" But anybody can do all that they are doing. —*Beecher.*

VI. *OPPORTUNITIES FOR DOING GOOD SHOULD BE EAGERLY SEIZED.*

(1731.) If cruelty has its expiations and its remorses, generosity has its chances and its turns of good fortune; as if Providence reserved them for fitting occasions, that noble hearts may not be discouraged. —*Lamartine.*

VII. *MODES OF DOING GOOD.*

(1732.) In one of the boxes sent to us by the American Sanitary Commission was a Patch-work quilt of unusual softness and lightness. When we opened it, we found a note pinned to it. I read as follows:—

'I have made this Scripture quilt for one of the Hospital beds, for I thought that whilst it would be a comfort to the poor body, it might speak a word of good to the precious soul; the words are so beautiful and blessed, and full of balm and healing! May it be blessed to the dear boys in the army, amongst whom I have a son.' It was made of square blocks of calico and white cotton intermingled, and on every white block was written a verse from the Bible or a couplet from one of our best hymns. On the central block, in letters so large as to catch the careless eye, was that faithful saying, in which is our hope and strength—'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' And below it, the prayer of all prayers, "God be merciful to me a sinner.' The head border which would be nearest the sick man's eye, and oftenest read, had the sweetest texts of promise, and love, and comfort. Amongst them I read, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.' 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Ho, every one that thirsteth,

come ye to the waters!' 'I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.' 'Oh,' we said, 'that all our beds had such quilts! God will surely speak through these texts to the sick and wounded men! They will read them when they will read nothing else. Who knows how much good they will do!' To sufferer after sufferer who lay under it, this quilt was a source of interest, and to some the means of life and peace. At last came the boy who had best right to the comfort of our Scripture quilt—the 'son' of whom the good woman who made it spoke in the note attached. It was a strange circumstance that he should have come to lie beneath it, but so it was. He had lain there nearly senseless for more than a week, when I saw him kiss the patch-work. I thought he might be wandering, or if not, had found a text of hope or consolation that seemed to suit his need, and marked with my eye the place he had kissed, to see what it was. It was no text, but a calico block, the pattern a little crimson leaf on a dark ground. He kept looking at it, with tears in his eyes, and I was almost sure his mind was wandering. Nay, he was never more in his right mind, and his thoughts were at home with his mother. A bit of the gown he had so often seen her wear had carried him back to her. He kissed it again. I approached him. He looked up and smiled through his tears. 'Do you know where this quilt came from?' he asked. 'Some good woman sent it to us through the Sanitary Commission.' 'You don't know her name, nor where it came from?' 'No, but I saved a note that was pinned to the quilt.' Would you be willing to let me see it some time when it's convenient?' 'Oh yes. I'll get it now.' I got it for him, his hand trembled, and his lips grew white as he opened it and saw the writing. 'Please read it to me quite slowly,' he said, returning it. I read it. 'It is from my mother; shall you keep it?' 'Yes' I answered, 'I value it very much, as also the quilt.' He put his hands over his eyes. I thought he wished to be alone, and left him. As I stood by his bed the next day, I was wondering if he had not seen his mother's texts, as well as the bit of her gown. He had, and pointed out one to me. It was, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.' 'I am no more worthy,' he whispered. I put my finger on the next white block, and read aloud, 'When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.' As I looked up, I saw there were tears upon his cheeks, and his lips were tremulous. He covered his eyes, and I left him. A few days after, when he had grown much stronger, he held up to me the text I had shown him. 'I was a great way off,' he said, 'but He has met me and had compassion on me.' 'You feel the Saviour's love?' 'It fills me with peace.' 'What love! What a Saviour!' I said, in my thanksgiving. 'Shall I not write to your mother and tell her that her son, who was dead, is alive again; was lost, and is found?' 'Will it not be too much trouble?' 'Oh no! a pleasure instead!' I wrote the blessed tidings, making the mother's heart rejoice. And now our Scripture quilt was even dearer and more sacred than before.

VIII. *THE HIGHEST FORM OF DOING GOOD.*

(1733.) To do good to men is the great work of life; to make them true Christians is the greatest good we can do them. Every investigation brings us round to this point. Begin here, and you are like one who strikes water from a rock on the summits of the mountains; it flows down all the intervening tracts to the very base. If we could make each man love his neighbour, we should make a happy world. The true method is to begin with ourselves, and so to extend the circle to all around us. It should be perpetually in our minds.

—*J. W. Alexander.*

IX. *THE SUPREME QUALIFICATION FOR DOING GOOD.*

(1734.) We can do more good by being good than in any other way. —*Rowland Hill.*

(1735.) As for doing good, that is one of the professions which are full. What *good* I do, in the common sense of that word, must be aside from my main path, and for the most part wholly unintended. Men say, practically, Begin where you are, and such as you are, without aiming mainly to become of more worth, and with kindness aforethought go about doing good. If I were to preach at all in this strain, I should say, rather, Set about being good. As if the sun should stop when he had kindled his fires up to the splendour of a moon or a star of the sixth magnitude, and go about like a Robin Goodfellow, peeping in at every cottage window, inspiring lunatics, and tainting meats, and making darkness visible, instead of steadily increasing his genial heat and beneficence till he is of such brightness that no mortal can look him in the face, and then, and in the meanwhile too, going about the world in his own orbit, doing it good, or rather, as a truer philosophy has discovered, the world going about him getting good. —*Thoreau.*

X. *ITS REWARDS.*

1. Personal invigoration and comfort.

(1736.) Doing good is the best way for receiving good: he that in pity to a poor man that is almost starved, will but fall to rubbing him, shall get himself heat, and both be gainers.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1737.) All the purest ordinances and churches will not afford that solid comfort, as the converting of a few sinners by our unwearied, compassionate exhortations. Two men in a frosty season come where a company of people are ready to starve; the one of them laps himself, and taketh shelter, for fear lest he should perish with them; the other, in pity, falls to rub them that he may recover heat in them, and while he laboureth hard to help them, he getteth far better heat to himself than his unprofitable companion doth. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

2. True and unexpected happiness.

(1738.) As every faithful minister is never so well pleased as when he doth most for the good of souls; so it is with every faithful Christian. A candle if it be not burnt, is lost and good for nothing.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1739.) Alexander, the Emperor, was one day out hunting; and having gone ahead of his suite, he fancied he heard a groan: the groan pierced his heart; he alighted on the spot, looked around him and found a poor man at the point of death. He bent over him, chafed his temples, excited the poor

man or tried to do so; he went by a public road, and called the attention of a surgeon to the case of the poor man. "Oh!" said the surgeon, "he is dead: he is dead." "Try what you can do," said Alexander. "He is dead," said the surgeon. "Try what you can do." The surgeon adopted a set of experimental processes at the command of the Emperor; and at last a drop of blood appeared. At the mouth of the opened vein there was suction; respiration was forming in the chest of the man. Alexander's eyes flashed fire, and he said—"Oh! this is the happiest day of my life; I have saved another man's life!"

What says another great man among ourselves—Lord Eldon? In a letter to his sister which he wrote in his old age, after he had retired from the honours of office, he says—"It was my duty, as Lord Chancellor, to listen to the record of the sentences passed by the Recorder of the City of London. It used to be a formal thing, when the sentences of death were read over that the Chancellor should give his assent; but I determined after the first time that I would go into each case, and have each case clearly and distinctly stated. It used to give me a great deal of trouble in addition to all my other duties; but the consequence of this was, that I saved the lives of several persons." I say, do good in the cause of truth and righteousness, and you will promote your own honour and happiness; and when the eye sees you, it will bless you; and when the ear hears you, it will bear witness to you. —*Beaumont.*

(1740.) It is recorded of a man who had made an ample fortune and had retired to a country seat to enjoy it, that when he had nothing to do he became absolutely wretched; so wretched that he formed the horrible idea of committing suicide. Going to drown himself he met a poor woman who had not tasted bread for four and twenty hours; cold—ragged—wretched—starving—she implored aid, he gave her a shilling; and the grateful smile reflected from the starving woman's face arrested his career, and he returned a wiser and a better man, saying to himself, "If God makes me the instrument of giving happiness by the gift of a shilling, I think He must have more work for me to do in the world." If any do not know what to do, and therefore cannot find happiness in the world, let them apply at the nearest Sunday-school for work as teachers, Visit the first day-school and take an interest in it. Follow a city missionary in his laborious, and arduous, and excellent toil; and you will reap blessings in that poor man's footsteps. If you want to be happy, do good, if you wish to rejoice, begin to be beneficent. This is the law that God has made. In every age, in every circumstance, in every sphere, it has been proved to be practically true; make the experiment, and you will find it is so still. —*Cumming.*

(1741.) In seeking others' good, we achieve good ourselves. I know of no way to get rid of a great deal of the prevalent dulness, and drowsiness, and spiritual *ennui* with which many of God's children are afflicted, than by shaking it off like cobwebs, and going to work. Work is the necessary prerequisite of growth; and exercise, of health and development. When good Christian people tell me about being in a saddened condition, when they confess to a state of spiritual stagnation, and say, 'I am making but little progress in this heavenly way,' it does not seem wonderful at all. The man who does not work has no right to expect anything but distrust and dissatisfaction, and deprivation, and ultimate degradation, and he will get it sooner or later. For any Christian man to suppose that he is simply a piece of sanctified sponge, to continuously absorb the light and life of others and grow, is sheer nonsense. He will by and by *rot!* He will not be able to keep, even with salt. If you would be healthily developed, *work.* If there is a single organ of the body that is weak, use it well and use it long, and strength will come to it. So with regard to your spiritual life. There is no such beneficent arrangement for spiritual growth like the effort to prove a blessing to mankind.

—*Ormiston.*

(1742.) If we view this microcosm, the human body, we shall find that the heart does not receive the blood to store it up, but while it pumps it in at one valve, it sends it forth at another. The blood is always circulating everywhere, and is stagnant nowhere; the same is true of all the fluids in a healthy body, they are in a constant state of expenditure. If one cell stores for a few moments its peculiar secretion, it only retains it till it is perfectly fitted for its appointed use in the body; for if any cell in the body should begin to store up its secretion, its store would soon become the cause of inveterate disease; nay, the organ would soon lose the power to secrete at all, if it did not give forth its products. The whole of the human system lives by giving. The eye cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee, and will not guide thee; for if it does not perform its watchful office, the whole man will be in the ditch, and the eye will be covered with mire. If the members refuse to contribute to the general stock, the whole body will become poverty-stricken, and be given up to the bankruptcy of death. Let us learn, then, from the analogy of nature, the great lesson, that to get, we must give; that to accumulate, we must scatter; that to make ourselves happy, we must make others happy; and that to get good and become spiritually vigorous, we must do good, and seek the spiritual good of others. —*Spurgeon.*

(1743.) A physician was once returning to his home, when he saw a little child in great peril in the street. Another instant she would have been crushed under the iron hoofs which were almost upon her. At great peril to himself, he rushed forward, and seizing the little one, bore her in safety to the sidewalk. Curiosity impelled him to look into the child's face that he might see if he knew whom he had rescued. Pushing back the little bonnet, what were his feelings to see that it was his own little daughter whose life he had saved. So he who hastes to save the perishing often finds rewards he little dreamed of. "Whatever thy hands find to do, do it with all your might."

8. True glory.

(1744) If there be nothing so glorious as doing good, if there is nothing that makes us so like God, then nothing can be so glorious in the use of our money as to use it all in works of love and goodness.

—*Law.*

(1745.) Some men live in their good deeds, and like a beautiful insect, or a delicate moss preserved

in a mass of golden, aromatic amber, seem to lie embalmed in the memory of their worth.

—*Guthrie.*

4. The approval of Christ.

(1746.) A Russian soldier, one very cold, piercing night, kept duty between one sentry-box and another. A poor working man, moved with pity, took off his coat and lent it to the soldier to keep him warm; adding that he should soon reach home, while the soldier would be exposed out of doors for the night. The cold was so intense that the soldier was found dead in the morning. Some time afterwards the poor man was laid on his death-bed, and in a dream saw Jesus. "You have got my coat on," said the man. "Yes, it is the coat you lent to me that cold night when I was on duty, and you passed by. 'I was naked, and you clothed Me.'"

EDUCATION.

1. Its nature.

(1747.) Real knowledge, like everything else of the highest value, is not to be obtained easily. It must be worked for,—studied for,—thought for,—and more than all, it must be prayed for. And that is education which lays the foundation of such habits,—and gives them, so far a boy's early age will allow, their proper exercise.

—*Arnold*, 1795–1842.

(1748.) Because education is a dynamical, not a mechanical process, the more powerful and vigorous the mind of the teacher, the more clearly and readily he can grasp things, the better fitted he is to cultivate the mind of another. And to this I find myself coming more and more; I care less and less for information, more and more for the true exercise of the mind; for answering questions concisely and comprehensively, for showing a command of language, a delicacy of taste, a comprehensiveness of thought, and a power of combination.

—*Arnold*, 1795–1842.

(1749.) A girl may be shown how to darn and how to patch, how to bake and how to brew, how to scrub and how to rub, how to buy pennyworths with pennies, and yet be sent out to the rich man a defective servant, and to the poor man an unthrifty uncomfortable wife. On the other hand, she may have received formal instruction in no one of these things, and yet be able to overcome every difficulty as it arises, by help of the spirit that has been put into her, and will not only soon do well, but will perpetually advance towards perfection in whatever ministry may be demanded of her by the circumstances of her future life. If she has been trained to live by How and Why,—always pouring down through these conductors the whole energy of the mind upon the matter actually in hand,—she will surely make a wise wife or a clever servant.

—*Household Words.*

2. Its object.

(1750.) I call a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war . . . . . But here the main skill and groundwork will be, to temper them [the learners] with lectures and explanations upon every opportunity, as may lead and draw them in willing obedience, inflamed with a study of learning, and the admiration of virtue; stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God, and famous to all ages.

—*Milton*, 1608–1674.

(1751.) I hesitate not to assert, as a Christian, that religion is the first rational object of education. Whatever may be the fate of my children in this transitory world, about which, I hope, I am as solicitous as I ought to be, I would, if possible, secure a happy meeting with them in a future and everlasting life. I can well enough bear their reproaches for not enabling them to attain to worldly honours and distinctions; but to have been in any measure accessory, by my neglect, to their final perdition, would be the occasion of such reproach and blame, as would be absolutely insupportable.

—*Priestley.*

(1752.) The object of a *liberal education* is to develop the whole mental system of man;—to make his speculative inferences coincide with his practical convictions;—to enable him to render a reason for the belief that is in him, and not to leave him in the condition of Solomon's sluggard, who is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that *can* render a reason.

—*Whewell.*

3. Its necessity.

(1753.) Like as a field, although it be fertile, can bring forth no fruit except it be first tilled and seed cast in: so the mind, although it be apt of itself, cannot without learning bring forth any goodness.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(1754.) The fruits of the earth do not more obviously require labour and cultivation to prepare them for our use and subsistence, than our faculties demand instruction and regulation in order to qualify us to become upright and valuable members of society, useful to others, or happy in ourselves.

—*Barrow*, 1631–1713.

(1755.) I consider a human soul without education like marble in the quarry, which shows none of its inherent beauties until the skill of the polisher fetches out the colours, makes the surface shine, and discovers every ornamental cloud, spot, and vein that runs through the body of it. Education, after the same manner, when it works upon a noble mind draws out to view every latent virtue and perfection, which without such helps are never able to make their appearance.

If my reader will give me leave to change the allusion so soon upon him, I shall make use of the same instance to illustrate the force of education which Aristotle has brought to explain his doctrine of substantial forms, when he tells us that a statue lies hid in a block of marble, and that the art of the statuary only clears away the superfluous matter and removes the rubbish. The figure is in the stone, the sculptor only finds it. What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to a human soul. The philosopher, the saint, or the hero, the wise, the good, or the great man, very often lie hid and concealed in a plebeian, which a proper education might have disinterred, and have brought to light.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(1756.) Education, in the most extensive sense of the word, may comprehend every preparation that is made in our youth for the sequel of our lives; and in this sense I use it. Some such preparation

is necessary for all conditions, because without it they must be miserable, and probably will be vicious, when they grow up, either from the want of the means of subsistence, or from want of rational and inoffensive occupation. In civilised life, everything is effected by art and skill. Whence, a person who is provided with neither (and neither can be acquired without exercise and instruction) will be useless; and he that is useless, will generally be at the same time mischievous to the community. So that to send an uneducated child into the world is injurious to the rest of mankind; it is little better than to turn out a mad dog or a wild beast into the streets.
—*Paley*, 1743–1805.

(1757.) Despotism is the only form of government which may with safety to itself neglect the education of its infant poor. —*Horsley*, 1733–1806.

(1758.) I am persuaded that the extreme profligacy, improvidence, and misery which are so prevalent among the labouring classes in many countries are chiefly to be ascribed to the want of education. In proof of this, we need only cast our eyes on the condition of the Irish compared with that of the peasantry of Scotland. —*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(1759.) Culture's hand
Has scatter'd verdure o'er the land;
And smiles and fragrance rule serene,
Where barren wild usurp'd the scene.
And such is man—a soil which breeds
Or sweetest flowers or vilest weeds;
Flowers lovely as the morning light,
Weeds deadly as an aconite;
Just as his heart is trained to bear
The poisonous weed, or flow'ret fair.
—*Bowring.*

4. Should begin early.

(1760.) Education may be compared to the grafting of a tree. Every gardener knows that the *younger* the wilding-stock is that is to be grafted, the easier and the more effectual is the operation, because, then, one scion put on just above the root, will become the main stem of the tree, and all the branches it puts forth will be of the right sort. When, on the other hand, a tree is to be grafted at a considerable age (which may be very successfully done), you have to put on twenty or thirty grafts on the several branches; and afterwards you will have to be watching from time to time for the wilding-shoots which the stock will be putting forth, and pruning them off. And even so one whose character is to be *reformed* at mature age will find it necessary not merely to implant a right principle once for all, but also to bestow a distinct attention on the correction of this, that, and the other bad habit.
—*Whately*, 1787–1863.

(1761.) Youth is that period in which, if you would educate men, they must be educated. If they are not educated then, they will not be educated, and no repentance can change the fact. When the plates are prepared for steel engravings, the steel is made soft; and then the graver works out the picture; and then the plate is put into a furnace and brought to great hardness, so that impressions can be taken off by the hundreds without wearing it. Now the time to engrave men is youth, when the plate is soft and ductile. Manhood is hard, and cannot be cut easily, any more than tempered steel. —*Beecher.*

5. Cannot be imposed on any one.

(1762.) Every man who rises above the common level receives two educations: the first from his instructors; the second, the most personal and important, from himself. —*Gibbon*, 1737–1794.

(1763.) Costly apparatus and splendid cabinets have no magical power to make scholars. As a man is in all circumstances, under God, the master of his own fortune, so he is the maker of his own mind. The Creator has so constituted the human intellect that it can only grow by its own action: it will certainly and necessarily grow. Every man must therefore educate himself. His books and teachers are but helps; the work is his. A man is not educated until he has the ability to summon, in an emergency, his mental powers in vigorous exercise to effect its proposed object. It is not the man who has seen the most, or read the most, who can do this; such a one is in danger of being borne down, like a beast of burden, by an overloaded mass of other men's thoughts. Nor is it the man who can boast merely of native vigour and capacity. The greatest of all warriors who went to the siege of Troy had not the pre-eminence because nature had given him strength and he carried the largest bow; but because self-discipline had taught him how to bend it. —*Daniel Webster.*

6. Some minds are incapable of it.

(1764.) Professions of universal education are as ludicrous as professions of universal cure; the obliquity and inaptitude of some minds being absolutely incurable. —*W. B. Clulow.*

7. Mistakes in education.

(1765.) The general mistake among us in the educating our children is, that in our daughters we take care of their persons and neglect their minds; in our sons we are so intent upon adorning their minds that we wholly neglect their bodies. It is from this that you shall see a young lady celebrated and admired in all the assemblies about town, when her elder brother is afraid to come into a room. From this ill-management it arises that we frequently observe a man's life is half spent before he is taken notice of; and a woman in the prime of her years is out of fashion and neglected.
—*Hughes*, 1677–1720.

(1766.) With respect to the education of boys, I think they are generally made to draw in Latin and Greek trammels too soon. It is pleasing, no doubt, to a parent, to see his child already in some sort a proficient in those languages at an age when most others are entirely ignorant of them; but hence it often happens that a boy who could construe a fable of Æsop at six or seven years of age, having exhausted his little stock of attention and diligence in making that notable acquisition, grows weary of his task, conceives a dislike for study, and perhaps makes but a very indifferent progress afterwards. —*Cowper.*

(1767.) It is an ill-judged thrift, in some rich parents, to bring up their sons to mean employments, for the sake of saving the charge of a more expensive education; for these sons, when they become masters of their liberty and fortune, will hardly continue in occupations by which they think themselves degraded; and are seldom qualified for anything better. —*Paley*, 1743–1805.

8. Uniformity is impossible.

(1768.) Men hope, by systems and rules, to shape different minds according to one fixed model; but nature and the accidents of life intervene to thwart the design, and thus keep up the infinite diversity of intellect and attainments, corresponding to the equally varied tempers and fortunes of mankind.

—*W. B. Clulow.*

(1769.) It must not be forgotten that education resembles the grafting of a tree in this point also, that there must be some affinity between the stock and the graft, though a very important practical difference may exist; for example, between a worthless crab and a fine apple. Even so, the new nature, as it may be called, superinduced by education, must always retain some relation to the original one, though differing in most important points. You cannot, by any kind of artificial training, make *any* thing of *any* one, and obliterate all trace of the natural character. Those who hold that this *is* possible, and attempt to effect it, resemble Virgil, who (whether in ignorance or, as some think, by way of "poetical licence") talks of grafting an oak on an elm: "glandemque sues fregere sub ulmis."

—*Whately*, 1787–1863.

9. Public schools.

(1770.) A boy will learn more true wisdom in a public school in a year, than by a private education in five. It is not from masters, but from their equals, youth learn a knowledge of the world: the little tricks they play each other, the punishment that frequently attends the commission, is a just picture of the great world; and all the ways of men are practised in a public school in miniature. It is true, a child is early made acquainted with some vices in a school; but it is better to know these when a boy, than be first taught them when a man; for their novelty then may have irresistible charms.

—*Goldsmith*, 1728–1774.

10. Its Results.

(1771.) Many are born into the world, not only with the general taint of original sin, but also with such particular propensities, such predominant inclinations to vice, that they are as fruitful a soil for the devil to plant in, and afford as much fuel for sin to flame out upon, as it is possible for the utmost corruption of human nature to supply them with. But God, who in His most wise providence restrains many whom He never renews, has many ways to prevent the outrageous eruption of this vicious principle. And one great one is this of a pious education; which may lay such strong fetters, such powerful restrictions upon the heart, that it shall not be able to lash out into those excesses and enormities, which the more licentious and debauched part of the world wallow in: yet still, though by this the unclean bird be caged up, the uncleanness of its nature is not hereby changed. For as no raking or harrowing can alter the nature of a barren ground, though it may smooth and level it to the eye; so neither can those early disciplines of parents and tutors extirpate the innate appetites of the soul, and turn a bad heart into a good; they may indeed draw some plausible lines of civility upon the outward carriage and conversation, but to conquer a natural inclination is the work of a higher power. Nevertheless it must be always looked upon as a high mercy, where God is pleased to do so much for a man as this comes to; and whosoever he is, who in his minority has been kept from those extravagances which his depraved nature would otherwise have carried him out to, and so has grown up under the eye of a careful and severe tuition, has cause with bended knees to acknowledge the mercy of being born of religious parents, and bred up under virtuous and discreet governors; and to bless God, without any danger of pharisaical arrogance, that upon this account "he is not as many other men are." But still (as I have noted), all this is but "the sweeping and garnishing of the house;" and though education may sometimes do that, yet it is grace only that can keep out "the unclean spirit." And consequently such a person, notwithstanding all this outward flourish of behaviour, must yet know that his heart may be all this while as really unrenewed, and upon that score as impure, as the heart of those, who, not being hampered with such early preventions, break forth into the most open and flagitious practices.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(1772.) I think we may assert that in a hundred men there are more than ninety who are what they are, good or bad, useful or pernicious to society, from the instruction they have received. It is on education that depend the great differences observable among them. The least and most imperceptible impressions received in our infancy have consequences very important, and of a long duration. It is with these first impressions as with a river, whose waters we can easily turn, by different canals, in quite opposite courses; so that from the insensible direction the stream receives at its source, it takes different directions, and at last arrives at places far distant from each other; and with the same facility we may, I think, turn the minds of children to what direction we please. —*Locke*, 1632–1704.

(1773.) It is important to distinguish between actual failure, and failure as to the production of visible effect. It appears more has been effected by education than is really apparent. The water has been frozen, and to bring the ice even to the state of cold water, a considerable quantity of caloric has been employed. They have expended much fuel, taken much pains, enough to make the water boil had it been cold water when they began; but though, when they put their hand in the vessel, they now feel the water cold, even that is an advance upon the ice. So when they saw the state of crime, however they might lament it, they consider what the extent of evil would have been but for so much religious education. In calculating the good done, the evil prevented must be considered, and if this is not so apparent, it is not less real. —*Salter.*

(1774.) Hang me all the thieves in Gibbet Street to-morrow, and the place will be crammed with fresh tenants in a week; but catch me up the young thieves from the gutter and the doorsteps; take Jonathan Wild from the breast; send Mrs. Sheppard to Bridewell, but take hale young Jack out of her arms; teach and wash me this young unkempt vicious colt, and he will run for the Virtue Stakes yet; take the young child, the little lamb, before the great Jack Sheppard ruddles him and folds him for his own black flock in Hades; give him some soap, instead of whipping him for stealing a cake of brown Windsor; teach him the Gospel, instead of sending him to the treadmill for haunting chapels and purloining prayer-books out of pews; put him in the way of filling shop-tills, instead of transport-

ing him when he crawls on his hands and knees to empty them; let him know that he has a body fit and made for something better than to be kicked, bruised, chained, pinched with hunger, clad in rags or prison gray, or mangled with jailer's cat; let him know that he has a soul to be saved. In God's name, take care of the children, somebody; and there will soon be an oldest inhabitant in Gibbet Street, and never a new one to succeed him!

—*Household Words.*

(1775.) When you show me a man who has been cultured, you ought to show me a man that is better built to meet the contingencies of life than any that are uncultured.

During the war we sent into the camp both classes; and we expected the rude swain, who had known only coarseness, would make a better soldier, and resist all the hardships of the field more easily than the young man who had passed through college, or who had been brought up in the midst of wealth and refinement; but experience did not justify that expectation. It was found, on the contrary, that although the regiments that were gathered from the country were physically hardier than those that came from the cities, they, after all, could not endure the service as well. It was found that those who came from the cities, and had more mind, more brain-power, and had been brought up in wealth and with culture, were more efficient than the opposite class. It was found that educated intelligence was a better preservative than mere muscular strength, and that those who had been brought up in dainty conditions of life adapted themselves more easily to the hardships of the camp than those who came from the poorer ranks of society. It was found that men who had mental resources could bear up under wounds, and would recover, where those who were without such resources were more apt to sicken and die. It is the result of education to make men more enduring, not simply in the midst of favourable circumstance, but everywhere.

It is said that when the French nobility were expelled from France, after the French Revolution, they bore their exile and wanderings more nobly, and were more self-helpful, than the common peasantry, or than men in the lower ranks of life who were also expelled. And when the Hungarian expulsion brought Kossuth and his noble band to this country, no equal number of men ever justified culture more, by adapting themselves to their circumstances, and without complaint or repining meeting the hardships of their changed methods of livelihood. A true education makes a man larger and better, and fits him for revolutions. If one has lived in refinement, and in a changed condition goes down to the bottom, and comes in contact with barrenness and coarseness, that culture which he has acquired sustains him, and makes him superior to his condition. —*Beecher.*

ELECTION.

1. Its cause and method.

(1776.) Paul considers the chain of our salvation, depending on four links—election, vocation, justification, and glorification (Rom. viii. 30); the first whereof hath no beginning, the last no ending. Here is the kindness of a Father, that singles out some special children, to whom He bears the greatest affection, and intends most good; and in this consists election. In good time He declares His affection, and makes His love manifest to them; there is vocation. Then He conforms them to His own image, gives them a place in court, the honour of children, the earnest of His Spirit, in token of assurance; there is justification. Lastly, He bids them enter into their Father's joy, makes them co-heirs with His eldest Son in the possession of bliss; there is glorification. God hath chosen us before the world, created us with the world, called us from the world, justified us in the world, and He will save us in the world to come. He that chose us when we were not, and called us when we were naught, and hath justified us being sinners, will glorify us being saints. The Husbandman of heaven chooseth out a plot of ground at His own pleasure; there is election: He sows this with the immortal seed, by His word; there is vocation: He waters it with the dew of Hermon, the graces of His Spirit; there is sanctification: when it is ripe He reaps it from the earth, and carries it into the barn of heaven; there is salvation.

—*Adams*, 1654.

(1777.) In election we behold God the Father in choosing; in vocation, God the Son teaching; in justification, God the Holy Ghost sealing; in salvation, the whole Deity crowning. God chooseth of His love; Christ calleth by His Word; the Spirit sealeth by His grace: now the fruit of all this, of God's love choosing, of Christ's Word calling, of the Spirit's grace sanctifying, is our eternal glory and blessedness in heaven. In election God bestows on us His love; in calling He grants the blessing of His Word; in justifying He communicates to us the sweetness of His Spirit; in glorifying He doth wholly give us Himself. We see far with our body's eye, sense; further with the mind's eye, reason; furthest with the soul's eye, faith. The rational eye doth not so far exceed the sensual, as the spiritual exceeds the rational. Calling illuminates the mind with knowledge; sanctifying seals up the heart with spiritual comfort; salvation crowns all, even the soul with immortal bliss. This gradation of assurance is sweetly contracted by St. Paul; "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Wherein the fathers have found the four causes of our salvation. In predestinating, the efficient cause, which is God's love. In calling, the material cause, which is Christ's death, delivered in His Word that doth call us. In justifying there is the formal cause, a lively faith. In glorifying there is the final cause, that is, everlasting life. Paradise had four rivers that watered the earth: these four springs come from the Eden of heaven and run through the earth; and howsoever neglected by many, they make glad the city of God. So Bernard sweetly: Eternal life is granted to us in election, promised in our vocation, sealed in our justification, possessed in our glorification. Conclude, then, faithfully to thy own soul, I believe, therefore I am justified; I am justified, therefore I am sanctified; I am sanctified, therefore I am called; I am called, therefore I am elected; I am elected, therefore I shall be saved. Oh! settled comfort of joy, which ten thousand devils shall never make void! —*Adams*, 1654.

(1778.) Inward holiness and eternal glory are

the crown with which God adorns and dignifies His elect. But they are not the cause of election. A king is not made a king by the royal robes he wears, and by the crown that encircles his brow; but he therefore wears his robes, and puts on his crown, because he is a king. —*Salter.*

2. Its design.

(1779.) What was God driving at in His electing some out of the lump of mankind? Was it only their impunity He desired, that while others were left to swim in torment and misery, they should only be exempted from that infelicity? No, sure; the Apostle will tell us more. "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." Mark, not because He foresaw that they would be of themselves holy, but that they should be holy; this was that God resolved He would make them to be. As if some curious workman, seeing a forest growing upon his own ground of trees (all alike, not one better than another), should mark some above all the rest, and set them apart in his thoughts, as resolving to make some rare pieces of workmanship of them. Thus God chose some out of the lump of mankind, whom He set apart for this purpose, to carve His own image upon them, which consists in righteousness and true holiness; a piece of such rare workmanship which, when God hath finished, and shall show it to men and angels, will appear to exceed the fabric of heaven and earth itself. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

3. Furnishes no argument for continuance in sin.

(1780.) A temptation which Satan suggests into the minds of carnal men, God's decree of predestination is unchangeable as Himself; and, therefore, if thou art elected of God, thou mayest go on in thy sins, yet surely thou shalt be saved, and He will give thee repentance, though it be deferred to the last gasp. But if thou be rejected of God in His eternal counsel, then take what pains thou wilt, all is in vain, for those whom He has reprobated shall be condemned. And therefore much better were it to take thy pleasure whilst thou art in this life, for the punishments of the life to come will be enough, though thou addest no torments of this life unto them.

But if we consider of this temptation aright, and sound it to the bottom, we shall find, *first*, that it is most foolish and ridiculous; *secondly*, that it is most false and impious.

That it is most foolish will easily appear if we use the like manner of reason in worldly matters. For it is all one as if a man should thus say: Thy time is appointed, and the Lord in His counsel has set down how long thou shalt live. If, therefore, it be ordained that thy time shall be short, use what means thou wilt of physic and good diet, yet thou shalt not prolong it one day. But if God has decreed that thou shalt live till old age, take what courses thou wilt, run into all desperate dangers, use surfeiting and all disorder of diet, nay, eat no meat at all, and yet thou shalt live till thou art an old man.

Or, as if he should say: God has decreed already whether thou shalt be rich or poor. And if He has appointed thee to be poor, take never so much pains, follow thy calling as diligently as thou wilt, abstain from all wastefulness and prodigality, yet thou shalt never get any wealth. But if thou art pre-ordained to be rich, sell all that thou hast, and scatter it abroad in the streets, spend thy time in gaming, drinking, and whoring, never troubling thy head with care, nor thy hands with work, yet thou shalt be a wealthy man.

Now, who would not laugh at such absurd manner of reasoning, if any should use it? Because every man knows that as God has decreed the time of our life, so He has decreed also that we should use the means whereby our lives may be preserved so long as He has ordained that we should live, namely, avoiding of dangers, good diet, and physic; and as He has decreed that a man should be rich, so He has decreed also that he should use all good means of attaining unto riches, namely, providence and pains in getting, and care and frugality in keeping that he has gotten; and whosoever use not the means do make it manifest that they were not ordained unto the end. Although, indeed, because the Lord would show His absolute and almighty power, He does not always tie Himself unto means, but sometimes crosses and makes them ineffectual to their ends, and sometimes He effects what He will without or contrary to means; and hence it is that some quickly die who use all means to preserve health, and some become poor who use all means of obtaining riches, whereas others, being deprived of means, attain unto long life and riches by the immediate blessing of God. But ordinarily the means and end go together, and therefore it is fond presumption to hope without the use of means to attain unto the end. And thus it is also in spiritual matters appertaining to everlasting life. They whom God has elected He has also ordained, that they should attain unto and use all good means tending thereunto—namely, faith, repentance, sanctification, and newness of life.

But as this temptation is foolish, so also it is false; for whereas He says that though we live in our sins without repentance, yet we may be elected and therefore saved, and though we take never so great pains in God's service, and most carefully endeavour to spend our lives in holiness and righteousness, yet we may be reprobates, and therefore shall be condemned. This is utterly untrue. For whomsoever the Lord has ordained to everlasting life, those also He has ordained to use the means whereby they may be saved: and consequently whosoever use these means may be assured of their salvation. Whosoever neglect and despise these means they manifestly declare that they are not in the number of the elect, so long as they continue in their neglect and contempt. For the end and the means are inseparably joined in God's decree: so that they who use the one shall obtain the other. Those who neglect and contemn the means shall never attain unto the end. —*Downame*, 1644.

(1781.) Predestination is pleaded. If I be written to life, I may do this; for many are saved that have done worse. If not, were my life never so strict, hell appointed is not to be avoided. These men look to the top of the ladder, but not to the foot. God ordains not men to jump to heaven, but to climb thither by prescribed degrees. He that decreed the end, decreed also the means that conduce to it. If thou take liberty to sin, this is none of the way. Peter describes the rounds of this ladder: "Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, charity." Thou runnest a contrary course in the wild paths of unbelief, profaneness, ignorance, riot, impatience, impiety, malice; this is none of the way. These are the rounds of a ladder that goes downward to hell. God's predestination helps many

to stand, pusheth none down. Look thou to the way, let God alone with the end. Believe, repent, amend, and thou hast God's promise to be saved. —*Adams*, 1654.

4. No reason for neglecting God's offers of mercy.

(1782.) We have no ground at first to trouble ourselves about God's election. "Secret things belong to God;" God's revealed will is, "that all that believe in Christ shall not perish." It is my duty, therefore, knowing this, to believe, by doing whereof I put that question, Whether God be mine or no? out of all question; for all that believe in Christ are Christ's, and all that are Christ's are God's. It is not my duty to look to God's secret counsel, but to His open offer, invitation and command, and thereupon to adventure my soul. And this adventure of faith will bring a rich return of faith unto us. In war men will venture their lives, because they think some will escape, and why not they? In traffic beyond the seas many adventure a great estate, because some grow rich by a good return, though many miscarry. The husbandman adventures his seed, though sometimes the year proves so bad that he never sees it more. And shall not we make a spiritual adventure in casting ourselves upon God, when we have so good a warrant as His command, and so good an encouragement as His promise, that He will not fail those that rely on Him? —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(1783.) Suppose a rope cast down into the sea for the relief of shipwrecked men ready to perish, and that the people in the ship or on the shore should cry out unto them to lay hold on the rope, that they may be saved; were it not unseasonable and foolish curiosity for any of those poor distressed creatures, now at the point of death, to dispute whether did the man that cast the rope intend to save me or not, and so, minding that which helpeth not, neglect the means of safety offered?—or as a prince proclaiming a free market of gold, rich garments, precious jewels, and the like to a number of poor men upon a purpose to enrich some few of them, whom of his mere grace he purposeth to make honourable courtiers and great officers of state; were it fitting that all these men should stand to dispute the king's favour, but rather that they should repair to the market, and by that means improve his favour so graciously tendered unto them? Thus it is that Christ holdeth forth, as it were, a rope of mercy to lost sinners, and setteth out an open market of heavenly treasure. It is our parts, then, without any further dispute, to look upon it as a principle afterwards to be made good, that Christ hath gracious thoughts towards us, but for the present to lay hold on the rope, ply the market, and husband well the grace that is offered. And as the condemned man believeth first the king's favour to all humble suppliants before he believe it to himself, so the order is, being humbled for sin, to adhere to the goodness of the promise; not to look to God's intention in a personal way, but to His complacency and tenderness of heart to all repentant sinners. This was St. Paul's method, embracing by all means that good and faithful saying, "Jesus Christ came to save sinners," before he ranked himself in the front of those sinners. —*Rutherford*, 1661.

(1784.) Your proper business is, instead of prying into the secrets of God, to attend to His discoveries; instead of stumbling at His unknown purposes, to listen to His known and gracious invitation. I bring you to one test of your sincerity, in deriving from the secret purposes of God an excuse for treating these invitations with indifference or rejection, and saying, whether lightly or indignantly, "If I am of the chosen, good and well; and if I am to be damned, I cannot help it." The test is a fair and simple one.

If you have any belief in a superintending Providence, you must be convinced that there are secret purposes of God in regard to temporal things, as well as in regard to spiritual. You shall have full credit for such sincerity whenever I see you applying your principle alike on both sides;—when, in time of sickness, I see you refusing to have recourse to any means of cure till you can ascertain the secret purpose of God whether you are to recover or die;—when, in agriculture I hear you say, "Not a ploughshare shall break up a ridge of my fields, not a handful of seed will I throw away, nor shall a harrow be allowed to pass over it, till I know what is the intention of Providence as to the harvest—whether it be the purpose of God to send a favourable season and allow me a fair return for my toil and expense, or to visit me with a famine and a failure of my hopes;—when, in case of fire in your dwelling, you use no means of escape, make no effort either to quench the flames or to flee from them, but sit still, or lie still, where you chance to be, till you know whether it be the decree of heaven that the fire should reach you, or, reaching, injure you;—when, in one word, I see you give up food itself, refuse all means of sustenance, till you can discover how long the God of your life has purposed that you should live.

You are a passenger, let me suppose, on board a ship at sea. The storm rises and rages. The vessel strikes on a rocky coast. The waves break over her, and she is in danger every moment of going to pieces. Your own life and the lives of all on board are in jeopardy. In the instinct of dread, you shriek out for help. The humane spectators on the beach respond to the cry, and hasten to the rescue. They launch and man the life-boat. And, just as they are pushing off to dash through the foaming breakers, I coolly come up to them and say, "What folly is all this? why this useless ado? how vain this exposure of yourselves to peril! If these men are destined to survive, He who has so ordered it will save them without any aid from you; and if otherwise He has purposed, and has doomed them to a watery grave, what puny power of yours can rescue them from the doom?" Would you, in these circumstances, like the doctrine? would you relish this kind of application of your own principle? Yet the cases are parallel. If you would not relish it then, be assured you are deceiving yourselves, or you are hypocritically deceiving others, in applying it as you do now. If you were as much in earnest about your eternal as about your temporal interests—about the life of your souls as about the life of your bodies; if you felt your danger in the one case as you feel it in the other, and were as anxious for safety; Divine purposes would not give you another moment's thought;—you would listen at once to Divine entreaties and flee to the refuge.

I have said that the cases are parallel. There is one point, however, in which the parallelism fails; and that point is all against you. In regard to your present or temporal life, you have no assurance

given you that by eating of the "meat that perisheth" it will actually be prolonged,—that a single day or hour will be added to it. Notwithstanding this ignorance, you eat. You eat from the mere knowledge of the necessity and the tendency, although entirely unassured of the actual effect. But in the case to which you are applying your principle, it is otherwise; and it is the only case in which it is so. With regard to the "bread of life," —the "true bread,"—the "bread from heaven, that giveth life unto the world," you have the positive Divine assurance, that "whosoever eateth of this bread shall live for ever." How strange, then, the infatuation! You eat with avidity "the meat that perisheth," when you have no more than a peradventure that the frail life which it is meant to sustain shall continue for an hour; and yet you refuse the "living bread," although you have the assurance of Him who cannot lie, that none who eat of it can ever be "hurt of the second death," and that, if you eat of it, the eternal life of your soul is secure. You eat for the sake of the one life, on the ground of a probability; you refuse to eat for the sake of the other on the ground of a certainty! In the peril of a shipwreck, even the life-boat may fail you; but to the perishing sinner, who feels his danger, and who calls to Him for succour, Christ is a refuge that never fails. None ever applied to Him in vain; and none whose soul's salvation He undertakes can ever perish! If you do perish, then the blame rests with yourselves. You perish by an act of self-destruction. It is by no influence of any secret decree of heaven that you are lost;—it is the result of your own free and unconstrained choice. God offers you life, and you choose death;—He offers you holiness, and you choose sin;—He offers you His blessing, and you choose His curse;—He offers you Himself, and you choose the world;—He offers you heaven, and you choose hell!

—*Wardlaw.*

5. Does not discharge us from the obligation to use the appointed means.

(1785.) Ludovicus, who was a learned man of Italy, yet wanting the guidance of God's Spirit, and so, never considering advisedly of the means of His salvation, grew at last to this resolution: "*Si salvabor, salvabor,*" *&c.*—"It is no matter what I do or how I live, for if I be saved I am saved; if I be predestinated to life I am sure of salvation; if otherwise, I cannot help it." Thus bewitched with this desperate opinion, he continued a long time, till at length he grew very dangerously sick, whereupon he sent for a skilful physician, and earnestly requested his help. The physician, aforehand made acquainted with his former lewd assertion, how he would usually say, "If I am saved I am saved," directed his speech to the same purpose, and said, "Surely it will be altogether needless to use any means for your recovery, neither do I purpose to administer anything unto you; for if the time of your death be now come, it is impossible to avoid it." Ludovicus, musing in his bed of the matter, and taking the physician's speech into serious consideration, makes out this conclusion to himself:—That if means were to be used for the health of the body, then much more had God also ordained means for the salvation of men's souls. And so, upon further conference (with shame and grief), he recanted his former opinion, took physic, and was happily cured both of soul and body together. Thus it is that the determinate counsel of God, in the matter of predestination, doth not take away the nature and property of secondary causes, nor exclude the means of salvation, but rather sets them in order and disposes of them to their proper end. And common sense and reason teach that in every action the end and the means of the end must go together. —*Maxey*, 1658.

(1786.) When you are dangerously sick, and the physician tells you unless you take such a course of physic, your case is desperate, do you use to reason thus: If I knew that God had decreed my recovery, I would take that course that is so like to restore me; but till I know that God has decreed my recovery I'll take nothing? Surely we should think such a reasoner not only sick, but distracted. Thus it is here. The sinner is ready to perish; apply thyself to Christ, says the Lord, cast thyself on Him, apply the promise; there is no other way to save thy life. Oh, says he, if I knew the Lord had decreed my salvation, I would venture on Christ; but till I know this, I must not believe. Oh, the unreasonableness of unbelief! This is as if an Israelite, stung with the fiery serpent, should have said, If I knew that the Lord had decreed my cure, I would look upon the brazen serpent; but till I know this, though there be no other way to save my life, I will not look on it. If all the stung Israelites had been thus resolved, it is likely they had all perished.

Or, as if one pursued by the avenger of blood, should have set him down in the way to the city of refuge, when he should have been flying for his life, and said, If I knew that the Lord had decreed my escape, I would make haste for refuge; but till I know this, I will not stir, till I die for it. Would not this be counted a wilful casting away his life, with a neglect of that provision which God had made to save it? Was it not sufficient that a way was made for his escape, and a way feasible enough, the city of refuge always open? Even so are the arms of Christ always open to receive a perishing sinner fleeing to Him for refuge. And wilt thou destroy thyself by suffering Satan to entangle thee with a needless, impertinent, and unreasonable scruple? If there be no way but one, and any encouraging probability to draw men into it, they fly into it without delay, never perplexing themselves with the decrees and secrets of God. This is thy case, Christ is thy way; there is no way but this one, fly to it as for thy life; and let not Satan hinder thee, by diverting thee to impossibilities and impertinencies. —*Clarkson*, 1621–1686.

(1787.) Heaven is not the purchase or reward of your striving. No soul shall boastingly say there, Is not this the glory which my duties and diligence purchased for me? And yet, on the other side, it is as true, that without striving you shall never set foot there. Say not, it depends on the pleasure of God, and not upon your diligence; for it is His declared will and pleasure to bring men to glory in the way, though not for the sake, of their own striving. As in the works of your civil calling, you know all the care, toil, and sweat of the husbandman avails nothing of itself, except the sun and rain quicken and ripen the fruits of the earth; and yet no wise man will neglect ploughing and harrowing, sowing and reaping, because these labours avail not without the influence of heaven, but waits for them

in the way of his duty and diligence. Rational hope sets all the world to work. Do they plough in hope, and sow in hope, and will you not pray in hope, and hear in hope? —*Flavel*, 1630–1691.

(1788.) If you will needs be fools, let it be about these worldly things which you may better spare. Try your own opinion awhile, and give over eating and drinking and working; but do not befool yourselves about the one thing necessary, and play not the madmen about the flames of hell, and do not in such jest throw away your salvation. It were a hundred times a wiser course for a man to set his house on fire, and say, "If God have decreed the saving of it, the fire shall not burn it; if he have not, it will perish whatsoever I do." I tell you again, God hath not ordinarily decreed the end without the means; and if you will neglect the means of salvation, it is a certain mark that God hath not decreed you to salvation. But you shall find that He hath left you no excuse, because He hath not thus predestinated you.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1789.) I used to think that the doctrine of election was a reason why we need not pray, and I fear there are many who split upon this rock, who think it is to no purpose to pray, as things will be as they will be. But I now see that the doctrine of election is the greatest encouragement instead of a discouragement to prayer. He that decreed that any one should be finally saved, decreed that it should be in the way of prayer; as much as He that has decreed what we shall possess of the things of this life, has decreed that it shall be in the way of industry; and as we never think of being idle in common business, because God has decreed what we shall possess of this world's good, so neither should we be slothful in the business of our souls, because our final state is decreed. —*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

(1790.) All events are equally sure and fixed of God, equally foreknown by Him; but this consideration does not repress our energies in other pursuits of a merely secular kind; why then should we suffer it to impede us in the search after salvation? Here is a house on fire, and the devouring element is rapidly enveloping the whole edifice and endangering the lives of its inmates. Now, God knows infallibly, and hath fixed beforehand, how much of the property will be destroyed, and how much will be spared, which of the inmates shall escape, and which will perish in the conflagration. But who, on this account, makes one effort less for the rescue of either goods or lives?

When Paul was shipwrecked off Melita, he told the whole crew that not a hair of their heads should perish; but it was by each one being commanded to make his way to the shore when the vessel went to pieces. Some swam, and some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship did what they could for themselves. "And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to land."

—*T. G. Horton.*

(1791.) You have practically nothing to do with the Divine foreknowledge, or with God's predestinating decree. Your conduct should be just the same as if He knew nothing of the future, and whether you would at last be lost or saved. It is as if a mighty chain had been let down from heaven to earth, the extremities of which were hidden from us, while only the central links were visible to our gaze, or within the reach of our grasp. One end of that chain is concealed far away in the past, and the other lies equally remote in the future, but both, though alike hidden in darkness inscrutable, are alike firmly riveted to the throne of the Almighty. We cannot trace the links of this seemingly interminable progression either far forward or far backward. What then are we to do? Shall we waste our time in petulant complaints, because our knowledge is so limited? Shall we fold our hands in listless or in scornful apathy, because we may err in our conjectures concerning the past or future? No, let our course be that which alone wisdom dictates: let us lay hold on the links that are close at hand. Let us do the work which immediately demands our care. Let us repent and believe the gospel. And then we may know that as God is true, and His purpose unchangeable, we are in the high road to glory. —*T. G. Horton.*

(1792.) Do you say: "*I* believe in foreordination, and am waiting 'God's time'"?

Foreordination! that is a shameful sham. God's time is "now." He never has any other time. Foreordination is nothing for you to meddle with, any more in religious than in money-making matters. In each it is in equal force, but 'tis God's business, not yours. If you *will* meddle with it, you deserve to get befogged and puzzled, though there's nothing against, but everything for, you in it. But let it alone if it troubles you.

What farmer when the sun runs high, and the earth is ready for the seed, and the small rain and the dew are coming on the earth, says: "I believe in foreordination; I shall not take the trouble to plant. If I'm to have a harvest, I *shall* have one"? Or what merchant when he goes to his store in the morning, says: "If I'm to have a good large heap of money in my till to-night, I *shall* have it there. No need for me to trouble myself to please customers; I believe in foreordination"?

Men are not fools enough for this in temporal concerns, though plenty of them are so in regard to the interests of their immortal souls. No, when they see God working for them *in nature*, they take hold, with a right good will, and work too. And, as a general thing, they gain the blessing for which they strive. In other words, they do, in these minor matters, "work with God," to will and to do of His own good pleasure; but when it comes to spiritual work, they hold quickly back, and exclaim: "Oh! foreordination!" But this will be no plea for them, when they come forth from their graves, and when, from mountain and valley, and from the dark waves of the sea, they lift up their blanched faces to their Judge. Of all the myriads who will stand before Him, there will not be *one* who will have a word to say—they will be "speechless." —*Beecher.*

6. Speculations concerning it are unwise and perilous.

(1793.) To inquire the way and manner by which God makes a few do acceptable works, or how out of a corrupt lump He selects and purifies a few, is but a stumbling-block and a temptation. Who asks a charitable man that gave him an alms where he got it, or why he gave it? Will any favourite, whom his prince only for his appliableness to him,

or some half virtue, or his own glory, burdens with honour and fortunes every day, and destines to future offices and dignities, dispute or expostulate with his prince why he rather chose not another; how he will restore his coffers, how he will quench his people's murmuring, by whom this liberality is fed: or his nobility, with whom he equals new men; and will not rather repose himself gratefully in the wisdom, greatness, and bounty of his master? Will a languishing, desperate patient, that hath scarcely time enough to swallow the potion, examine the physician how he procured those ingredients, how that soil nourished them, which humour they affect in the body, whether they work by excess of quality, or specifically; whether he have prepared them by correcting, or else by withdrawing, their malignity, and for such unnecessary scruples neglect his health? Alas! our time is little enough for prayer, and praise, and society, which is for our mutual duties.

Moral divinity becomes us all, but natural divinity and metaphysic divinity almost all may spare. Almost all the ruptures in the Christian Church have been occasioned by such bold disputations *de modo.* —*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(1794.) If a child of eight or ten years old, hearing a philosopher discourse of the greatness and course of the sun, should argue against him, and maintain that the same were no greater than a platter, neither of any swifter pace than a snail, the philosopher would not stand upon the delivery of the reason of his discourse unto him, because the child could not be capable to conceive it, but he would tell him, "Thou art yet a child:" even so is man, in comparison of God, infinitely less in knowledge than is a child in comparison of the most excellent philosopher in the world, and therefore he ought not to reason, strive, or dispute with God, why He either electeth some to salvation or reprobateth others to damnation. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1795.) Whatever the decrees of God be concerning the eternal state of men, since they are secret to us, they can certainly be no rule either of our duty or comfort. And no man hath reason to think himself rejected of God, either from eternity or in time, that does not find the marks of reprobation in himself. I mean an evil heart and life. By this indeed a man may know that he is out of God's favour for the present; but he hath no reason at all, from hence, to conclude that God hath from all eternity and for ever cast him off. That God calls him to repentance, and affords to him the space and means of it, is a much plainer sign that God is willing and ready to have mercy on him than anything else is, or can be, that God hath utterly cast him off. And therefore for men to judge of their condition by the decrees of God which are hid from us, and not by His Word which is near us and in our hearts, is as if a man wandering in the wide sea in a dark night, when the heaven is all clouded about, should yet resolve to steer his course by the stars which he cannot see, but only guess at, and neglect the compass which is at hand and would afford him a much better and more certain direction.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(1796.) Many men are swamped in the doctrines of election and predestination, but this is supreme impertinence. They are truths which belong to God, and if you are troubled by them, it is because you are meddling with what does not belong to you. You only need to understand that all God's agencies are to assist you in gaining your salvation, if you will but use them rightly. To doubt this is as if men in a boat, pulling against the tide, and with all their efforts going backwards every hour, should by and by find the current turning, and see the wind springing up with it and filling the sails, and hear the man at the helm exclaim, "Row away, boys! wind and tide are in your favour," and they should all say, "What shall we do with the oars? Do not the wind and the tide take away our free agency?"

—*Beecher.*

(1797.) I don't blame a man for not understanding the mysteries of God any more than I should blame one, who was standing in the Atlantic Ocean, for saying, "I can't."

"Can't *what?*"

"I *cannot.*"

"Cannot what?"

"I've been in ankle deep, and knee deep, and thigh deep; I've been in all over, and it's no use; I never can wade across the Atlantic Ocean."

"Of course you can't—nobody told you to. What did you try for? God never meant to have you do it, or He would have made it more shallow."

Just in this way do men act in regard to doctrines. They go out a little way on election, and back they come shaking their heads and saying, "It's very mysterious; I can't understand it." Then they try free agency, then decrees, &c., but they have no better success with them. Well, what of it? Man, by all his searching, cannot find out God. I am not ashamed to say that I do not understand His mysteries. I believe that what He says is true, if I cannot reconcile it. My own consciousness agrees with the most seemingly contradictory passages concerning free will and sovereignty. I know that I *am* free, that by my own choice I perform moral acts; that with me lies the power of sinning, or refraining from sin; and yet when I go forth with my most buoyant sense of freedom to think and act, I am conscious of influences, of barriers, which say, "Thus far, and no farther." I feel in my very nature that I am free, and yet that I do not direct my own steps, nor appoint my own bounds. I cannot reconcile this. I know it; and there it must rest.

God does us no violence. He uses us through the very nature which He gave to us, and through our free will. The mulberry leaves are stripped from the tree, and the food which they make for the worm acts upon it according to its own nature. As their nature dictates, the worms spin their cocoons, and sleep in them. Then when the little spinners have been despoiled, the loom is made, and the silk is woven and stamped by the skill of man. Everything has been used, according to its nature, in the construction of the silk. And the web which God is weaving, and the pattern with which He will mark it, will all be done in the same way. The whole plan is in His mind now, and it will result as He intends, but only through the free action of the nature He has given to man. His plan embraced this idea from the very beginning of things, and every contingency is provided for in the eternal mind. —*Beecher.*

7. How assurance of personal election is to be attained.

(1798.) Some are much troubled because they

proceed by a false method and order in judging of their estates. They will begin with election, which is the highest step of the ladder; whereas they should begin from a work of grace wrought within their hearts, from God's calling by His Spirit, and their answer to His call, and so raise themselves upwards to know their election by their answer to God's calling. "Give all diligence," says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure," your election by your calling. God descends unto us from election to calling, and so to sanctification; we must ascend to Him beginning where He ends. Otherwise it is a great folly as in removing of a pile of wood, to begin at the lower first, and so, besides the needless trouble, to be in danger to have the rest to fall upon our heads.

—*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

(1799.) We know there is a sun in heaven, yet we cannot see what matter it is made of, but perceive it only by the beams, light, and heat. Election is a sun, the eyes of eagles cannot see it; yet we may find it in the heat of vocation, in the light of illumination, in the beams of good works.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(1800.) The head of Nilus cannot be found, they say; but many sweet springs issuing from it are well known. The head of our election is too high and secret to be found; yet we may taste the springs, our calling, holiness, justification, and upright life; and he that runs along by the bank of these rivers shall be brought at last to that fountain-head, even the place and book wherein his own name stands written. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1801.) Mark in what order: first, our calling; then, our election: not beginning with our election first. It were as bold, as absurd, a presumption in vain men, first to begin at heaven, and from thence to descend to earth. The angels of God upon Jacob's ladder both ascended and descended; but, surely, we must ascend only from earth to heaven; by our calling, arguing our election. If we consider of God's working and proceeding with us, it is one thing: there, He first foreknows us, and predestinates us; then He calls us, and justifies us; then He glorifies us. If we consider the order of our apprehending the state wherein we stand with God—there, we are first called, then justified; and thereby come to be assured of our predestination, and glory. Think not, therefore, to climb up into heaven, and there to read your names in the book of God's eternal decree; and thereupon to build the certainty of your calling, believing, persevering: the course is presumptuously preposterous: but by the truth of your effectual calling and true believing, grow up at last, towards a comfortable assurance of your election; which is the just method of our apostle here, "Make your calling and election sure." —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(1802.) If any man would know whether the sun shineth or not, let him go no further, but look upon the ground to see the reflection of the sunbeams from thence, and not upon the body of the sun, which will but the more dazzle his sight. The pattern is known by the picture, the cause by the effect. Let no man, then, soar aloft to know whether he be elected or not, but let him gather the knowledge of his election from the effectualness of his calling and sanctification of his life, the true and proper effects of a lively faith stamping the image of God's election in his soul. —*Negus.*

ERROR.

1. Its source.

(1803.) When some men look up to the clouds, they imagine them to have the forms of men, of armies, castles, &c., whereas none else can see any such things, nor is there any true resemblance of such things at all; and some, again, there are who, when they have somewhat of rolls and tumbles in their thoughts, think that the ringing of bells, the beating of hammers, the report that is made by great guns, or any other measured, intermitted noise, doth articulately sound and speak the same which is in their thoughts. Thus it is that a strong imagination or fancy becomes very powerful as to persuasion in the matters of God and religion. Hence it is, therefore, that most of those who are unlearned and unstable wrest the Scriptures, thinking they find that in them which, indeed, is not there to be found; persuading themselves that the Scripture represents to them such formed opinions, such and such grounded tenets, when, without all doubt, they do but patch and lay things together without any reason at all; from whence have proceeded the senseless dotages of heretics, and of late the whimsical conceits of some dreamers, who have flown about in their most ridiculous papers, wherein they bring Scripture with them, but no sense, fancying the holy Word of God to strike, to ring, and chime to their tunes, to echo out unto their wild conceptions, and answer all their undigested notions. —*Torshell*, 1649.

2. Is worse than ignorance.

(1804.) It is almost as difficult to make a man unlearn his errors as his knowledge. Malinformation is more hopeless than noninformation; for error is always more busy than ignorance. Ignorance is a blank sheet on which we may write; but error is a scribbled one on which we must first erase. Ignorance is contented to *stand still* with her back to the truth; but error is more presumptuous, and *proceeds* in the *same* direction. Ignorance has no light, but error follows a false one. The consequence is, that error, when she retraces her footsteps, has farther to go before she can arrive at the truth than ignorance. —*Colton.*

(1805.) That time and labour are worse than useless that have been occupied in laying up treasures of false knowledge, which it will be one day necessary to unlearn, and in storing up mistaken ideas which we must hereafter remember to forget. Timotheus, an ancient teacher of rhetoric, always demanded a double fee from those pupils who had been instructed by others; for in this case, he had not only to plant in, but also to root out.

—*Colton*

3. When it is most dangerous.

(1806.) Error is never so dangerous as when it is the alloy of truth. Pure error would be rejected; but error mixed with truth makes use of the truth as a pioneer for it, and gets introduction where otherwise it would have none. Poison is never so dangerous as when mixed up with food; error is never so likely to do mischief as when it comes to us under the pretensions and patronage of that which is true.

—*Cumming.*

(1807.) Error is sometimes so nearly allied to truth, that it blends with it as imperceptibly as the colours of the rainbow fade into each other.
—*W. B. Clulow.*

4. How it gains a footing in the world.

(1808.) In every religious error which has gained a footing in the world there is some mixture of truth. Absolute error, falsehood with no mixture of truth, would contradict men's sense of what is just and right too violently; it would not be sufficiently plausible, its leaden weight of absurdity would sink it. There must be some fragment of truth attached, in order to make it float; and in nothing has the craft of Satan and of his agents been more conspicuous than in the sagacity with which they mix a maximum of falsehood with a minimum of truth.
—*L. H. Wiseman.*

5. How it is diffused.

(1809.) As in dark nights pirates used to kindle fires and make great lights upon the rocks and maritime coasts, whither when the seamen steer in hope of harbour, they meet with wreck and ruin: so heretics flourish with Scripture, or at least with some flashes of it, like false lights; to which when distressed souls repair for succour, these pestilent seducers feed them with nothing but pernicious error.
—*Origen.*

(1810.) That opinion is justly to be suspected for erroneous which comes in at the postern-door of the affections, and not openly and fairly at the right gate of an enlightened and well-satisfied judgment. It is a thief that comes in at the back-door, at least strongly to be suspected for one. Truth courts the mistress, makes its first and fairest addresses to the understanding. Error bribes the handmaid, and labours first to win the affections, that by their influence it may corrupt the judgment.
—*Flavel*, 1630–1691.

(1811.) Hasty engagements in weighty and disputable matters have cost many souls dear. As hasty marriages have produced long and late repentance; so has the clapping up of a hasty match betwixt the mind and error. By entertaining of strange persons, men sometimes entertain angels unawares; but by entertaining of strange doctrines, many have entertained devils unawares. It is not safe to open the door of the soul to let in strangers in the night; let them wait till a clear daylight of information show you what they are. —*Flavel*, 1630–1691.

(1812.) Error is of a spreading nature; it is compared to leaven, because it sours (Matt. xvi. 11), and to a gangrene, because it spreads (2 Tim. ii. 17). 1. One error spreads into more, like a circle in the water that multiples into more circles; one error seldom goes alone. 2. Error spreads from one person to another; it is like the plague, which infects all round about. Satan, by infecting one person with error, infects more; the error of Pelagius did spread on a sudden to Palestine, Africa, and Italy; the Arian error was at first but a single spark, but at last it set almost all the world on fire. —*Watson.*

(1813.) The progress of error, like that of sin, is from small beginnings to awful and unthought of consequences. Gospel truth, like a bank opposed to a torrent, must be preserved entire to be useful; if a breach is once made, though it may seem at first to be small, none but He who says to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther," can set bounds to the threatening inundation that will quickly follow. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

6. The sinfulness of diffusing it.

(1814.) As he is a traitor to his prince who taketh upon him to coin moneys out of a base metal—yea, although in the stamp he putteth forth show the image of the prince—so he that shall broach any doctrine that cometh not from God, whatsoever he say for it, or what gloss soever he set on it, is a traitor unto God; yea, in truth, a cursed traitor, though he were an angel from heaven.
—*Abbot*, 1562–1635.

7. Our liability to it.

(1815.) Rays of light, whether they proceed from sun, star, or candle, move in perfectly straight lines: yet so inferior are our works to God's, that the steadiest hand cannot draw a perfectly straight line, nor with all his skill has man ever been able to invent an instrument capable of doing a thing apparently so simple. And it would seem to be as impossible for men to keep the even line of truth between what appear conflicting doctrines: such as the decrees of God and our free will; such as election by grace and the universal offer of the gospel; such as the justifying faith of Paul and the justifying works of James. —*Guthrie.*

(1816.) The noblest spirits are most sensible of the possibility of error, and the weakest do most hardly lay down an error. —*Whichcote*, 1610–1683.

8. Who are perverted by it.

(1817.) As the wind doth not carry away the sound wheat, but only the light chaff; neither doth a storm overturn a tree fast rooted: even so no more doth every wind of doctrine carry away true members of the Church, but the chaff and rotten members only, as heretics, ignorant persons, hypocrites, fantastical heads, newfangled men, &c.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1818.) If we flinch never so little from God, presently error catcheth us; as chickens that will stray from the wings of the hen are in danger of the kite. —*Adams*, 1653.

9. The evil of persistence in it.

(1819.) The cynic answered smartly, who, coming out of a brothel, was asked whether he was not ashamed to be seen coming out of such a bad house; "No," said he, "the shame was to go in, but honesty to come out." Oh sirs, it is bad enough to fall into an error, but worse to persist in it. The first shows thee a man, *humanum est errare*, but the last makes thee like a devil, that will not repent.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

10. How it is to be overthrown.

(1820.) My principal method for defeating heresy is by establishing truth. One proposes to fill a bushel with tares; now if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts.
—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(1821.) These are questions which having been again and again settled, still from time to time present themselves for *re*-solution; errors which having been refuted, and cut up by the roots, reappear in the next century as fresh and vigorous as ever.

Like the fabled monsters of old, from whose dissevered neck the blood sprung forth and formed fresh heads, multiplied and indestructible; or like the weeds, which, extirpated in one place, sprout forth vigorously in another.

In every such case it may be taken for granted that the root of the matter has not been reached; the error has been exposed, but the truth which lay at the bottom of the error has not been disengaged. Every error is connected with a truth; the truth being perennial, springs up again, as often as circumstances foster it, or call for it; and the seeds of error which lay about the roots spring up again in the form of weeds, as before.

A popular illustration of this may be found in the belief in the appearance of the spirits of the departed. You may examine the evidence for every such alleged apparition; you may demonstrate the improbability; you may reduce it to an impossibility; still the popular feeling will remain; and there is a lurking superstition even among the enlightened, which in the midst of professions of incredulity, shows itself in a readiness to believe the wildest new tale if it possess but the semblance of authentication. Now two truths lie at the root of this superstition. The first is the reality of the spirit-world, and the instinctive belief in it. The second is the fact that there are certain states of health in which the eye creates the objects which it perceives. The death blow to such superstition is only struck when we have not only proved that men have been deceived, but shown besides how they came to be deceived; when science has explained the optical delusion, and shown the physiological state in which such apparitions become visible. Ridicule will not do it. Disproof will not do it. So long as men feel that there is a spirit-world, and so long as to some the impression is vivid that they have seen it, you spend your rhetoric in vain. You must show the truth that lies below the error.

The principle we gain from this is that you cannot overthrow falsehood by negation, but by establishing the antagonistic truth. The refutation which is to last must be positive, not negative. It is an endless work to be uprooting weeds; plant the ground with wholesome vegetation, and then the juices which would have otherwise fed rankness, will pour themselves into a more vigorous growth; the dwindled weeds will be easily raked out then. It is an endless task to be refuting error! Plant truth, and the error will pine away.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1817–1853.

11. Error, schism, and heresy.

(1822.) As natural, so politic bodies have *cutem et cuticulam*. The little thin skin which covers all our body may be broken without pain or danger, and may reunite itself, because it consists not of the chief and principient parts. But if in the skin itself there be any solution or division, which is seldom without drawing of blood, no art nor good disposition of nature can ever bring the parts together again, and restore the same substance, though it seems to the eye to have soldered itself. It will ever seem so much as a deforming scar, but is in truth a breach. Outward worship is this *cuticula:* and integrity of faith the skin itself. And if the first be touched with anything too corrosive, it will quickly pierce the other; and so schism (which is a departure from obedience) will quickly become heresy (which is a wilful deflection from the way of faith), which is not yet, so long as the main skin is inviolate. —*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(1823.) There is difference betwixt error, schism, and heresy. Error is when one holds a wrong opinion alone; schism, when many consent in their opinion; heresy runs further, and contends to root out the truth. Error offends, but separates not; schism offends and separates; heresy offends, separates, and rageth, making the party good *vi et armis*, if not with arguments of reason, yet with arguments of steel and iron, Error is weak, schism strong, heresy obstinate. Error goes out, and often comes in again; schism comes not in, but makes a new church; heresy makes not a new church, but no church. Error untiles the house, schism pulls down the walls, but heresy overturns the foundation. Error is as a child, schism a wild stripling, heresy an old dotard. Error will hear reason, schism will wrangle against it, heresy will defy it. Error is a member blistered, schism a member festered, heresy a member cut off. He that returns quickly from error, is not a schismatic; he that returns from schism, is not a heretic. Error is reproved and pitied, schism is reproved and punished, heresy is reproved and excommunicated. Schism is in the same faith, heresy makes another faith. Though they may be thus distinguished, yet without God's preventing grace, one will run into another; error will prove a schism, and schismatical follies will prove stigmatical furies. —*Adams*, 1653.

12. How it is to be distinguished from truth.

(1824.) Reader, try the spirits. Error is often plausible, and the most ensnaring errors are those which are an obvious resemblance to truth. Even though the outside coating is not brass but real gold, the leaden coin is none the less a counterfeit; and, like the devil's temptation, wrapped up in a Scripture saying, many false doctrines come now-a-days with a sacred or spiritual glamour round them—quoting texts and uttering Bible phrases. But the question is not, Who has got a text on his side? but, Who has got the Bible?—not, Who can produce certain sentences torn from their connection, and reft of the purport which that connection gives them? but, looking at Scripture in its integrity—having regard to its general drift, as well as to the bearing of these special passages—who is it that makes the fairest appeal to the statute book of heaven? —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

13. Is not to be tolerated.

(1825.) The candour which regards all sentiments alike, and considers no errors as destructive, is no virtue. It is the offspring of ignorance, of insensibility, and of cold indifference. The blind do not perceive the difference of colours. The dead never dispute. Ice, as it congeals, aggregates all bodies within its reach, however heterogeneous their quality. Every virtue has certain bounds, and when it exceeds them it becomes a vice; for the last step of a virtue and the first step of a vice are contiguous.

—*Jay.*

14. The duty of public teachers in regard to it.

(1826.) In all churches there are men whom moral cowardice, or mistaken conceptions of duty, hinder from taking part in the settlement of great questions; and who gladly leave to others the responsibility of maintaining the truth. They are

not unfaithful to their convictions, but they are unfaithful to the truth, concerning their duty to which their convictions are mistaken. Nobly absorbed, perhaps, in spiritual work—in preaching, in pastoral duties, in various efforts to save men's souls—they refuse both to examine their own ecclesiastical position and to defend the theological truths upon which the spiritual power of all churches must depend. They fear, perhaps, lest their own loosely formed convictions should be disturbed, or their practical spiritual work be hindered. To every Sanballat who challenges them, they reply, "We are doing a great work, so that we cannot come down;" the wisest of all replies, so long as the enemy remains below in the "plain of Ono;" but what if he has climbed to the very walls of the Holy City? What if he assaults the builder on its scaffold,—what if he is tampering with its watchmen, and raising an insurrection in its streets? To refuse to fight then were a cowardly infidelity to Christ, which even the most pious occupation could not justify. It is as if the harvest-man were to persist in the ingathering of his sheaves, regardless of the enemy who had landed upon his coasts. It may be a duty to sacrifice even a spiritual harvest in order to defend the territory upon which all spiritual harvests are to be produced.

—*Henry Allon.*

(1827.) When errors are public, they should be publicly met, notwithstanding that by so meeting them a certain extended publicity is given them. What would be thought of a physician who, at a time when a pestilence was raging in a city, should shut himself up in his own house, on the plea that by coming in contact with the smitten and the sound alternately he might spread the plague? Would he not be plainly told, that it was his duty to employ his skill in mitigating the pain of the sufferers, even at the risk of becoming infected himself, or of communicating the infection to others? Would he not be plainly told, that it would be wrong in him to refrain from doing the certain good through fear of a possible evil?

What would be thought of him further, were he to say, "I will not trouble myself; the normal condition of the people is health; if I let it alone, the pestilence will in due time die out of itself"? I think men would call him a driveller and a fool, and bid him bestir himself to shorten the course of the pestilence, and to endeavour to save those who seemed likely to become its victim. Even so I hold that a moral pestilence being widely diffused, I am justified in publicly doing what I can to arrest it. According to my judgment, I should shamefully fail in my duty, were I to sit at ease in my study, and say merely, "Truth will prevail; this is but a nine days' wonder, and will soon be forgotten." Truth will prevail, but what of those who are giving credence to the temporary lie? Should nothing be done to regain them to the truth?

In reasoning as in war, to be forewarned is to be forearmed; and it is better that you should even be made acquainted with these errors by me, than that you should learn them from some enemy of the truth. I hope you will excuse me if I say, that morally men are very like children mentally. You know that you need only put on a mask, however clumsy, and present yourself suddenly to your children, in order to frighten them. And you know, too, that it would be quite in vain for you to put on the mask, if you had previously shown it to them, and permitted them to handle it beforehand. So, too, when an errorist suddenly presents himself with his fallacies before the people, they are frightened out of their wits; it is all over, they think, with our preconceived ideas; their fathers were fools, and now they are going to be made wiser than them all. But if his fallacies have been explained to them beforehand, if they have been shown the other side of the mask, when the errorist appears before them he is greeted with deserved derision.

—*R. A. Bertram.*

15. Ultimately advances the truth.

(1828.) God suffers desperate opinions to be vented for the purging of His own truth. The truth of God is compared to silver. "The words of the Lord are pure, yea, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Every corrupt opinion that comes to be vented against any truth of God is a new furnace; and the truth being cast into that furnace, it comes out the purer for it. "Purified seven times."

As it is with passengers of quality and note, were it not for some evil inveterate curs in the street, they might pass, and never be observed; the very barking of the dogs makes them to be noted.

—*Arrowsmith*, 1602–1659.

EVIL THOUGHTS.

1. Their sinfulness.

(1829.) Some please themselves in the thoughts of sinful sports, or cheats, or unclean acts, and sit brooding on such cockatrice-eggs with great delight. It is their meat and drink to roll these sugar-plums under their tongues. Though they cannot sin outwardly, for want of strength of body or a fit opportunity, yet they act sin inwardly with great love and complacency. As players in a comedy, they act their parts in private, in order to a more exact performance of them in public. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1830.) A malicious thought and a malicious deed are from the same spring, and have the same nature; only the deed is the riper serpent, and can sting another; when the thought is as the younge serpent, that hath only the venomous nature in itself. A lustful thought is from the same defiled puddle, as actual filthiness: and the thought is b. the passage to the action: it is but the same sin in its minority, tending to maturity.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1831.) By sinful thoughts our formerly committed sins that were dead are revived again, and have a resurrection by our bosom ones; by our contemplating the same with delight. As the witch of Endor called up Samuel that was dead; so a delightful thought calls up a sinful action that was dead before. Hereby our sins, that were in a manner dead before, are revived, and have a resurrection. —*Ralph Erskine*, 1685–1712.

2. Usually indicate character.

(1832.) Our thoughts are like the blossoms on a tree in the spring. You may see a tree in the spring all covered with blossoms, so that nothing else of it appears. Multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing. Ofttimes where there are most

blossoms there is least fruit. But yet there is no fruit, be it of what sort it will, good or bad, but it comes in and from some of those blossoms. The mind of man is covered with thoughts, as a tree with blossoms. Most of them fall off, vanish, and come to nothing, end in vanity; and sometimes where the mind does most abound with them there is the least fruit, the sap of the mind is wasted and consumed in them. Howbeit there is no fruit which actually we bring forth, be it good or bad, but it proceeds from some of these thoughts. Wherefore, ordinarily, these give the best and surest measure of the frame of men's minds. "As a man thinks in his heart so is he." In case of strong and violent temptations, the real frame of a man's heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object, for whether they are from Satan's suggestions, or from inward darkness, trouble, and horror, they will impose such a continual sense of themselves on the mind as shall engage all its thoughts about them; as when a man is in a storm at sea, the current of his thoughts run quite another way than when he is in safety about his occasions. But ordinarily voluntary thoughts are the best measure and indication of the frame of our minds. As the nature of the soil is judged by the grass which it brings forth, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts; they are the original acting of the soul, the way whereby the heart puts forth and empties the treasure that is in it, the waters that first rise and flow from that fountain. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

3. But often are interjected by Satan.

(1833.) Some thoughts be the darts of Satan; and these *non nocent, si non placent*. We cannot keep thieves from looking in at our windows, but we need not give them entertainment with open doors. "Wash thy heart from iniquity, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" They may be passengers, but they must not be sojourners. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1834.) Satan slily conveys evil thoughts, and then makes a Christian believe they come from his own heart. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack, but it was of Joseph's putting in; so a child of God oft finds atheistical, blasphemous thoughts in his mind, but Satan hath cast them in.

—*Watson*, 1696.

4. Are not as guilty as evil actions.

(1835.) It is a great mistake to say that sin in the heart is the very same as sin thrown into a deliberate and daring act. They are in the same line as our Lord has taught us, but the external act gives evil a power which it had not before, and which may prove fatally destructive. It is like a combustible material, which, if once exploded, may leave the man's nature a shattered and hopeless wreck. To repress sin from the actual life is something,—only let it not stop there, else it is a constant deception and danger. —*Ker*.

5. Yet they are most powerful and disastrous in their influence.

(1836.) Indifferent looking, equal and easy conversation, appliableness to wanton discourses, and notions, and motions, are the devil's single money, and many pieces of these make up an adultery. As light a thing as a spangle is, a spangle is silver; and leaf-gold, that is blown away, is gold; and sand that has no strength, no coherence, yet knits the building. So do approaches to sin become sin, and fixed sin. —*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(1837.) Set thy thoughts, examine thy thoughts: thy conscience must not only extend to deeds and words, but even to secret thoughts. They that are accustomed to evil thoughts can seldom bring forth good words, never good deeds. As the corn is, so will the flour be: if the meal be bad, the fault is not in the millstones that ground it, but in the miller that put in such base corn. All thy senses and members are but the millstones; the heart is the miller: if thy words and works be ill meal, thank the miller, thy heart, for such corrupt thoughts. As the wood is, so will the fire be: if it be wet and stinking wood, look for an unsavoury and unwholesome fire: if the wood be sweet and dry, it will perfume the room with a sweet and pleasant air. Such fuel as you lay on your thoughts; such fire shall you have in your actions. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1838.) My works will be answerable to my thoughts; if my thoughts be wicked or fruitless, so will my actions be. My thoughts are the seed that lies in the ground out of sight; my works are the crop which is visible to others; according to the seed, whether good or bad, such will the crop be. If men are so careful to get the purest, the cleanest, and the best seed for their fields, that their harvest may be the more to their advantage; how much it concerns me that my heart be sown with pure and holy thoughts, that my crop may tend both to my credit and comfort! Lord, there is no good seed but what comes out of Thy garner. I confess, the piercing thorns of vicious thoughts, and the fruitless weeds of vain thoughts, are all the natural produce of my heart. Oh, let Thy good Spirit plough up the fallow ground of my soul, and scatter in it such seeds of grace and holiness, that my life may be answerable to Thy Gospel, and at my death I may be translated to Thy glory! —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1839.) Our heart is of that colour which our most constant thoughts dye it into. Transient fleeting thoughts, whether of one kind or another, do not alter the temper of the soul. Neither poison kills nor food nourishes, unless they stay in the body; nor does good or evil benefit or harm the mind, unless they abide in it.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1669.

(1840.) As the thoughts are, the soul is. The cask, long after it has been emptied, still retains the scent of the liquor with which it was formerly filled; and in the same way do the thoughts leave behind them the trace of their nature and quality in the heart. And as wine is never put into a foul or fetid cask, so never does God pour His grace into the heart which is voluntarily defiled with evil thoughts. The thoughts are the soul's pinions, with which it wings its way either to heaven or to hell. With these it may either, like Noah's dove, light upon an olive tree, and pluck from it a twig; or, like the raven, settle upon a carcase and defile itself. —*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(1841.) Any one who has visited limestone caves has noticed the stalactite pillars, sometimes large and massive, by which they were adorned and supported. They are nature's masonry of solid rock,

formed by her own slow, silent, but mysterious process. The little drop of water percolates through the roof of the cave, and deposits its sediment, and another follows it, till the icicle of stone is formed; and finally reaching to the rock beneath, it becomes a solid pillar, a marble monument, which can only be rent down by the most powerful forces.

But is there not going forward oftentimes in the caverns of the human heart a process as silent and effective, yet infinitely more momentous? There in the darkness that shrouds all from the view of the outward observer, each thought and feeling, as light and inconsiderable perhaps as the little drop of water, sinks downward into the soul, and deposits—yet in a form almost imperceptible—what we may call its sediment. And then another and another follows till the traces of all combined become more manifest, and at length, if these thoughts and feelings are charged with the sediment of worldliness and worldly passion, they have reared within the spirit permanent and perhaps everlasting monuments of their effects. All around the walls of this spiritual cave stand in massive proportions the pillars of sinful inclinations and the props of iniquity, and only a convulsion like that which rends the solid globe can rend them from their place and shake their hold.

Thus stealthily is the work done; mere fancies and desires, and lusts unsuspiciously entertained, contribute silently but surely to the result. The heart is changed into an impregnable fortress of sin. The roof of its iniquity is sustained by marble pillars, and all the weight of reason and conscience and the Divine threatenings are powerless to lay it low in the dust of humility.

Such is the power of those light fancies and imaginations and desires which enter the soul unobserved, and are slighted for their insignificance. They attract no notice. They utter no note of alarm. We might suppose that if left to themselves they would be absorbed in oblivion, and leave no trace behind. But they form the pillars of character. They sustain the soul under the pressure of all those solemn appeals to which it ought to yield.

How impressive, then, the admonition, "Keep thy heart with all diligence!" Things which seem powerless and harmless may prove noxious beyond expression. The power of inveterate sin is from the silent flow of thought. Your habitual desires or fancies are shaping your eternal destiny.

—*American National Preacher.*

(1842.) Beware of evil in the buddings of desire! Whoever allow themselves to indulge in evil imaginations or thoughts, are preparing themselves to commit the crimes they fancy. Desires are the seed of deeds. Working in the dark, and all the more dangerous that their progress, like a miner's, is silent and unseen, they sap the walls of virtue; and thus the man of God is overthrown by temptations that otherwise had broken on him, as breaks the mountain billow on a front of rock. May not the bad thoughts and fancies, that do their work secretly and unsuspected within the recesses of the heart, account for those sudden falls and sins on the part of such good men as David, that neither they nor others would have ever dreamt of? The mischief is due less to the temptation than to what preceded it—and prepared for it.

You are walking, for example, through a forest. Across your path and on the ground lies, stretched out in death, a mighty tree, tall and strong—fit mass to carry a cloud of canvas and bear unbent the strain of tempests. You put your foot lightly upon it; and how great your surprise when, breaking through the bark, it sinks deep into the body of the tree—a result much less owing to the pressure of your foot, than to the poisonous fungi and foul crawling insects that had attacked its core. They have left the outer rind uninjured—but hollowed out its heart. Take care your heart is not hollowed out; and nothing left you but the crust and shell of an empty profession.

—*Guthrie.*

6. How they are to be dealt with.

(1843.) The best Christian's heart here is like Solomon's ships, which brought home, not only gold and silver, but also apes and peacocks; it has not only spiritual and heavenly, but also vain and foolish thoughts. But these latter are there as a disease or poison in the body, the object of his grief and abhorrence, not of his love and complacency.

Though we cannot keep vain thoughts from knocking at the door of our hearts, nor from entering in sometimes, yet we may forbear bidding them welcome, or giving them entertainment. "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" It is bad to let them sit down with us, though but for an hour, but it is worse to let them lie or lodge with us. It is better to receive the greatest thieves into our houses than vain thoughts into our hearts. John Huss, seeking to reclaim a very profane wretch, was told by him, that his giving way to wicked, wanton thoughts was the original of all those hideous births of impiety which he was guilty of in his life. Huss answered him, that though he could not keep evil thoughts from courting him, yet he might keep them from marrying him; "as," says he, "though I cannot keep the birds from flying over my head, yet I can keep them from building their nests in my hair." —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(1844.) Check them at the first appearance. If they bear upon them a palpable mark of sin, bestow not upon them the honour of an examination. If the leprosy appear in their foreheads, thrust them, as the priests did Uzziah, out of the temple; or as David answered his wicked solicitors, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God." Though we cannot hinder them from haunting us, yet we may from lodging in us. The very sparkling of an abominable motion in our hearts is as little to be looked upon as the colour of wine in a glass by a man inclined to drunkenness. Quench them instantly, as you would do a spark of fire in a heap of straw. We must not treat with them. Paul's resolve is a good pattern, not to confer with flesh and blood. We do not debate whether we should shake a viper off our hands. —*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

(1845.) Use not your thoughts to take their liberty and be ungoverned: for use will make them headstrong and not regard the voice of reason; and it will make reason careless and remiss. Use and custom have great power on our minds: where we use to go, our path is plain: but where there is no use, there is no way. Where the water useth to run there is a channel. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(1846.) Cast out vain and sinful thoughts in the beginning, before they settle themselves and make

a dwelling of thy heart. They are more easily and safely resisted in the entrance. Thy heart will give them rooting and grow familiar with them, if they make any stay. Besides, it shows the greater sin, because there is the less resistance, and the more consent. If the will were against them, it would not let them alone so long. Yea, and their continuance tendeth to your ruin: it is like the continuance of poison in your bowels, or fire in your thatch, or a spy in an army: as long as they stay they are working toward your greater mischief. If these flies stay long they will grow and multiply: they will make their nests, and breed their young, and you will quickly have a swarm of sins. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1847.) With all possible might and speed oppose the very first risings and movings of the heart to sin; for these are the buds that produce the bitter fruit: and if sin be not nipped in the very bud, it is not imaginable how quickly it will shoot forth. There be sudden sallies out of inherent corruption in these first motions which, though at first they are not so easily prevented, yet may be easily suppressed; and these may be working in the heart, when there is no noise of any outward enormity in the actions. The fire may burn strongly and vehemently, though it does not flame. The bees may be at work, and very busy within, though we see none of them fly abroad.

Now these sins, though they may seem small in themselves, yet are exceedingly pernicious in their effects. These little foxes destroy the grapes as much or more than the greater, and therefore are to be diligently sought out, hunted, and killed by us, if we would keep our hearts fruitful. We should deal with these first streamings out of sin, as the Psalmist would have the people of God deal with the brats of Babylon; "Happy shall he be who taketh and dasheth those little ones against the stones." And without doubt most happy and successful will that man prove in his spiritual welfare, who puts on no bowels of pity even to his infant corruptions, but slays the small as well as the great; and so not only conquers his enemies by opposing their present force, but also by extinguishing their future race. The smallest children, if they live, will be grown men; and the first notions of sin, if they are let alone, will spread into great, open, and audacious presumptions.
—*South*, 1633–1716.

7. Their cure.

(1848.) It is the part of a skilful surgeon or physician, not only to take away any appearing ulcer, or to cool the heat of a burning fever with outward applications, but to look into the inward causes and malignity of the disease, and so to order the matter, that the cause being taken away the effect may necessarily follow. Now, it is well known that the seed of all sins, and the well-spring of all wickedness, ariseth from the heart of man. The heart is, therefore, to be washed, as from all wickedness, so from all wicked thoughts, they being the source and originals of all unrighteousness.
—*Maverick*, 1617.

(1849.) There is nothing so unaccountable as the multiplicity of thoughts in the minds of men. They fall from them like the leaves of trees when they are shaken with the wind in autumn. To have all these thoughts, all the several fragments of the heart, all the conceptions that are framed and agitated in the mind, to be evil, and that continually, what a hell of horror and confusion must it needs be! A deliverance from this loathsome, hateful state is more to be valued than the whole world. Without it neither life, nor peace, nor immortality, nor glory, can ever be attained. The design of conviction is to put a stop to these thoughts, to take off from their number, and thereby to lessen their guilt. It deserves not the name of conviction of sin which respects only outward actions and regards not the inward actions of the mind; and this alone will for a season make a great change in the thoughts, especially it will do so when assisted by superstition, directing them unto other objects. These two in conjunction are the rise of all that devotional religion which is in the papacy. Conviction labours to put some stop and bounds to thoughts absolutely evil and corrupt, and superstition suggests other objects for them, which they readily embrace; but it is a vain attempt. The minds and hearts of men are continually minting and coining new thoughts and imaginations; the cogitative faculty is always at work. As the streams of a mighty river running into the ocean, so are the thoughts of a natural man, and through self they run into hell. It is a fond thing to set a dam before such a river to curb its streams. For a little space there may be a stop made, but it will quickly break down all obstacles, or overflow all its bounds. There is no way to divert its course, but only by providing other channels for its waters, and turning them thereinto. The mighty stream of the evil thoughts of men will admit of no bounds or dams to put a stop unto them. There are but two ways of relief from them, the one respecting their moral evil, the other their natural abundance. The first is by throwing salt into the spring, as Elisha cured the waters of Jericho,—that is, to get the heart and mind seasoned with grace; for the tree must be made good before the fruit will be so. The other is, to turn their streams into new channels, putting new aims and ends upon them, fixing them on new objects: so shall we abound in spiritual thoughts; for abound in thoughts we shall, whether we will or no. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

EXAMPLE.

1. Is better than precept.

(1850.) Though "the words of the wise be as nails fastened by the masters of the assemblies," yet their examples are the hammer to drive them in, to take the deeper hold. A father that whipped his son for swearing, and swore himself whilst he whipped him, did more harm by his example than good by his correction. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(1851.) Examples do more compendiously, easily, and pleasantly inform our minds, and direct our practice, than precepts, or any other way or instrument of discipline. Precepts are delivered in a universal and abstracted manner, naked and void of all circumstantial attire, without any intervention, assistance, or suffrage of sense; and, consequently, can have no vehement operation upon the fancy, and soon do fly the memory: like flashes of lightning, too subtle to make any great impression, or to leave any remarkable footsteps upon what they encounter; they must be expressed in nice terms,

and digested in exact method; they are various, and in many disjointed pieces conspire to make up an entire body of direction: they do also admit of divers cases, and require many exceptions or restrictions, which, to apprehend distinctly, and retain long in memory, needs a tedious labour, and continual attention of mind, together with a piercing and steady judgment. But good example with less trouble, more speed, and greater efficacy, cause us to comprehend the business, representing it like a picture exposed to sense, having the parts orderly disposed and completely united, suitably clothed and dressed up in its circumstances; contained in a narrow compass and perceptible by one glance, so easily insinuating itself into the fancy, and durably resting therein.

—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(1852.) Precepts instruct us what things are our duty, but examples assure us that they are possible. They resemble a clear stream wherein we may not only discover our spots, but wash them off. When we see men like ourselves, who are united to frail flesh and in the same condition with us, to command their passions, to overcome the most glorious and glittering temptations, we are encouraged in our spiritual warfare. —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(1853.) Ill patterns are sure to be followed more than good rules. —*Locke*, 1632–1704.

2. Its power for good.

(1854.) Nothing awakens our sleeping virtues like the noble acts of our predecessors. They are flaming beacons, that fame and time have set on hills, to call us to a defence of virtue, whensoever vice invades the commonwealth of man.

—*Feltham*, 1568.

(1855.) It is Plutarch's observation concerning Cæsar's soldiers, that they who in service under other commanders did not exceed the ordinary rate of courage, nor excel their fellows, did yet, when he led them, become irresistibly valiant, being animated and inspired by his unparalleled gallantry: and who is there indeed so incurably heartless, so desperately sluggish, whom the sight of a valiant leader marching before into the mouth of danger, will not infuse fire and vigour into, and instigate forward into a participation of brave adventure? So example doth by a kind of contagion insinuate courage, or inveigle men thereinto; beside that it is a kind of daring, and proclaimeth him a dastard that will not imitate it; which imputation the lowest courage of man can hardly digest, and will therefore by doing somewhat answerable strive to decline. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(1856.) A wanderer had to go a long and dangerous journey over a rugged and rocky mountain, and knew not the way. He asked a traveller for information, of whom he heard that he had come this same path. The traveller pointed out the road to him clearly and distinctly, together with all the by-ways and precipices of which he must beware, and the rocks which he should climb; moreover he gave him a leaf of paper, on which all these things were described skilfully and exactly.

The wanderer observed all this attentively, and at each turn and by-path he considered carefully the instructions and description of his friend. Vigorously he proceeded; but the more he advanced, the steeper the rocks appeared, and the way seemed to lose itself in the lonely dreary ravines.

Then his courage failed him; anxiously he looked up to the towering gray rocks, and cried: "It is impossible for man to ascend so steep a path, and to climb these rugged rocks. The wings of eagles and the feet of the mountain-goat alone can do it."

He turned away thinking to return by the way he had come, when suddenly he heard a voice exclaiming: "Take courage, and follow me!" He looked round, and to his joyful surprise he beheld the man who had pointed out the way to him. He saw him walk calmly and steadily between the ravines and precipices and the rushing mountain torrents. This inspired him with new confidence, and he followed vigorously. Before nightfall they had ascended the mountain, and a lovely valley, where blossomed myrtle and pomegranate trees, received them at the end of their pilgrimage.

Then the cheerful wanderer thanked his friend, and said: "How can I express my gratitude to thee? Thou hast not only guided me on the right way, but hast also given me strength and courage to persevere."

The other answered: "Not so; am I not a wanderer like thyself, and art thou not the same man as before? Thou hast only seen by my example what thou art, and what thou art able to do."

—*Krummacher.*

(1857.) An eminent Christian is a North Foreland Lighthouse, seen far and wide, and doing good to myriads whom he never knows. —*Kyle.*

(1858.) The moral influence of a holy life cannot be lost. Like the seed which the wind wafts into hidden glades and forest depths, where no sower's hand could reach to scatter it, the subtle germ of Christ's truth will be borne on the secret atmosphere of a holy life, into hearts which no preacher's voice could penetrate. When the tongue of men and angels would fail, there is an eloquence in living goodness which will often prove persuasive. For it is an inoffensive, unpretending, unobtrusive eloquence; it is the eloquence of the soft sunshine when it expands the close-shut leaves and blossoms—a rude hand would but tear and crush them; it is the eloquence of the summer heat when it basks upon the thick-ribbed ice—blows would but break it; but beneath that softest, gentlest, yet most potent influence, the hard impenetrable masses melt away. —*Caird.*

(1859.) The truth is, that no man or woman, however poor their circumstances or mean their lot, are without their influence; like an electric spark, passing from link to link, that runs flashing down the chain of successive generations. Indeed, a man's life is as immortal as his soul; and by its influence, though dead, he yet speaketh and worketh.

. . . . . .

Men live after they are dead. Outliving our memory, and more enduring than any monument of brass or marble, our example may prove like the circle that rises round the sinking stone, and, growing wider and wider, embraces a larger and larger sphere, till it dies in gentle wavelets on the distant beach. It reaches a distant shore; your example a distant time.

Take care, then, how you live. —*Guthrie.*

(1860.) The blossom cannot tell what becomes of its odour, and no man can tell what becomes of his

influence and example, that roll away from him, and go beyond his ken on their perilous mission.

(1861.) A child, coming from a filthy home, was taught at school to wash his face. He went home so much improved in appearance, that his mother washed *her* face. And when the father of the household came home, and saw the improvement in domestic appearances, he washed *his* face. The neighbours, happening to call in, saw the change, and tried the same experiment, until all that street was purified; and the next street copied its example, and the whole city felt the result of one school-boy washing his face. That is a fable, by which we set forth that the best way to get the world washed of its sins and pollution, is to have our own heart and life cleansed and purified. A man with grace in his face, and Christian cheerfulness in his heart, and only consistency in his behaviour, is a perpetual sermon; and the sermon differs from others in that it has but one head, and the longer it runs the better.
—*Talmage.*

3. Its power for evil.

(1862.) A virtuous man, shining in the purity of a righteous life, is a lighthouse set by the sea-side, whereby both the mariners sail aright and avoid danger: but he that lives in noted sins is a false lantern, which shipwrecks those that trust him.
—*Felltham*, 1668.

(1863.) He that gives good receipts, and follows them by a bad example, is like a foolish man who should take great pains to kindle a fire, and when it is kindled, throw cold water upon it to quench it.
—*Secker.*

(1864.) When men first engage into the ways of God, they have a reverent esteem of those whom they believe to have been made partakers of that mercy before themselves; these they love and honour, as it is their duty. But after a while they find many of them walking in many things unevenly, crookedly, and not unlike the men of the world. Here sin is not wanting to its advantage. Insensibly it prevails with men to a compliance with them. "This way, this course of walking, does well enough with others; why may it not do so with us also?" Such is the inward thought of many, that works effectually in them. And so, through the craft of sin, one generation of professors corrupts another. As a stream arising from a clear spring, whilst it runs in its own peculiar channel, and keeps its water unmixed, preserves its purity and cleanness, but when it falls in its course with other streams that are turbid and foul, though running the same way with it, it becomes muddy and discoloured also; so is it in this case. Believers come forth from the spring of the new birth with some purity and cleanness; thus for a while they keep in the course of their private walking with God: but now, when they come sometimes to fall into society with others, whose profession flows and runs the same way with theirs, even towards heaven, but yet are muddied and sullied with sin and the world, they are often corrupted with them and by them, and so decline from their first purity, faith, and holiness. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(1865.) One watch kept right will do to try many by; but, on the other hand, one that goes wrong may be the means of misleading a whole neighbourhood: and the same may be said of the example we individually set to those around us.
—*E. Cook.*

4. Is no rule of life or excuse for sin.

(1866.) For any voluntarily to fall into such a frame as others are cast into by the power of their temptations, or to think that will suffice in them which they see to suffice in others whose distempers they know, is folly and presumption. He that knows such or such a person to be a living man and of healthy constitution, if he sees him go crawling up and down about his affairs, feeble and weak, sometimes falling, sometimes standing, and making small progress in anything, will he think it sufficient for himself to do so also? Will he not inquire whether the person he sees have not lately fallen into some distemper or sickness that has weakened him and brought him into that condition? Assuredly he will so do. Take heed, Christians; many of the professors with whom ye do converse are sick and wounded, the wounds of some of them do stink and are corrupt because of their folly. If you have any spiritual health, do not think their weak and uneven walking will be accepted at your hands; much less think it will be well for you to become sick and to be wounded also.
—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

5. Which to follow.

(1867.) Seeing we are all apt to be followers, let us seek out the best patterns. It is the custom of the wicked to pretermit all good precedents and to single out such as they would have, not such as they should have. As the dorr, that passeth by all the sweet flowers of the meadow, humming in scorn, and ends his flight in a dung-hill. Or as the Egyptians, who behold the sun, the moon, the stars, all the glories of nature, without admiration, yea, without common regard; until they spy a crocodile, an ugly serpent, and then fall down on their knees to worship it. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1868.) Let us then look out better precedents to follow: "Be followers together of Me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." We must not imitate every one, but such as Paul; nor Paul in every thing, but wherein he follows Christ. That great apostle encouraged our imitation, but gave a limitation: Do not you follow after me, unless you see the track of Christ before me. Let us follow good men, but only in what they are good. In our Christian imitation, there is one example necessary; Christ who is called the way; *Via in exemplo, veritas in promisso, vita in præmio:* others but in some actions, and at some occasions; their lives being lines so far to be followed, as they swerve not from the original copy, Christ. We are not bound to be good men's apes: let us follow David where he followed God's heart, not where he followed his own heart; if he turn toward lust and blood, let us leave him there. Let us follow Peter's confession, not his abnegation: All our following hath the *so far;* if our precedents go out of the way, let us shake hands and bid them farewell. Two of us are going towards Jerusalem, but saith one, I must needs call in at Rome, or go a little about by Samaria. Nay, then I leave you; here our ways part. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1869.) The way to excel in any kind, is to propose the highest and most perfect examples to our

imitation. No man can write after too perfect and good a copy; and though he can never reach the perfection of it, yet he is like to learn more than by one less perfect. He that aims at the heavens, which yet he is sure to come short of, is like to shoot higher than he that aims at a mark within his reach. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(1870.) Example is a dangerous lure; where the wasp got through the gnat sticks fast.
—*La Fontaine*, 1621–1695.

6. Importance and value of the human examples set before us in Scripture.

(1871.) God hath provided and recommended us to one example, as a perfect standard of good practice; the example of our Lord. That indeed is the most universal, absolute, and assured pattern; yet doth it not supersede the use of other examples, not only the valour and conduct of the general, but those of the inferior officers, yea, the resolution of common soldiers, do serve to animate their fellows. The stars have their season to guide us, as well as the sun; especially when our eyes are so weak as hardly to bear the day. Even, considering our infirmity, inferior examples by their imperfection sometimes have a peculiar advantage. Our Lord's most imitable practice did proceed from an immense virtue of Divine grace, which we cannot arrive to; it, in itself, is so perfect and high, that we may not ever reach it; looking upon it may therefore sometimes dazzle and discourage our weakness: but other good men had assistance in measure, such as we may hope to approach unto; they were subject to the difficulties which we feel; they were exposed to the perils of falling which we fear: we may therefore hope to march on in a reasonable distance after them; we may, by help of the same grace, come near in transcribing their less exact copy.
—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(1872.) It is true that with the sun shining we feel no need for those lesser orbs that lose their lustre in his overwhelming brightness. But it is not true that with a perfect model of every virtue and grace in Jesus Christ we have no need of any other. Children must creep before they can walk: and on such as are only yet able to make feeble efforts in the direction of what is good, the very fact that Christ presents not merely a high, but a perfect model, may have somewhat of a depressing and deterring influence. To live like Him seems a hopeless task. Greatly superior to us as Abraham, Moses, David, and Paul appear, they resemble those lofty mountains to whose tops, though raised high above the level plain and piercing the clouds with their glistening snows, a brave crags-man may climb; but Jesus, occupying a higher region, seems like the star that shines above them, which, though we should mount up on eagle's wings, it would be impossible to reach. It is not impossible. We are assured that when we shall see Him, we shall be like Him as He is. Yet there are times of defeat, of spiritual depression, when one, who might otherwise give up in despair, will attempt the imitation of an imperfect model, and find in its very imperfections encouragement to persevere.

Besides, while Jesus was, in a sense, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, and while His life does certainly illustrate the grand principles of our duty toward God and man, the saints are very valuable as models, since they teach us how to act in circumstances in which our Lord was never placed, but we often are. Though bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and as such having a fellow-feeling with all our infirmities, He was not a fallen man, as we are, and the saints were. Animated by the same passions, placed in the same relationships, and called to endure the same trials as ourselves, their footprints teach us where to walk, and their triumphs how to conquer. We look on Jesus, nor can hope to be altogether such as He was, till death's strong hand break the mould of clay, and we are brought forth, to the admiration and joy of angels, a perfect image of our Lord and Master. But in the faith of Abraham and the chastity of Joseph, the meekness of Moses and the patience of Job, the piety of David and the fidelity of Daniel, the zeal of Paul and the love of John, we see what attainments others have reached, to what heights of grace we ourselves may aspire.
—*Guthrie.*

FAITH.

I. *ITS NATURE.*

1. It is confidence in truth.

(1873.) Faith is a theological term rarely used in other matters. Hence its meaning is obscured. But faith is no strange, new, peculiar power; supernaturally infused by Christianity; but the same principle by which we live from day to day, one of the commonest in our daily life.

We trust our senses; and that though they often deceive us, we trust men; a battle must often be risked on the intelligence of a spy. A merchant commits his ships with all his fortunes on board to a hired captain, whose temptations are enormous. Without this principle society could not hold together for a day. It would be a mere sand-heap.

Such too is religious faith; we trust on probabilities; and this though probabilities often are against us. We cannot prove God's existence. The balance of probabilities, scientifically speaking, are nearly equal for a living person or a lifeless cause: immortality, &c., in the same way. But faith throws its own convictions into the scale and decides the preponderance.

Faith, then, is that which, when probabilities are equal, ventures on God's side, and on the side of right, on the guarantee of a something within which makes the thing seem to be true because it is loved. It is so defined by St. Paul: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen." —*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

2. It is confidence in the ability of persons.

(1874.) Religious faith, like natural faith, exists, not perhaps in opposition to, but in distinction from, present knowledge. That is to say, in the exercise of faith we do many things both in nature and religion, of the results of which we do not possess, at the present time, any certain foresight. If faith did not carry us beyond the reach of our own understanding, beyond the line of human reason, beyond what we can now perceive, it would not be faith; and those who might walk within the circle described by that measurement, could not be said to walk by faith but by sight.

The daughter of a celebrated physician was once attacked by a violent and dangerous fever; but she

exhibited great resignation and tranquillity. She said she was ignorant of what might effect her cure; and if it were left to herself to prescribe, she might desire remedies which would be prejudicial. Shall I not gain everything, she added, by abandoning myself entirely to my father? He desires my recovery; he knows much better than I do what is adapted to the restoration of my health; and having confidence therefore, that everything will be done for me which can be done, I remain without solicitude either as to the means or the result.—This was an instance of natural faith; believing without knowing; and entirely peaceable and tranquil, while trusting itself in the hands of another. Religious faith, in like manner, trusts itself in the hands of God; knowing nothing and enduring all things, in the full confidence that it will be well in the end.

—*Upham.*

3. It is confidence in the character of persons.

(1875.) Faith is a theological expression; we are apt to forget that it has any other than a theological import; yet it is the commonest principle of man's daily life, called in that region prudence, enterprise, or some such name. It is in effect the principle on which alone any human superiority can be gained. Faith in religion is the same principle as faith in worldly matters, differing only in its object; it rises through successive stages. When in reliance upon your promise, your child gives up the half hour's idleness of to-day for the holiday of to-morrow, he lives by faith; a faith supersedes the present pleasure. When he abstains from over-indulgence of the appetite, in reliance upon your word that the result will be pain and sickness, sacrificing the present pleasure for fear of future punishment, he acts on faith: I do not say that this is a high exercise of faith. —*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(1876.) The child that sets out with his parents upon a long and untried journey, without a doubt that his parents will supply his wants, and guide him in the right way, and will bring him home again in safety (if, indeed, he feels that he can have a home but in the arms and presence of those parents), knows what it is to believe. The young man who for the first time enters upon business for himself, and, in the prosecution of the plans and labours which now devolve upon him, finds it necessary to implicate himself with his fellow-men, and to enter into arrangements and contracts which imply the discharge of duties and the fulfilment of promises on the part of others, knows what it is to believe. The man of more mature years, who is called by his countrymen to the high office of sustaining and administering the laws, but who is obviously unable to do it, without confidence in himself, without confidence in his subordinate agents and in the community at large, knows what it is to believe. So complicated are the relations of society, and so dependent is man on his fellow-man, that it is difficult to see, if man had not faith in others, how he could exist in the world for any length of time.

—*Upham.*

4. It is trust in the testimony of others.

(1877.) There is more of belief than reason in the world. All instructors and masters in sciences and arts require, first, a belief in their disciples, and a resignation of their understanding and wills to them. And it is the wisdom of God to require that of man which his own reason makes him submit to another which is his fellow-creature. He, therefore, that quarrels with the condition of faith, must quarrel with all the world, since belief is the beginning of all knowledge; yea, and most of the knowledge in the world may rather come under the title of belief than of knowledge; for what we think we know this day we may find from others such arguments as may stagger our knowledge, and make us doubt of that we thought ourselves certain of before; nay, sometimes we change our opinions ourselves without any instructor, and see a reason to entertain an opinion quite contrary to what we had before. And if we found a general judgment of others to vote against what we think we know, it would make us give the less credit to ourselves and our own sentiments. All knowledge in the world is only a belief depending upon the testimony or arguings of others; for, indeed, it may be said of all men, as in Job viii. 9, "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing."

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(1878.) It is easy to show that, even considering faith as trust in another, it is no irrational or strange principle of conduct in the concerns of this life.

For when we consider the subject attentively, how few things there are which we can ascertain for ourselves by our own senses and reason! After all, what do we know without trusting others? We know that we are in a certain state of health, in a certain place, have been alive for a certain number of years, have certain principles and likings, have certain persons around us, and perhaps have in our lives travelled to certain places at a distance. But what do we know more? Are there not towns (we will say) within fifty or sixty miles of us which we have never seen, and which, nevertheless, we fully believe to be as we have heard them described? To extend our view;—we know that land stretches in every direction of us a certain number of miles, and then there is sea on all sides; that we are in an island. But who has seen the land all around, and has proved for himself that the fact is so? What, then, convinces us of it? The report of others: this trust, this faith in testimony which, when religion is concerned, then, and only then, the proud and sinful would fain call irrational.

And what I have instanced in one set of facts which we believe, is equally true of numberless others, of almost all of those which we think we know.

Consider how men in the business of life, nay, all of us, confide, are obliged to confide, in persons we never saw, or know but slightly; nay, in their handwritings which, for what we know, may be forged, if we are to speculate and fancy what may be. We act upon our trust in them implicitly, because common sense tells us that, with proper caution and discretion, faith in others is perfectly safe and rational. Scripture, then, only bids us act in respect to a future life as we are every day acting at present. —*Newman.*

(1879.) How certain we all are when we think on the subject that we must sooner or later die. No one seriously thinks he can escape death; and men dispose of their property and arrange their affairs, confidently contemplating, not indeed the exact time of their death, still death as sooner or later to befall them. Of course they do; it would be most irrational in them not to expect it. Yet observe, what

proof has any one of us that he shall die? Because other men die? How does he know that? Has he seen them die? He can know nothing of what took place before he was born, nor of what happens in other countries. How little, indeed, he knows about it at all, except that it is a received fact, and except that it would, in truth, be idle to doubt what mankind as a whole witness, though each individual has only his proportionate share in the universal testimony. —*Newman.*

5. It is trust in God.

(1880.) Faith is that conviction upon the mind of the truth of the promises and threatenings of God made known in the Gospel; of the certain reality of the rewards and punishments of the life to come, which enables a man, in opposition to all the temptations of a corrupt world, to obey God, in expectation of an invisible reward hereafter.

—*Dr. S. Clarke.*

(1881.) In vain will you hope to please God, and secure those rewards which He confers on them that diligently seek Him, unless yours is a *practical* faith. Faith is more than assent; it is active assent. Whatever a man believes, moves him in proportion to its importance; and if a man is told anything that concerns him greatly, and it does not move him at all, it is proof sufficient that he does not believe it. At the commencement of the late war, there appeared in the "Daily News" a most exciting letter from one of its correspondents, detailing the treatment to which he and some other Englishmen had been subjected at Metz. Arrested as Prussian spies, they were nearly murdered by the mob, and were with difficulty got into a guard-room by the soldiers. There they were examined by the General in command. Their answers to his questions appeared by no means to satisfy him. The correspondent says, "He then looked at us in the face, and, addressing the officers, police agents, and men in blouses who surrounded him, said, 'Gentlemen, you know that Metz is in a state of siege, and therefore no longer under the common law. We have been too humane, too noble-hearted, too generous. While the Prussians have committed the most horrible crimes against inoffensive Frenchmen and other officers, we have suffered the enemy to abuse our generosity, and this is the gratitude we receive. But it must stop once for ever. It is a hard thing, but the law gives me the right to shoot any one I choose in the market-square; and an example must be given, or we shall never have peace.' 'Bravo, General! bravo, commander!' cried all of them in a chorus. The man in a blouse left the room, and in a second the whole square echoed with cries of 'Bravo, le General!' 'Mort aux espions!' As I felt pretty safe that M. le General would think twice before making his experiment on an English subject, I said frankly that what he had been saying was all nonsense." The situation was a terrible one —a man with absolute power threatening death, and a yelling mob applauding the sanguinary decree— and yet the Englishman was not terrified. Why? Because he did not believe that the threats were real. *His calmness proved sufficiently that he had no faith in them.*—Is it not thus with you, who live in daily and constant neglect of the great salvation? In what other way could you more plainly avow your disbelief in God's declarations concerning your danger? He assures you in His Word that His wrath abides upon all who do not penitently seek forgiveness from Him through Jesus Christ, that when this brief life is over He will bar heaven against you, and consign you to endless woe; and you? What is it that you do? By going on just as you did before, you give Him the lie. If not with your lips, by your lives, you reply that what He says is unworthy of credit, nay, even of serious consideration! Consider now, I pray you, how you will answer for the dishonour which you thus put upon Him when you meet with Him face to face in the Judgment Day. —*R. A. Bertram.*

II. *ITS NECESSITY.*

1. To the existence of society, and to all forms of human activity and excellence.

(1882.) In matters of daily life, we have no time for fastidious and perverse fancies about the minute chances of our being deceived. We are obliged to act at once, or we should cease to live. There is a chance (it cannot be denied) that our food to-day may be poisonous,—we cannot be quite certain,— but it looks the same and tastes the same, and we have good friends round us; so we do not abstain from it, for all this chance, though it is real.

—*Newman.*

(1883.) The power, whether of painter or poet, to describe rightly what he calls an ideal thing, depends upon its being to him not an ideal but a real thing. No man ever did or ever will work well but either from actual sight, or sight of faith.

—*Ruskin.*

(1884.) In the *business of life*, what is it but faith or trust that guides a man? A merchant, for instance, embarks his capital in a foreign speculation. On what security does he proceed? Simply on that of faith. He has no *certainty* for anything on which he rests his whole adventure. All is mere probability, and he risks so much on these probabilities simply because he has faith in them. He has faith in the elements, faith in the constancy of nature, faith in human nature; and on this he builds. Go to his counting-house, and ask him to give you mathematical demonstration or rational philosophical proof that his venture will be successful, he will laugh in your face, or pity you for an unhappy lunatic, whom too much study has made mad. All men, then, live by faith.

—*Dr. W. L. Alexander.*

(1885.) Faith is the basis of all great, active enterprises. If a man cannot think well nor write well without faith; so in all difficult enterprises, which imply physical as well as mental effort, he cannot act well. Without faith there would have been no Parthenon, and no Pyramids of Egypt. Without faith there would have been no Thermopylæ, and no memorable Marathon. Hannibal could not have passed the Alps without faith. Cincinnatus could neither have ploughed nor have left the plough; could neither have sowed for the harvest, nor trained soldiers for victory, without faith. Columbus could not have crossed the ocean without faith. And here we speak not of religious, but of natural faith. Cortes could not have conquered Mexico without faith. Park, Ledyard, Cooke, and Bruce could not have explored unknown countries without faith. The English Revolution, the French Revolution, the American

Revolution, whatever faults or crimes may have accompanied any or all of them, could not have been accomplished without faith. The same may be said of all great civil and political movements. A mere sneerer, the man who sits in his easy-chair, believing in nothing and laughing at everything, could have done nothing of these things. No oceans are crossed by him; no nations are conquered; no boundless forests are subdued; no rude barbarism is tamed; no new civilisation is planted and reared up, at the expense of toil and blood in mighty triumph. —*Upham.*

(1886.) Faith, which is the source of so much human happiness, is the mainspring of human activity. It moves more than half the machinery of life. What leads the husbandman, for example, to yoke his horses when, no bud bursting to clothe the naked trees, no bird singing in hedgerows or frosty skies, nature seems dead? With faith in the regularity of her laws, in the ordinance of her God, he believes that she is not dead but sleepeth; and so he ploughs and sows in the certain expectation that he shall reap, and that these bare fields shall be green in summer with waving corn, and be merry in autumn with sunbrowned reapers. The farmer is a man of faith. So is the seaman. No braver man than he who goes down to see God's wonders in the deep. Venturing his frail bark on a sea ploughed by so many keels, but wearing on its bosom the furrows of none, with neither path to follow nor star to guide, the mariner knows no fear. When the last blue hill has dipped beneath the wave, and he is alone on a shoreless sea, he is calm and confident—his faith in the compass-needle, which, however his ship may turn, or roll, or plunge, ever points true to the north. An example his to be followed by the Christian with his Bible, on that faith venturing his all, life, crew, and cargo, he steers his way boldly through darkest nights and stormiest oceans, with nothing but a thin plank between him and the grave. And though metaphysicians and divines have involved this matter of faith in mystery, be assured that there is nothing more needed for your salvation or mine than that God would inspire us with a belief in the declarations of His Word as real, heartfelt, and practical, as that which we put in the laws of providence—in the due return of day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest. —*Guthrie.*

(1887.) Conviction, which is only another word to express faith, lies at the root of all consistent action. A mechanical genius conceives an idea. It is as clear as noon-day in his mind, but ere that idea is embodied in a wheel, a spring, or a lever, he must believe in the possibility of its embodiment: and just in proportion to the strength of his conviction as to the practicability and probable success of his idea will he be consistent and earnest in working it out. The mind must conceive *and* believe, before the hand or foot will move. Columbus *conceived* the existence of a continent; the conception grew into a *conviction:* the *conviction* was followed by consistent *action*, and that action was crowned with success by the discovery of America. A man *believes* that an observance of certain physical laws is conducive to health, and he *acts* accordingly. Another believes that obedience to certain moral laws is necessary to a good moral character, self-respect, and peace of conscience, and he obeys those laws. Christianity, then, by making man's pardon and happiness to hinge upon faith, acts in accordance with the laws of his mental and moral being. It is no arbitrary requirement; it is as necessary to holy obedience as any cause is to an effect. . . . . A man, for instance, must believe in God, or he will never serve Him; in law, or he will never obey it; in sin, or he will never see the necessity of a mediator. . . . . In other words, there is a necessary connection between faith and practice. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Convictions are the seedlings or springs of actions, and actions make the man. —*T. W. Tozer.*

2. To our happiness here and now.

(1888.) Hast thou faith? To this, an apostle's question, all men could, in a sense, return an answer in the affirmative; for it is not more true that no man liveth and sinneth not, that no man liveth and believeth not; or devil either; for "the devils also believe and tremble." Suppose a man without faith in any one, without faith in the honesty of his servants, faith in the integrity of his friends, faith in the affections of his children, faith in the fidelity of his wife, death would be to be preferred to a life like his. Better that our eyes were closed in death than that they should see every one with a mask on their face and a dagger beneath their cloak; with such a jaundiced vision, we should be "of all men the most miserable." On looking into the matter, you will find that faith, instead of belonging only to the elect of God, holy and chosen, is common to all, even the worst of men. The backbone, indeed, of the social, and the foundation of the commercial fabric, remove faith between man and man, and society and commerce fall to pieces. There is not a happy home on earth but stands on faith; our heads are pillowed on it; we sleep at night in its arms with greater security for the safety of our lives, peace, and property, than bolts and bars can give. —*Guthrie.*

3. To enable us to please God.

(1889.) "One thing thou lackest." The want of one thing may make void the presence of all things else. Lacking its mainspring—which is but one thing—a watch with jewels, wheels, pinions, and beautiful mechanism, the finest watch indeed that ever was made, is of no more use than a stone. A sun-dial without its gnomon, as it is called, Time's iron finger that throws its shadow on the circling hours—but one thing also—is as useless in broad day as in the blackest night. A ship may be built of the strongest oak, with masts of the stoutest pine, and manned by the best officers and crew, but I sail not in her if she lacks one thing—that trembling needle which a child running about the deck might fancy a toy; on that plaything, as it looks, the safety of all on board depends—lacking that, but one thing, the ship shall be their coffin, and the deep sea their grave. It is thus with true piety, with living faith. That one thing wanting, the greatest works, the costliest sacrifices, and the purest life, are of no value in the sight of God—are null and void.

Still further, to impress you with the valuelessness of everything without true piety, and show how its presence imparts such worth to a believer's life and labours, as to make his mites weigh more than other men's millions, and his cup of cold water more precious than their cups of gold—let me borrow

an illustration from arithmetic. Write down a line of ciphers. You may add thousands, multiplying them till the sheets they fill cover the face of earth and heaven, they express nothing; and are worth nothing. Now take the smallest number of the ten, the smallest digit, and place that at their head—magic never wrought such a change! What before amounted to nothing rises instantly by the addition of one figure, one stroke of the pen, into thousands, or millions, as the case may be; and whether they represent pounds or pearls, how great is the sum of them! Such power resides in true faith—in genuine piety.

It may be the lowest piety—but one degree above zero; it may be the love of smoking flax; the hope of a bruised reed; the faith of a mustard seed; the hesitating, fluttering confidence of him who cried, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Still, so soon as it is inwrought by the Spirit of God, it changes the whole aspect of a man's life and the whole prospect of his eternity. It is that one thing, wanting which, however amiable, moral, and even apparently religious we may be, our Lord addresses us, as He did the young ruler, saying, "One thing thou lackest." —*Guthrie.*

III. *ITS PRECIOUSNESS.*

1. By it we are justified.

(1890.) Faith will be of more use to us than any grace; as an eye, though dim, was of more use to an Israelite than all the other members of his body; not a strong arm, or a nimble foot; it was his eye looking on the brazen serpent that cured him. It is not knowledge, though angelical, not repentance, though we could shed rivers of tears, could justify us: only faith, whereby we look on Christ.
—*Watson*, 1696.

2. By it we are grafted into Christ.

(1891.) Faith is the vital artery of the soul. When we begin to believe, we begin to love. Faith grafts the soul into Christ, as the scion into the stock, and fetches all its nutriment from the blessed vine. —*Watson*, 1696.

3. By it our final salvation is ensured.

(1892.) Now, because Noah's faith was the thing that wrapped up his soul in the favour of God, the ground of all his perfection and righteousness, the virtue whereby he lived when all the world was drowned; how precious should this jewel be to us, without which we can neither live in this valley of tears, nor escape in the day of flames! There is no life but in the Son, and "he that hath the Son hath life," and he that hath faith hath the Son. *Justus ex fide vivet:* faith, like Eve, is the mother of all that live. God Himself is content to divide His praises with faith: whereas she can do nothing but by Him, she shall do anything with Him. She can work wonders: subduing kingdoms, strangling lions, quenching violent fires, with handfuls conquering huge armies, dividing seas, turning back streams, yea, commanding mountains to remove, overcoming the world; what call you these but wonders? Such wonders can faith do. Yea, God is pleased to do nothing for us without her, that doth all things of Himself. True faith is not less than miraculous in the sphere of her activity, and with the warrant of God's truth. It is no præmunire nor offence to God's crown and dignity, to say, it is His own arm to the saving of men. There is a kind of omnipotence in faith, when it shall say to the sun and moon, Stand still, and be obeyed. But as Christ could do no miracle in Capernaum, because they had no faith; so where men want faith, it must be a miracle, yea, beyond a miracle, if they be saved. I know it is easy to say, I believe: there is a titular faith, but it shall never save any, until saying, Be filled, gives a man his dinner; or, Be warmed, makes him hot. But he that can believe, with Noah, in a storm of indignation, in a deluge of destruction, when the arrows of vengeance fly about, and the Lord raineth coals of fire like hailstones, in flaming trials, and strongest temptations; then to believe, shall bring a glorious crown in the day of Jesus Christ. —*Adams*, 1653.

4. It brings peace.

(1893.) We have peace in believing. We have peace with our own conscience. When that stern sergeant shall take thee by the throat, and arrest thee upon God's debt, Pay that thou owest; let thy faith plead, I have paid it. How? Produce thy acquittance, that bloody acquittance, sealed in the wounds of thy Saviour, and given to thy faith. This shall turn the frowns of thy conscience into smiles; and that hand which was ready to hale thee to prison, shall now embrace thee with joy, encourage thee with kindness, and fight for thee with conquest. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1894.) "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," *i.e.*, we enter into the state of peace immediately. "Peace is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." And he is a rich man who has a thousand acres of corn in the ground, as well as he who has so much in his barn, or the money in his purse. They have rest and peace in the seed of it, when they have it not in the fruit; they have rest in the promise, when they have it not in possession; and he is a rich man who has good bonds and bills for a great sum of money, if he have not twelve pence in his pocket. All believers have the promise, have rest and peace granted them under God's own hand, in many promises which faith brings them under; and we know that the truth and faithfulness of God stands engaged to make good every line and word of the promise to them. So that though they have not a full and clear actual sense and feeling of rest, they are, nevertheless, by faith come into the state of rest.
—*Flavel*, 1630-1691.

5. Of all other graces it is the germ and animating power.

(1895.) Love, touched by the hand of faith, flames forth; hope, fed at faith's table, grows strong, and casts anchor within the veil; joy, courage, and zeal, being smiled upon by faith, are made invincible and unconquerable. What oil is to the wheels, what weights are to the clock, what wings are to the bird, what sails are to the ship, that faith is to all religious duties and services. —*Brooks*, 1680.

(1896.) Faith has an influence upon other graces. It is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearls. It puts strength and vivacity into all other virtues. It made Abraham rejoice, and it made Noah sit still and quiet in the midst of a deluge. Faith is the first pin that moves the soul; it is the spring in the watch that sets agoing—all the golden wheels of love, joy, comfort, and peace.

Faith is a root grace, from whence spring all the sweet flowers of joy and peace. —*Brooks*, 1680.

(1897.) Faith is an assimilating grace; it changeth the soul into the image of the object. A deformed person may look on a beautiful object, but not be made beautiful; but faith looking on Christ transforms a man, and turns him into His similitude. Faith looking on a bleeding Christ, causeth a soft, bleeding heart; looking on an holy Christ, causeth sanctity of heart; looking on an humble Christ, makes the soul humble. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1898.) Faith hath influence upon all the graces, and sets them a-work; not a grace stirs till faith sets t a-work. As the clothier sets the poor a-work, he sets their wheel a-going: faith sets hope a-work. The heir must believe his title to an estate in reversion, before he can hope for it; faith believes its title to glory, and then hope waits for it. Did not faith feed the lamp of hope with oil, it would soon die. Faith sets love a-work, "Faith which worketh by love;" believing the mercy and merit of Christ causeth a flame of love to ascend. Faith sets patience a-work, "Be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promise." Faith believes the glorious rewards given to suffering. This makes the soul patient in suffering. Thus faith is the master-wheel, it sets all the other graces a-running. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1899.) If the spring in a watch be stopped, it will hinder the motion of the wheels: if faith be down, all the other graces are at a stand.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(1900.) Every one knows that the seeds of plants and trees must be cast into the earth and become decomposed before vegetation will take place. This is one of nature's wonders, or rather of nature's God. Let us imagine, if we can, a man who had never seen this order exemplified in this particular instance, and he would be just as ready to disbelieve that plants and trees could spring from seed cast into the earth, as we are to calculate upon the certainty of the fact. What resemblance is there indeed between the future plant, and the seed from which it springs? How little could mere reason, without experience, venture to predict the result that follows from a few handfuls of grain scattered over the soil! So, when overwhelmed with our corruptions, and we can scarce discover the existence of any graces, and then look at the height and stature they have attained to in others, we are ready to doubt whether such a simple principle as faith, and that so weak, can ever spring up in the abundance of Christian fruitfulness we shall one day attain to. But what if this faith be a *seminal* principle, as the seed which contains the mighty oak? Let us take courage in the assurance of its progressive growth, and destined increase. —*Salter*, 1840.

6. Without it no other grace is acceptable to God.

(1901.) Of all the virgins presented to Ahasuerus, none was so pleasing as Esther. "Let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti." When that decree was published, what strife, what emulations (may we think) was among the Persian damsels, that either were, or thought themselves to be, fair! Every one hopes to be a queen; but so incomparable was the beauty of that Jewess, that she is not only taken into the Persian court, as one of the selected virgins, but hath the most honourable place in the seraglio allotted to her. The other virgins pass their probation unregarded; when Esther's turn came, though she brought the same face and demeanour that nature had cast upon her, no eye sees her without admiration. The king is so delighted with her beauty, that, contemning all the more vulgar forms, his choice is fully fixed upon her. Our heavenly King is pleased with all our graces: hot zeal and cool patience pleaseth Him; cheerful thankfulness and weeping repentance pleaseth Him; charity in the height and humility in the dust pleaseth Him; but none of them are welcome to Him without faith, as nothing can please Him without Christ. There is none that dares venture into His presence, without faith; she is that Esther to which God holds out His golden sceptre. Adorn thy soul with this grace; "so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." —*Adams*, 1653.

7. It is the faculty whereby we realise unseen things.

(1902.) Faith is seated in the understanding, as well as the will. It has an eye to see Christ, as well as a wing to fly to Christ.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(1903.) Faith is the eye of the soul, and the Holy Spirit's influence is the light by which it is seen.
—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(1904.) Consider what impressions we gain from the sense of touch. It is touch which, more than any other sense, convinces us of the reality of matter. What you see might be merely a phantom, an optical illusion, a picture painted on the retina of the eye, and nothing more; but if you go up to the thing you see, and touch it, and handle it, you become assured of its existence, you know that it is substantial. Now what is faith! It may be defined as the faculty by which we realise unseen things—such as the Being and Presence of God, the work which our Lord did for us, the future judgment, the future recompense of the righteous, and the like unseen things.

I say the faculty (not by which we conceive, but) by which we realise these things, feel them to have a body and a substance. To imagine the truths of religion is not to believe them. We may from time to time imagine God as He is in heaven, surrounded by myriads of glorious angels,—we may imagine Christ looking down upon us from God's right hand, interceding for us, calling us to account at the last day, and awarding to us our final doom; but the mere picturing these things to ourselves is not the same thing as believing them; the believing them is the having such a conviction of their reality, as to live under their influence, and to be in some measure, at least, governed by them. In short, to *imagine* the truths of religion is like surveying things by the eye; to *believe* in the truths of religion is like grasping the same things with the hand, and thus proving them to have substance and consistency. —*Goulburn*.

8. By it we are enabled to triumph over doubts.

(1905.) The eye of true faith is so quick-sighted that it can see through all the mists and fogs of difficulties. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1906.) Faith makes the discords of the present the harmonies of the future. —*Robert Collyer.*

(1907.) We may observe that we have three ascending degrees of faith, manifesting itself in the breaking through of hindrances which would keep from Christ in the paralytic (Mark ii. 4), the blind men at Jericho (Mark x. 48), and this woman of Canaan. The paralytic broke through the outward hindrances of things merely external; blind Bartimæus, through the hindrances opposed by his fellow-men; and this woman, more heroically than all, through apparent hindrances even from Christ Himself. These in their seeming weakness were the three mighty ones, not of David, but of David's Son, that broke through the hosts of the enemy, until they could draw living water from the wells of salvation. —*Trench.*

9. It enables us to exercise a wise foresight.

(1908.) Faith doth not only enable the soul to see the nature of all sin void of true treasure, but also how transient its false pleasures are: "I will not lose, saith faith, sure mercies, for transient uncertain pleasures." This made Moses leap out of the pleasures of the Egyptian court, into the fire of affliction, because he saw them "pleasures for a season." Should you see a man in a ship, throw himself overboard into the sea, you might at first think him out of his wits, but if a little while after you should see him stand safe on the shore, and the ship swallowed up of the waves, you would then think he took the wisest course. Faith sees the world, and all the pleasures of sin sinking; there is a leak in them which the wit of man cannot stop.
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

10. It enables us to walk safely.

(1909.) O faith! O gift of God! O divine torch which comes to clear up darkness, how necessary art thou to man. . . . O pillar of fire, at the same time so obscure and so luminous, of what importance is it that thou always conductest the camp of the Lord, the tabernacle and the tents of Israel, through all the perils of the desert, the rocks, the temptations, and the dark and unknown paths of this life? —*Massillon.*

11. It opens the promises.

(1910.) Faith is the key that unlocks the cabinet of the promises, and empties out their treasures into the soul. —*Watson*, 1696.

12. It gives calmness in trial and danger.

(1911.) Faith has an eagle's eye and a lion's heart. It has a lion's heart to bear present evils, and it has an eagle's eye to see future good.
—*Robinson*, 1559.

(1912.) Many animals act and are acted upon by fancy: so it is fancy in men that makes them fear where no fear is; dreading the danger, not trusting the Deliverer. The sheep at first sight of the wolf, apprehends him for a terrible object, naturally fears and flees him: the lion feels no terror, but passeth by him with an honourable scorn. A malkin frights a child, a man contemns it. Elisha's servant quakes at the Syrian army, no fear invades the prophet. He saw, and caused his man to see, a greater Deliverer above. In the street we see men walk in their equal stature and dimensions; they on a high turret appear little to us. Stand on a promontory, they with you are great, they beneath you seem small: the situation of the eye makes or mars all. So it is with men in the time of trouble; if their eyes be fixed on earth, their enemies appear great, and God that is so high seems little. Let our eyes be in heaven, and from thence look down upon our enemies, God will then appear mighty, our foes weak and contemptible. This was Jehoshaphat's confidence. "There is no strength in us to stand against this multitude; but our eyes are upon Thee" (2 Chron. xx. 12). . . . We are all weak; in this mighty Deliverer be our confidence. When little children first learn to go, feeling their own feebleness, they thrust out a hand to the wall to stay them. Our strength is but like children's; "Our help is in the name of the Lord."
—*Adams*, 1653.

(1913.) Haply those monstrous sons of Lamech came to Noah and asked him what he intended by that strange work; whether he meant to sail upon the dry land? to whom he relates God's purpose, and his own. They go laughing away at his idleness, and tell one another in sport, that too much holiness hath made him mad; that instead of a palace, he was building a prison; and because other men delighted in castles of stone, he (to be cross to the world) would have a house of wood. Yet cannot all this flout Noah out of his faith: still he preaches, and builds, and finishes. And when all they, like ghastly wretches, lay sprawling on the merciless waves, he lies safe at the anchor of hope and peace. The faith of the righteous cannot be so much derided, as their success is magnified. How securely doth he ride out of this universal uproar, of heavens, earths, waters, elements! He hears the pouring down of the rain above his head; the shrieking of men, women, and children, roaring and bellowing of beasts on every side; the rage of the waves under him: he saw the miserable shifts of the distressed unbelievers; and now, in the midst of all, sits quietly in his dry cabin, not feeling evil. He knew that the great Master of the world, whose judgments now overflowed the earth, would steer him in these deep waters; and that the same hand which shut him up, would preserve him.

Let me here again commend to you the blessedness of faith: what a sweet security and heavenly peace doth it work in the soul, in the midst of all the inundations of evils! This is the adamant which nothing will break; the palm that sinks not under the weightiest burden; the oil that ever overswims the greatest quantity of water that can be poured on it; the sheet-anchor that holds when all other tacklings break. The day of fire shall be more terrible and universal than was the day of water; this defaced earth, that shall melt the heavens. Yet still faith finds an ark, not of combustible wood, but of indissoluble strength; it is the opened side of Jesus Christ. There, when the earth is burning under her, heaven above her, the elements about her, reprobates shrieking beside her, death and hell trembling below her, she shall find assurance and peace; and at last be metamorphosed into that blessed vision, and eternal fruition of such joys; to which His mercy brings us, that they then may be known unto us. Amen. —*Adams*, 1653.

(1914.) Faith is like a bee; it will suck sweetness

out of every flower; it will extract light out of darkness, comforts out of distresses, mercies out of miseries, wine out of water, honey out of the rock, and meat out of the eater. —*Brooks*, 1680.

(1915.) Where the mind is stayed on God, it will be kept in perfect peace, before deliverance comes. A case will make my meaning plain.

I suppose you fallen into great distress, and a lawyer's letter is received, bringing doleful tidings that your person will be seized unless your debts are paid within a month. While the letter is perusing, an old acquaintance calls upon you, sees a gloom upon your face, and asks the cause of it. You put the letter into his hand: he reads, and drops a friendly tear. After some little pause, he says, "Old friend, I have not cash at present by me, but engage to pay your debts before the month is out." Now, if you thought this person was not *able* to discharge your debts, or not to be *relied* on, because his mind was fickle, his promise would bring no relief, because it gains no credit. You have no faith in him. But if you knew the man was able, and might be trusted, his promise would relieve you instantly. A firm reliance on his word would take away your burden, and set your mind at ease, before the debt was paid.

Well, if a firm reliance on the word of man has this sweet influence on the heart, a firm reliance on the Word of God will have the same.

—*Beveridge*, 1716–1793.

(1916.) Not many years since a number of workmen were engaged in constructing a railway tunnel. In the midst of their work there was a sudden fall of earth, which completely closed the entrance, and shut them up from the outer world. Their comrades outside, as soon as they discovered what had happened, began digging through the mass of earth. It was many hours before the task was accomplished. They found them quietly pursuing their labour inside the tunnel. Their work had never been interrupted. They had eaten their dinner, and gone on digging and boring. They knew, they said, that their fellow-workmen would rescue them; and so they went on with their labour. Transfer their state of mind to the Christian in his perplexities, and we see exactly what practical faith is. Faith teaches the believer, in the midst of the severest difficulty, not to set about forcing a way out of his trouble, but just to ply his pickaxe and spade in the work which is straight before him, leaving it to the Father above to make a way of escape for him. In the right manner, and at the right moment, the help comes, and the Christian goes on his way once more rejoicing.

—*Hooper*.

(1917.) What cares the child when the mother rocks it, though all storms beat without? So we, if God doth shield and tend us, shall be heedless of the tempests and blasts of life, blow they never so rudely. —*Beecher*.

(1918.) There is a view of God by which we may be lifted up into such a serene vision, such a glorious aspect, of a loving and forgiving God, that the soul says, "Thou art the Chief among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. Thou art my portion and my God." There is such a view possible, and there is such a view frequently given. It is offered to all; and it is offered never more than in times of distress. It is a view of God that compensates everything else, and enables the soul to rest in His bosom.

How, when the child in the night screams with terror, hearing sounds that he knows not of, is that child comforted and put to rest? Is it by a philosophical explanation that the sounds were made by the rats in the partition? Is it by an imparting of entomological knowledge? No; it is by the mother taking the child in her lap, and singing sweetly to it, and rocking it. And the child thinks nothing of the explanation, but only of the mother.

Now, it pleases God to take in His arms and bosom those that love Him and put their trust in Him. And that which comforts them and gives them rest is not so much this or that or the other thing which they can understand, as this: "God has enfolded me, and what can harm me? If God be for me, who can be against me?" There is in this infinite peace, if one can stay there. There is not the storm in all the world that can blow to his shipwreck, or to his disturbance, who abides in such a feeling. —*Beecher*.

(1919.) Birdie was only four years old, but she had already been taught that God loved her, and always took care of her. One day there was a very heavy thunderstorm, and Birdie's sisters and mamma even laid by their sewing, and drew their chairs into the middle of the room, pale and trembling with fear. But Birdie stood close by the window, watching the storm with bright eyes.

"O mamma! a'n't that bu'fu!" she cried, clapping her hands with delight, as a vivid flash of lightning burst from the black clouds, and the thunder pealed and rattled over their heads.

"It is God's voice, Birdie," said mamma, and her own voice trembled.

"He talks velly loud, don't He, mamma? S'pose it's so as deaf Betsey can hear, and the uver deaf folks."

"O Birdie, dear, come straight away from that window," said one of her sisters, whose cheeks were blanched with fear.

"What for?" asked Birdie.

"Oh! because the lightning is so sharp, and it thunders so loud."

But Birdie shook her head, and looking over her shoulder with a happy smile on her face, lisped out:

"If it funders, let it funder! 'Tis God makes it funder, and He'll take care of me. I a'n't a bit afraid to hear God talk, Maizy."

Was not Birdie's faith beautiful? Mamma and sisters did not soon forget the lesson.

13. It is our safeguard in temptation.

(1920.) An anchor being let fall, it passeth through the water, and violently maketh its way through all the waves and billows, never staying till it come at the bottom, where, taking hold of the ground that lieth out of sight, thus by a secret and hidden force staying the ship, so as though it be moved, yet it is not removed, but still keepeth her station. Of such use is faith to the soul of man. When it is in a stress, tossed with the waves and billows of temptations and trials, threatening to swallow it up, faith breaks through all, never resting till it come at God Himself, who is invisible, and taking hold upon

Him by a secret force it stayeth the soul, and keepeth it from being driven upon the rocks or sands of desperation. An anchor it is, and a sure anchor, that sheet anchor which the soul must trust to, which it may ride and live by in whatsoever stress can come down upon it.

—*Calvin*, 1509–1564.

(1921.) When Christ saw how Peter should be tempted, He tells him that He had prayed that his faith should not fail (Luke xxii. 32), noting that while his faith held, all would be sure. Faith in this case is like the cork that is upon the net—though the lead on the one side sink it down, yet the cork on the other side keeps it up in the water.

—*Ambrose*, 1564.

(1922.) Faith is absolutely necessary for resistance. A man cannot fight upon a quagmire. There is no standing out without a standing, some firm ground to tread upon; and this faith alone furnishes. It lifts the soul up to the firm advanced ground of the promises and fastens it there, and there it is sure. even as Mount Zion that cannot be removed. The apostle says, not steadfast by your own resolutions and purposes, but steadfast by faith (1 Pet. v. 9). When the soul is surrounded with enemies on all hands, so that there is no way of escape, faith flies above them, and carries up the soul to take refuge in Christ, where it is safe. It sets a soul in Christ, and there it looks down on all temptations, as at the bottom of the rock, breaking themselves into foam. When the floods of temptation rise and gather, so great and many that the soul is even ready to be swallowed up, then by faith it says, "Lord Jesus, Thou art my strength, I look to Thee for deliverance; now appear for my help." And thus it overcomes the guilt of sin; that is answered by His blood, and the power of sin is conquered by His Spirit; and afflictions that arise are nothing to these. His love and gracious presence makes them sweet and easy.

—*Leighton*, 1611–1684.

14. It saves us from despair.

(1923.) A ship that lies at anchor may be something tossed, but yet it still remains so fastened that it cannot be carried away by wind or weather. The soul, after it has cast anchor upon God, may, as we see in David, be disquieted awhile, but this unsettling tends to a deeper settling. The more we believe, the more we are established.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(1924.) Faith is a sheet anchor we cast into the sea of God's mercy, and by it we are kept from sinking in despair. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1925.) An able seaman once said to me, "In fierce storms we have but one resource: we keep the ship in a certain position: we cannot act in any way but this; we fix her head to the wind; and, in this way, we weather the storm." This is a picture of the Christian: he endeavours to put himself in a certain position: "My hope and help are in God: He is faithful: 'weeping may endure for a night,' but 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord.'" The man who has learnt this piece of heavenly navigation shall weather the storms of time and of eternity; for he trusts a faithful God, and he shall find Him faithful. This confidence has supported thousands in perilous situations, where others would have given up all in despair. —*Cecil*, 1743–1810.

(1926.) There are trying circumstances in which the only safety or confidence of a believer rest in walking by faith, and not by sight; in believing what the poet sings, how "behind a frowning providence," God hides a smiling face.

In ascending a lofty mountain, standing high above all its fellows, which the sun is the first to reach and the last to leave, I have seen the rock that crowned it cleft with storm, and its summit all naked and bare; and so, sometimes those who rise highest, and live nearest to God, whose heads are most in heaven, have often the bitterest cup to drink, and the heaviest burden to bear. What are they to do under such circumstances? I have known a timid traveller whose route lay across the Higher Alps, along a path no broader than a mule's foothold, that skirted a dreadful precipice, whence could be discerned the river far down below diminished to a silver thread; and on that dizzy precipice I have known a timid traveller who fancied it safest to shut her eyes, and not attempt to guide the course, nor touch the bridle—a fatal touch that would throw steed and rider over—till, bounding from shelf to shelf, they lay a mangled mass in the valley below. And there are times and circumstances in the believer's life when, if he would keep himself from sinful debts, if he would keep himself from falling into despair, he must, as it were, shut his eyes, lay the bridle on the neck of Providence, commit his way to God, and, however things may look, make this his comfort, "He will never leave me, nor forsake me." —*Guthrie.*

15. It gives prevalency to prayer.

(1927.) In the several precedents of praying saints upon Scripture record, you may see how the spirit of prayer ebbed and flowed, fell and rose as their faith was up and down. This made David press so hard upon God in the day of his distress: "I believed, therefore I spake, I was greatly afflicted." This made the woman of Canaan so invincibly importunate; let Christ frown and chide, deny and rebuke her, she yet makes her approaches nearer and nearer, gathering arguments from His very denials, as if a soldier should shoot his enemy's bullets back upon him again; and Christ tells us what kept up her spirit undaunted: "O woman, great is thy faith!"

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

16. It stimulates to endeavour.

(1928.) See the spider casting out her film to the gale, she feels persuaded that somewhere or other it will adhere and form the commencement of her web. She commits the slender filament to the breeze, believing that there is a place provided for it to fix itself. In this fashion should we believingly cast forth our endeavours in this life, confident that God will find a place for us. He who bids us pray and work will aid our efforts and guide us in His Providence in a right way. Sit not still in despair, O son of toil, but again cast out the floating thread of hopeful endeavour, and the wind of love will bear it to its resting-place. —*Spurgeon.*

17. It brings deliverance.

(1929.) Beloved, ye all see into what sad times we are now fallen: there is no grace, I say, will

stand us in more stead, or more able to turn away the evil that is now upon us, than faith is. Luther hath a notable story to this purpose: There was, saith he, a deadly contest between a great bishop, and a duke of Saxony: the duke of Saxony prepares for war against him: but before he would come upon him, he sends a spy to observe what the bishop was a-doing. The spy went: and being returned again; "Come," says the duke, "what is the bishop a-doing?" "Sir," says he, "he is idle, and secure, you may fall upon him and destroy him when you will." "Ay," says he, "but what says the bishop?" "Sir," he says thus: "I will feed my flock, I will visit the sick, I will preach the gospel; and as for the war, I will commit the whole weight and bulk of this war to God Himself, who fighteth for me." "Ay," says the duke, "did the bishop say so? Then," says he, "let the devil take up arms against him if he will, for I will not." Thus faith turns away the sword.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

18. It is the secret of all heroic enterprises.

(1930.) History furnishes numerous illustrations. Christopher Columbus, if we have a right understanding of his personal character, was a man of a self-controlled and quiet spirit. The foundation of this subdued and immovable calmness of spirit, which supported him under immense labours, deprivations, and sufferings, was faith, undoubtedly. And it is very possible that it was, to a considerable degree at least, *natural* faith. That is to say, he had faith in his mathematical and geographical deductions; he had faith in his personal skill as a navigator; he had faith in his own physical and intellectual resources; he had faith in his personal influence over minds of less power; he had faith in his integrity of purpose. He felt, therefore, that he stood on a strong foundation; and this inward conviction, strengthened perhaps in some degree by religious sentiments, imparted both inwardly and outwardly that self-possessed and delightful calmness of spirit and manner, which is one of the surest indices of true greatness. —*Upham.*

(1931.) Everywhere we find it to be true, that faith gives power. The history, for instance, of mechanical inventions, and of scientific improvements generally, furnishes an illustration of the subject. The labours of many persons, labours to which we are indebted for many of the most astonishing results in the mechanic arts and in the sciences, have been perseveringly and successfully prosecuted under circumstances of want, of opposition, and of ridicule. Nothing seemed sufficient to stop their efforts. And the inquiry naturally arises here, what was the secret of this remarkable perseverance, of this great energy, under circumstances exceedingly trying? Whatever incidental influences may have existed, one thing is certain, that one great element of their energy and perseverance was FAITH. They had faith in the value of the object; they had faith in the possibility of its being ascertained and realised; they had faith also in their ability to accomplish what they had undertaken to do. This was the secret (we do not say exclusively, but certainly in a very great degree), of their indomitable strength. When, therefore, at distant periods, we find individuals arising perhaps from the humblest walks of life, and accomplishing by their almost unaided efforts great results in science and the arts, the Franklins and Fultons of their generation, we may be assured that the element of natural faith, if not of any other and higher kind of faith, has sustained and invigorated the conceptions and efforts of natural genius. —*Upham.*

19. It ennobles the whole life.

(1932.) One of the most piteous of things is to see how men live. I do not mean barbarians. I mean intelligent men. I mean men brought up by much care and culture. The world is piteous to live in, if this is the only world. If there is nothing but what is here, I do not wonder that the aspiring mind cries out, "We are of all men most miserable." But a Christian man, under precisely the same circumstances, has a ground transcendently higher. For if there be nothing for him that suits his ambition, or his yearnings, or his wants, here, he has the land beyond. He knows that he is but a stranger and pilgrim; and he comforts himself, as he goes through the wilderness, thinking of the home toward which he is travelling. And he weaves tapestries, and paints pictures, and carves various creations. Living as he does by faith, and not merely by sight, his imagining, his picture-painting, his idealising, his holy reverie, is filling the great empty heavens with all conceivable beauty. And what if it be evanescent? So is the wondrous frost-picture on the window; but is it not beautiful, and worth having? So is the summer dew upon the flower; but is it not renewed night by night? And faith is given to man to lift him above the carnal, the dull, the sodden, and to enable him to conceive beyond that to which any earthly realisation has yet ever attained. —*Beecher.*

(1933.) A transcendent faith, a cheerful trust, turns the darkness of night into a pillar of fire, and the cloud by day into a perpetual glory. They who thus march on are refreshed even in the wilderness, and hear streams of gladness trickling among the rocks. —*Chapin.*

20. It gives calmness in death.

(1934.) When in your last hour (think of this) all faculty in the broken spirit shall fade away and sink into inanity—imagination, thought, effort, enjoyment—then will the flower of belief, which blossoms even in the night, remain to refresh you with its fragrance in the last darkness. —*Richter.*

IV. *SAVING FAITH.*

1. Its nature.

(1935.) Every one that assents to the truth of what the Scriptures saith of Christ doth not believe on Christ. No, this believing on Christ implies an union of the soul to Christ, and fiduciary recumbency on Christ. Therefore we are bid to take hold of Christ (Isa. xxvii. 5), who is there called God's strength, as elsewhere His arm, "that we may make peace with God, and we shall make peace with Him." It is not the sight of a man's arm stretched out to a man in the water will save him from drowning, but the taking hold of it.

Gurnall, 1617–1679.

(1936.) Judas knew the Scriptures, and without doubt did assent to the truth of them, when he was so zealous a preacher of the gospel; but he never

had so much as one drachm of justifying faith in his soul. "There are some of you which believe not, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him." Yea, Judas's master, the devil himself, one far enough (I suppose) from justifying faith, yet he assents to the truth of the Word. He goes against his conscience when he denies them: when he tempted Christ he did not dispute against the Scripture but from the Scripture, drawing his arrows out of this quiver (Matt. iv. 6). And at another time he makes as full a confession of Christ (for the matter) as Peter himself did (Matt. viii. 22, compared with Matt. xvi. 17). Assent to the truth of the Word is but an act of the understanding, which reprobates and devils may exercise. But justifying faith is a compounded habit, and hath its seat both in the understanding and will: and, therefore, called a "believing with the heart" (Rom. x. 10), yea, a "believing with all the heart" (Acts viii. 37). It takes in all the powers of the soul. There is a double object in the promise; one proper to the understanding, to move that: another to the will, to excite and work upon that. As the promise is true, so it calls for an act of assent from the understanding; and as it is good as well as true, so it calls for an act of the will to embrace and receive it. Therefore he which only notionally knows the promise, and speculatively assents to the truth of it, without clinging to it, and embracing of it, doth not believe savingly, and can have no more benefit from the promise than nourishment from the food he sees and acknowledgeth to be wholesome, but eats none of it. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1937.) How preferable is the light of the sun to the lustre of the moon! The former, while it illuminates the eye, and uncovers the elegant scenes of creation, warms the earth, and makes it fruitful, diffuses cheerfulness, and imparts enrichment to no fewer than six primary, and ten secondary worlds. As great is the difference between a cool historical faith that floats in a contemplative head and the faith of God's elect, which warms, invigorates, and purifies the members of Christ's Church. The former is a mere moonlight faith, which, however clear, so far as it goes, yet leaves us as cold and as barren as it found us. The latter, like the solar communications, enlivens and fertilises the soul, filling it with joy and peace through the power of the Holy Ghost; and adorning it with the flowers and fruits of grace. —*Salter.*

(1938.) The difference between common and true faith may be thus illustrated. Suppose two persons to have been informed that the government had pledged itself to bestow a grant of ten thousand acres of land at the Swan River to any one who would settle there, subject to certain conditions as to capital and stock. The announcement is received by both parties, and believed. But the one is not moved to take any steps in consequence of it, the other hastens to fulfil the conditions, and actually goes out to take possession of the land. So the gospel report, and the blessings it is ready to bestow, are believed on, and their truth is not questioned by the nominal professor and the true believer; but the one is not influenced to adopt measures, or comply with the terms it proposes, in order to secure its blessings; but he who has the true faith takes effectual steps, and is careful to fulfil the conditions to obtain its blessings. —*Salter.*

(1939.) There can be little doubt that the conception of different kinds of faith, such as speculative and practical, historical and saving, &c., and, indeed, all the notions which have existed with reference to a difference in the act of faith itself, as put forth by a real Christian and a mere professor, owe their existence to a desire to account for the different effects of faith on different individuals. There are two men, both of whom appear to understand the gospel, and both profess to believe it. The conduct of one is regulated by its precepts, while that of the other is not. The conclusion has therefore been that the latter individual believes the gospel *in the wrong way*, or has not the right kind of faith; whereas the conclusion should have been that he believes the *wrong gospel;* or, in other words, that the thing believed is not the truth as it is in Jesus. No mistake can be greater than that which ascribes the difference in the results to some difference in the faith, understanding by the term the act of believing. For the practical effect of faith is, in all cases, to be ascribed not to the act of believing, but to the thing believed. I believe, we will suppose, that there are mountains in the moon; the belief is followed by no results, because the truth, to which credit is given, is not adapted to produce any. I believe that the roof of the house in which I am sitting is about to fall; I immediately rush out, because the truth credited is fitted to excite alarm, and precipitate retreat. I believe that God hath reconciled the world to Himself by Christ Jesus; I rejoice, and the joy springs from the report itself. It is not to be traced to the act of faith by which it is admitted into the mind; for that is the only instrument by which, in all cases, the truth to which credit is given is brought into contact with the mind. In vision it is the thing seen, and not the act of seeing, which produces the effect upon the mind. Just so it is in believing. It is the truth perceived and believed, and not the act of perceiving or believing it, that effects, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, so mighty a change in the experience and character of the individual who receives it. In reference to the three cases just alluded to, it is abundantly manifest that faith is not inert in the first instance and active in the second, *because* the approaching fall of the roof is *cordially* believed; for, if there were cordiality in either case, it would be surely in the former and not in the latter. And in the third case, though there is cordiality, that is, though the reports of the gospel is welcomed into the mind, the joy which subsequently pervades the mind is not to be ascribed to the manner of its entrance, but to the good news it brings.

—*Payne.*

(1940.) We all remember that poor man whom Jesus saw at Capernaum sitting to receive taxes and custom duties. Nothing can be shorter than the story as it stands: "He saith unto him, Follow me, and he arose, and followed Him." But I think it needs little sagacity to see that that which made this publican do what others of his degraded class thought not of doing, was not a clearer perception of evidences or probabilities, but a moral difference. He wished to become other than he was; some dissatisfaction which his present state had broken down the hedges which usage and prudence would

mostly interpose against such a desertion of the calling by which one lives. Was it that he would no more minister to the oppressor above him who farmed the taxes, and grew rich out of the people? Was it that he could not endure the scowls of those in whose wrongs he was the agent? Was it that he had become sensible, from what he had heard of Christ's teaching, of the need of something better for his own soul than what his miserable vocation could furnish? At all events, it was a moral cause, for it altered at once all his life and prospects. It was not that he changed his opinion about Christ, and continued in other respects what he was before. It was an act of the will, and a strong one, which made him leave his office and his means of support, and cast himself upon a vague future, with no guide but Christ. This example serves to explain the share of the will in an act of religious faith. Faith is, as it has been objected, an intellectual act; but also it is a moral act in the next degree. How much or how little of our nature shall be implicated in our belief depends not on the nature of belief, but upon the objects of it. Last week we believed in an eclipse: it troubled no man's rest, it quickened no man's hopes, it roused no fears, as it might once have done. There was nothing in that object of belief to go down to the heart. Last week we thought that showers of cutting sleet would fall, and in deference to our belief we wrapped another garment round us, or planned a shorter walk. But to believe that a Father's care is over us, and that a higher life is waiting for us, and that a Son has taught us, and for our guilt has died, and that a life far more noble and beautiful than we thought is possible for us even here! Admit such thoughts in all their force of truth into the outer hall of our understanding, and their message shall ring through every passage and chamber, awakening them that sleep, and quickening with new strength the hands that hang down in despair. Belief is mere opinion! Yes; but a belief about God—about a Father not yet utterly estranged by all the meanness, selfishness, greedy self-seeking of one that He will still call His child—how shall such belief be limited to the mere understanding? No; the whole city within us is moved at His coming. Affections, feelings, bitter shames and regrets, fond longings after something better, all stir and troop forth at the mention of such a coming; and they strew their garments in the way, and throw down the torn branches in the way, and cry, Hosannah! save us! to Him that comes to them unexpectedly, blessed in the name of the Lord. Yes, belief is an opinion; but that God is and loves us is a great opinion, and it never dawns upon any understanding but for great issues.

—*Thomson.*

(1941.) This one thing I have noticed in everybody—the moment they come to a clear apprehension of the love of Christ, they turn right about upon the minister, or upon the Christians who have been labouring, perhaps for years, to bring them to that very point, and say, "Why didn't you tell us this before?"

Why, it's what we've been *always* telling them. I think that trying to point a man to the love of Jesus is like trying to show one a star that has just come out, the only star in the whole cloudy sky.

"I can see no star," says the man. "Where is it?"

"Why, there; don't you see?"

But the man shakes his head; he can see nothing. But by-and-by, after long looking, he catches sight of the star; and now he can see nothing else for gazing at it. He *wonders* that he had not seen it before.

Just so it is with the soul that is gazing after the Star of Bethlehem. Nothing in the world seems so hidden, so complex, so perplexing, as this thing, until it is once seen by the heart, and then, oh, there never was anything that ever was thought of that is so clear, so simple, so transcendently glorious! And men marvel that the whole world does not see and feel as they do. —*Beecher.*

(1942.) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Not in Christianity, but on Christ!

Mark that little yet great word *on*. It is not enough to believe *in* Christ Jesus. Millions of unconverted people believe in Jesus, just as they believe in Howard as a noble philanthropist, or in Washington as a pure patriot, or in Newton as a profound teacher of science. But they do not trust their souls to Jesus. They do not rest on Him for salvation. They do not build their hopes of heaven on Him. When a miner looks at the rope that is to lower him into the deep mine, he may coolly say, "I have faith in that rope as well made and strong." But when he lays hold of it, and swings down by it into the tremendous chasm, then he is believing on the rope. Then he is trusting himself to the rope. It is not a mere opinion—it is an act. The miner just lets go of everything else, and bears his whole weight on those well-braided strands of hemp. Now that is faith. And when a human soul lets go of every other reliance in the wide universe and hangs entirely upon the atoning Jesus, that soul "believes on Christ." That soul is intrusting itself to Jesus for guidance, for grace, for strength, for pardon, for final salvation.

Is not this the real core of faith? Is it anything else than simply trusting ourselves to Christ? Can there be a simpler, clearer idea of Bible faith than this? If so, we never have discovered it.

—*Cuyler.*

(1943.) Any faith in him, however small, is better than any belief about him, however great.

—*George Macdonald.*

2. Its object.

(1944.) As the act of healing through the eyes of the Israelites and the brazen serpent went together; so, in the act of justifying, these two, faith and Christ, have a mutual relation, and must always concur—faith as the action which apprehendeth, Christ as the object which is apprehended; so that neither the passion of Christ saveth without faith, nor doth faith help unless it be in Christ, its object. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1945.) Put yourselves upon the stream of the free grace of God, without having any foot on your own bottom; some men will learn to swim, and they are loth to lean themselves upon the stream of the water, but keep a foot at the bottom; and they never learn to swim, till they take up the foot: some would fain be evangelical, but they cannot lean themselves upon the stream of grace, but keep a foot at the bottom still upon something of their own.

Some there are that do, and work, and when

they can work no further, then they eke it out with Christ's mediation. So indeed they make the mediation of Christ but an ekement to their own working: but away with these ekements! Oh, let Christ be all. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(1946.) Had the stung Israelites looked on any other object besides the brazen serpent, they had never been healed. Neither will the stung conscience find ease with looking upon any besides Christ in the gospel-promise. The Levite and the Priest looked on the wounded man, but would not come near him; there he might have lain and perished in his blood for all them. It was the good Samaritan that poured oil into his wounds. Not the law, but Christ by His blood, bathes and supples, closeth and cureth the wounded conscience.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1947.) As the eye seeks for no other light than that of the sun, and joins no candles with it to dishonour the sufficiency of its beams, so no created thing must be joined with Christ as an object of faith. This is a dishonour to the strength of this Rock, which is our only foundation, this is to undervalue the greatness of the gift and the wisdom of the giver. It is a folly to seek for security anywhere else. Who would join the weakness of a bulrush with the strength of a rock for his protection? Who would fetch water from a muddy pond to make a pure fountain in his garden more pleasant? All other things are broken reeds under the most splendid appearances. Address yourselves only to Him, to find a medicine for your miseries, and counsel in your troubles.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(1948.) Nothing else of Christ can be the immediate and primary object of our faith, but His death. Nothing else but the priestly office of Christ and propitation, and atonement He has made for sin (and thereby delivered us from the wrath to come), can be the formal object of faith in its first application. There are many things in Christ that faith afterwards considers, and that are worthy of our deepest inquiries and meditations; but this only is considered in the first application. What did the poor stung Israelites consider in their looking upon the brazen serpent? Did they consider it only as the figure of a serpent, or let their minds run out upon the excellency of the figure, the skill of the artificer, and the curiosity of the workmanship? These, indeed, to a sound man would have been a delightful employment; but as soon as ever he had been bitten, he would have laid aside all such thoughts, and cast his eye upon it, according to the intent of its elevation on the pole for the cure of his disease. What did the poor malefactor consider in his distress when he ran to the horns of the altar? He considered it only as a place of refuge, and not as a place of worship. A man in the first act of faith considers himself guilty before God, and in danger of eternal fire, under the dreadful displeasure of God by reason of his transgression of the law; he considers himself a breaker of that law, and consequently under the threatening and curse of it, and wishes for security from that fire; his conscience, by virtue of a violated law, flashes in his face. That, therefore, which prompts a man in this condition to go to Christ, is the belief and hope of a sure deliverance by Him. His great intendment is justification, freedom, and deliverance, and therefore he eyes Christ as a deliverer, and in that posture and method wherein He was a deliverer, *i.e.*, as hanging upon the cross.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(1949.) Faith is described to be a "believing on the name of the Son of God," viz., on His person. The promise is but the cabinet, Christ is the jewel in it which faith embraceth; the promise is but the dish, Christ is the food in it which faith feeds on. And as faith rests on Christ's person, so on His person under this notion, "as He was crucified." Faith glories in the cross of Christ (Gal. vi. 14). To consider Christ as He is crowned with all manner of excellences, doth rather stir up admiration and wonder; but Christ looked upon as bleeding and dying, is the proper object of our faith; therefore it is called faith in His blood.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(1950.) To depend partly upon Christ's righteousness and partly upon our own, is to set one foot upon a rock and another in the quicksands. Christ will either be to us *all in all* in point of righteousness, or else nothing at all; as He did the whole work, so He will have the whole praise. If He be not able to save to the uttermost, why do we depend upon Him at all? If He be, why do we lean upon any beside Him? If we lean partly on Christ and partly on ourselves, or our own good works, wishes, actions, or affections, we infallibly ruin ourselves. If a man set one foot upon dry land and the other upon deep water, and lean to them both with equal weight; yea, if he give any of his weight to the water, he will sink there. So here, if a person rest partly upon the merits of Christ, and partly, or in any degree, upon his self-righteousness for salvation, he will inevitably perish.
—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(1951.) The stupendous Falls of Niagara have been spoken of in every part of the world; but while they are marvellous to hear of, and wonderful as a spectacle, they have been very destructive to human life, when by accident any have been carried down the cataract. Some years ago two men, a bargeman and a collier, were in a boat, and found themselves unable to manage it, it being carried so swiftly down the current that they must both inevitably be borne down and dashed to pieces. At last, however, one man was saved by floating a rope to him, which he grasped. The same instant that the rope came into his hand, a log floated by the other man. The thoughtless and confused bargeman, instead of seizing the rope, laid hold on the log. It was a fatal mistake, they were both in imminent peril, but the one was drawn to shore because he had a connection with the people on the land, whilst the other, clinging to the loose, floating log, was borne irresistibly along, and never heard of afterwards. *Faith* has a saving connection with Christ. Christ is on the shore, so to speak, holding the rope, and as we lay hold of it with the hand of our confidence, He pulls us to shore; but our good works having no connection with Christ are drifted along down to the gulf of fell despair. Grapple our virtues as tightly as we may, even with hooks of steel, they cannot avail us in the least degree; they are the disconnected log which has no holdfast on the heavenly shore. —*Spurgeon*.

3. Is necessarily personal.

(1952.) In Gideon's camp every soldier had his own pitcher; amongst Solomon's men of valour every man wore his own sword; the five wise virgins had every one oil in her lamp. Luther was wont to say that there lay a great deal of divinity couched up in pronouns—as *meum*, *tuum*, *suum* (mine, thine, his). Thus, faith appropriated is all in all: a bird shall as soon fly with another's wings as thy soul mount to heaven by another's faith. Whosoever will go to God, whether it be in prayer or in any religious performances, he must have a faith of his own; it must be *fides tua* (thy faith). It is not enough to say, "Lord, Lord!" but to say, with David, "My Lord!" with Job, "My Redeemer!" with the blessed Virgin, "My Saviour!" not to say, "*Credimus*," but "*Credo*"—not "We believe," but "I believe in God." Every man must possess and be accountable for his own faith. When a man believes his own reconciliation by the merits of Christ Jesus, and strengthens this belief by a desire of pleasing God, this is *fides sua*, the right appropriation of faith. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(1953.) It is not money in a rich man's hand, though offered to us, that will enrich us, unless we receive it. So it is not Christ's virtues or benefits will do us good, unless we receive them by the hand of faith. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1954.) It is not a woman's believing a man to be rich and honourable, but her actual consent to take him for her husband, that makes marriage; so, it is not people's believing Christ to be a great and glorious Saviour, but actual reception of Him for theirs, that makes a spiritual marriage and union to Christ. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(1955.) What is needed on our part to make Christ's forgiving love our own? There must be the personal contact of my soul with the loving heart of Christ, the individual act of my own coming to Him, and, as the old Puritans used to say, "my transacting" with Him. Like the ocean of the atmosphere, His love encompasses me, and in it I live, and move, and have my being. But I must let it flow into my spirit, and stir the dormant music of my soul. I can shut it out, sealing my heart love-tight against it. I do shut it out, unless by my own conscious, personal act I yield myself to Him, unless by my own faith I come to Him, and meet Him, secretly and really as did the penitent apostle, whom the message, that proclaimed the love of his Lord, emboldened to meet the Lord who loved, and by His own lips to be assured of forgiveness and friendship. It is possible to stumble at noontide as in the dark. A man may starve outside of barns filled with plenty, and his lips may be parched with thirst though he is within sight of a broad river flowing in the sunshine. So a soul may stiffen into the death of self and sin, even though the voice that wakes the dead to a life of love be calling to it. Christ and His grace are yours if you will, but the invitations and beseechings of His mercy, the constant drawings of His love, the all-embracing offers of His forgiveness, may be all in vain if you do not grasp them, and hold them fast by the hand of faith. —*Maclaren.*

(1956.) Multitudes of Christians as it were *press* upon Jesus Christ by hearing His word, receiving His sacraments, and performing the outward parts of religion; but few touch Him by a lively faith, by a true Christian life, by the prayer of charity, and by the meditation, love, and imitation of His mysteries. —*Quesnel.*

4. How it is exercised.

(1957.) As faith is called a trusting in God; so it is a practical kind of trust; and the principal trial of it lieth in forsaking all other happiness and hopes, in confidence of God's promise through Jesus Christ.

To open the matter by a similitude: Suppose that Christ came on earth again as He did at His incarnation, and should confirm His truth by the same miracles and other means; and suppose He should then tell all in the country, I have a kingdom at the Antipodes, where men never die, but live in perpetual prosperity; and those of you shall freely possess it who shall part with your own estates and country, and go in a ship of my providing, and trust me for your pilot to bring you thither, and trust me to give it you when you come there. My power to do all this I have proved by my miracles, and my love and will my offer proveth. How, now, will you know whether a man believe Christ and trust His promise or not? Why, if he believe and trust Him, he will go with Him and will leave all, and venture over the seas whithersoever He conducteth him, and in that ship which He prepareth for him: but if he dare not venture, or will not leave his present country or possessions, it is a sign that he doth not trust Him.

If you were going to sea, and had several ships and pilots offered you, and you were afraid lest one were unsafe, and the pilot unskilful, and it were doubtful which were to be trusted; when, after all deliberation, you choose one, and refuse the rest, and resolve to venture your life and goods in it; this is properly called trusting it. So trusting in God, and in Jesus Christ, is not a bare opinion of His fidelity, but a practical trust. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1958.) Oh, what a difference is there between this living faith in Christ, and the name of faith, which you presume upon! It is one thing for a man that is well to honour a physician, and another thing for a sick man to seek out to him, and beg his help, and willingly take anything that he giveth him. It is the common delusion of unconverted men, that they think that they believe in Christ already. This is a common belief that will never save them, and that they take up with, and look not after the saving faith. I cannot better open the difference to ordinary capacities, than by the aforesaid comparison. A man in health may truly believe that such a man is an able physician, and he may speak well of him and honour him. Now, suppose a man were deadly sick of a consumption, and did not know it; if this man honoureth the physician as much as any other healthful man, will this cure him, or save his life? No, but the patient that prayeth him to come to him, and will trust his life in his hands, and will take the bitterest medicine that he gives him, and will forbear any hurtful meat or drink, be it never so pleasant to him, this is he that is like to be healed by him. Christ is known among us to be the able Physician of souls; we all confess and praise His skill, and know that He can save us; we all hear of the freeness of His cure, that He takes nothing, but doth it, as soon for the poorest beggar as the greatest prince; but knowing all this, and speaking well of Him, will

cure no man; no, but you must go to Him believingly, and beg His help, and take Him for your Physician, and trust your souls upon His blood and Spirit, and apply His means, and take the bitterest cup that He shall reach you, and forsake the morsels of fleshly pleasure that have been sweet to you heretofore. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1959.) What, if all were as bad as thou dost fear, and none of thy sins were yet pardoned; is not the remedy at hand? Christ is willing if thou be willing. He offereth Himself and all His benefits to thee: He presseth them on thee, and urgeth thee to accept them. Why dost thou, therefore, stand complaining that thou art not pardoned and adopted, when thou shouldst take them, being offered thee? Were he not mad that would lie weeping and wringing his hands, because he is not pardoned, when his prince stands by all the while offering him a pardon, and entreating, and threatening, and persuading, and correcting him, and all to make him take it? Know ye not that pardon and adoption are offered you only on the condition of your believing? And this believing is nothing else but the accepting of Christ for thy Lord and Saviour, as He is offered to thee with His benefits in the Gospel: and this accepting is principally, if not only, the act of thy will. So that if thou be willing to have Christ upon His own terms, that is, to save and rule thee, then thou art a believer: thy willingness is thy faith; and if thou have faith, thou hast the surest of all evidences. Justifying faith is not thy persuasion of God's special love to thee, or of thy justification, but thy accepting Christ to make thee just and lovely. It may be, thou wilt say, "I cannot believe; it is not so easy a matter to believe as you make it." *Answer:* Indeed, to those that are not willing, it is not easy, God only can make them willing. But to him that is willing to have Christ for King and Saviour, I will not say believing is easy: but it is already performed; for this is believing. Let me, therefore, put this question to every doubting, complaining soul, What is it that thou art complaining and mourning for? What makes thee walk so sadly as thou dost? Because thou hast not Christ and His benefits? Why, art thou willing to have them on the fore-mentioned condition, or art thou not? If thou be willing, thou hast Him: thy accepting is thy believing: "To as many as receive Him (that is, accept Him), to them He gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1960.) The act of justifying faith lies in recumbency: we do rest on Christ alone for salvation. As a man that is ready to drown, catcheth hold on the bough of a tree: so a poor trembling sinner, seeing himself ready to perish, catcheth hold by faith on Christ the tree of life, and so is saved. —*Watson*, 1696.

(1961.) To "receive" Christ, in the sense of Scripture, stands opposed to rejecting Him, or to such a non-reception of Him as was practised by the body of the Jewish nation (John i. 11, 12). An interest in spiritual blessings, and, of course, a persuasion of it, is represented as following the reception of Christ, and, consequently, is to be distinguished from it: "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." The idea that is generally attached to the term, in various cases, to which the reception of Christ bears an allusion, corresponds with the above statement. To receive a gift is not to believe it to be my own, though, after I have received it, it is so; but to have my pride so far abased as not to be above it, and my heart so much attracted as to be willing to relinquish everything that stands in competition with it. To receive a guest is not to believe him to be my particular friend, though such he may be; but to open my doors to him, and make him heartily welcome. To receive an instructor is not to believe him to be my instructor any more than another's; but to embrace his instruction and follow his counsel. For a town, or city, after a long siege, to receive a king, is not to believe him to be their special friend, though such he may be, and in the end they may see it; but to lay down their arms, throw open their gates, and come under his government. These remarks are easily applied. —*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

(1962.) Every individual has full warranty to appropriate to himself the overtures addressed to the world. Only let a person announce to a multitude that all who come to him should receive a benefit, or that "whosoever," or any, or "every one" of them that would repair to a certain place should receive a benefit. It is not difficult to divine what will be the first thing in this case, as the effect of any one having believed the announcement. He will betake himself to the appointed place, and his alacrity in going will be just in proportion to his confidence in the honesty of him who made the promise. This may be applied to the faith of the gospel; "eternal life" is held out as "the gift of God through Jesus Christ," and the way is prescribed by which to reach it. Now when the earthly benefactor in our supposed case scattered abroad among the multitude the promise of a certain benefit on their repairing to the appointed place, he did not bid them wait till faith was obtained before they moved. He bade them move, and they by instantly doing so prove that faith existed. These did not seek to ascertain their faith before rendering obedience; by their obedience they ascertained their faith. So there are calls to obedience, and a man obeys them not by feeling inwardly for the faith, but by following outwardly the objects of faith. He must simply do what he is simply bid to do. A plain man is told what to hope for, and where to go for it, and without mysticism he hopes what he is told, and does what he is bid. —*Chalmers*, 1780–1847.

(1963.) Faith says, *if Thou wilt;* not, if Thou art able. . —*Bengel.*

(1964.) "Believe *on* the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." *Trust yourself to Christ and you are saved.* That is what the Holy Ghost tells us through the lips of Paul.

This is an *act*—not simply an opinion. It is *doing*. It is a laying hold on Jesus. It is resting on Jesus. It is trusting Jesus to lead us, and *going where He leads.* What avails it to me to analyze Saratoga water, and to believe in its virtues. I must drink the water if I want its purifying power. And the soul that has not actually drank of Christ can never be purged of sin. Oh, thirsty, dying soul

how long will you stand gazing at this precious water of life? Stoop down and drink! Saving faith is just as simple as drinking, if you will only try it. —*Cuyler.*

(1965.) A sea captain related at a prayer-meeting in Boston, a short time ago, a thrilling incident in his own experience. "A few years ago," said he, "I was sailing by the island of Cuba, when the cry ran through the ship, 'Man overboard!' It was impossible to put up the helm of the ship, but I instantly seized a rope and threw it over the ship's stern, crying out to the man to seize it as for his life. The sailor caught the rope just as the ship was passing. I immediately took another rope, and making a slip noose of it, attached it to the other, and slid it down to the struggling sailor, and directed him to pass it over his shoulders and under his arms, and he would be drawn on board. He was rescued; but he had grasped that rope with such firmness, with such a death-grip, that it took hours before his hold relaxed, and his hand could be separated from it. With such eagerness, indeed, had he clutched the object that was to save him, that the strands of the rope became imbedded in the flesh of his hands!"

Reader, has not God let down from heaven a rope to every sinner on the earth, is not every strand a precious promise, and ought we not to lay hold on it as for our very life?

(1966.) It was a time of spiritual awakening in a small manufacturing town. The foreman in a department of one of the factories became anxious about his soul. He was directed to Christ as the sinner's only refuge by many, and by his own master among the rest; but it seemed to be without result. At last his master thought of reaching his mind, and bringing him to see the necessity of God in the Gospel, by writing a note asking him to come to see him at six o'clock, after he left "the work."

He came promptly, with the letter in his hand. When ushered into his room, his master inquired, "Do you wish to see me, James?"

James was confounded, and holding up the note requesting him to come, said:

"The letter! The letter!"

"Oh," said the master, "I see you believe that I wanted to see you, and when I sent you the message you came at once."

"Surely, sir! surely, sir!" replied James.

"Well, see; here is another letter sent for you by One equally in earnest," said his master, holding up a slip of paper with some texts of Scripture written upon it.

James took the paper and began to read slowly: "Come—unto—me—all—ye—that—labour," &c. His lips quivered; his eyes filled with tears; and, like to choke with emotion, he thrust his hand into his jacket pocket, grasping his large red handkerchief, with which he covered his face, and there he stood for a few moments not knowing what to do. At length he inquired:

"Am I just to believe that in the same way I believed your letter?"

"Just in the same way," rejoined the master. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." This expedient was owned of God in setting James at liberty. He was a happy believer that very night, and has continued to go on his way rejoicing in God his Saviour, to point others to Calvary, and walk in the narrow way.

(1967.) How straight and simple is the way a child comes to Jesus! No doubt, no hesitation, only simple faith and perfect love. A little girl of my acquaintance was once looking at a picture, with which many of you may be familiar, which represents a rock in the midst of a stormy sea, bearing upon its summit a cross to which a female figure just recovered from the angry waves clings, faint and exhausted, while at her feet a hand, grasping a part of a wreck, is just disappearing in the black water.

"What does that mean?" asked the child.

"It is called 'The Rock of Ages,'" was the answer.—"That means Jesus to whom we cling for salvation."—"You know the hymn says, 'Other refuge have I none.'"

"Oh yes," said the child after a moment's hesitation, "but that rock isn't *my* Jesus; when I cling to Him He reaches down and clings too!"

Teach the little ones of this Jesus "who reaches down and clings to," to whom we hold, not so much from fear of falling, since underneath us are His everlasting arms; but because, like the trusting child whom the father safely carries, we love to cling, that we may draw Him closer.

(1968.) Little Alice was one of my Sabbath-school scholars—a fair-haired, blue-eyed little girl, whose beautiful face and sweet, winning ways made her a favourite with all. Methinks I can see now the soft, tender look of her mild eyes, fixed so earnestly upon me, as I endeavoured to impress upon her opening mind the Gospel plan of salvation.

One day I said to her: "Alice, what will you do when you die, and are called upon to stand before the judgment-seat of God, to answer for all the sins done here upon earth?"

Her face glowed with emotion as she answered: "Christ died for sinners; I will hide behind Him. God will not look at me; He will look at Christ."

Beautiful thought, to hide behind Christ, to lose ourselves in Him, and, casting aside our own impure works, to rest solely and entirely upon His finished work for salvation!

5. How it justifies and saves.

(1969.) Why hath God appointed the eye to see, and not the ear? Why the hand to take our food, rather than the foot? It is easily answered: because these members have a particular fitness for these functions, and not the other. Thus *faith* hath a fitness for the work of justification peculiar to itself. We are justified, not by giving anything to God,—what we do,—but by receiving from God, what Christ hath done for us. Now faith is the only receiving grace, and therefore only fit for this office. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1970.) Some make works their righteousness; some make faith their righteousness: and they walk in this faith, not in Christ by faith; but it is not faith that saves merely, but Christ received by faith. As it is not the laying on the plaster that heals the sore, but the plaster itself that is laid on; so it is not our faith, or receiving of Christ, but Christ received by faith that saves us. It is not our looking to the brazen serpent mystical, but the

mystical brazen serpent looked unto by faith, Christ received by faith, that saves us.
—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(1971.) What is the righteousness of God? What is the matter of it? Is it faith? I am asked by some one, Is it faith; forasmuch as in some of these passages it is called righteousness of faith? I answer No, in no wise; on no account. Faith is an act of man's own mind, whereas the righteousness of God is on a man—faith is the travelling forth of a sinner's emptiness to meet the Saviour's fulness; the Saviour's fulness is one thing, and the sinner's emptiness going forth to meet Him is another thing. Faith and the righteousness of God are not identical, for the text says, "it is on them."—I am asked by some, if these good works which flow from the exercise of faith in the Divine influence on the believing man, are the righteousness of God! I answer No! and I give this answer to the question for the same reason that I gave it to the other question—these good works are ours, just as the fruits gathered from the soil are called the fruits of the earth; they are the product of the influence of the sun, and rain, and dew, and a million atmospheric influences acting on the tree and the soil; and the fruits produced upon the tree are called the fruits of the earth; so those good works which are produced in the exercise of faith, as the result of a Divine influence on the believing man, are the man's, and he will be judged according to them at the last day; but righteousness is not man's, it is God's. —*Beaumont.*

(1972.) Consider what faith is,—It is that strong buoy and confidence in God and His love which gives energy and spirit to do right without doubt or despondency. Where God sees that, He sees the spring and fountain out of which all good springs: He sees, in short, the very life of Christ begun, and He reckons that to be righteousness; just as a small perennial fountain in Gloucestershire is the Thames, though it is not as yet scarcely large enough to float a schoolboy's boat; and just as you call a small seedling, not bigger than a little almond peeping above the ground, an oak; for the word "justify" means not to be made righteousness, but to reckon or account righteous. Now observe, just as you count the seven springs to be the Thames, without a flood of waters, and without the navy that rides on the Thames, and just as you call the sapling an oak, without the acorns, so God reckons the trust in Him as righteousness, because it is the fountain and the root of righteousness, being indeed the life divine in the soul. He reckons it as such (that is, He justifies the soul that has it) without works—that is, before works are done, and not because of the works. But then that faith will not be without works; for the fountain must flow on, and the tree must grow, and the life of God in the soul, sanguine trust in God, the loving and good One, must spring up with acts; for to say that it does not would be to say that it is dead. —*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(1973.) Another mistake is sometimes perpetrated on the subject of faith. Many persons say faith now takes the place of works. The old law was, "Justified by works; the new law, they say, is "Justified by faith;" and they substitute the word "faith" for the word "works," and then as before. Now that is not the fact. Faith has no more merit than works; it is no more the ground of our acceptance than works. If it were so, we should be saved now by intellectual acumen, sifting and believing truth, instead of being saved by good works, paying the price of heaven, and so reaching it.

But that is absurd; it would be orthodoxy of creed as the ground of salvation, instead of orthodoxy of life as of old. How then does faith save us? It saves us as the instrument. If you put money into the hand of a poor man, it is not his hand that he thanks, but you. If you give bread to a starving man, it is not the trencher on which it lies that he thanks, but the donor. And when you obtain eternal life through faith, it is not faith that you thank, but the gift of that righteousness which is unto all upon all; and faith you recognise as a divine and precious instrument, that concurs with you in regarding Christ as all and in all.
—*Cumming.*

(1974.) Faith is receiving Christ into our emptiness. There is Christ like the conduit in the market-place. As the water flows from the pipes, so does grace continually flow from Him. By faith I bring my empty pitcher and hold it where the water flows, and receive of its fulness grace for grace. It is not the beauty of my pitcher, it is not even its cleanness that quenches my thrist: it is simply holding that pitcher to the place where water flows. Even so I am but the vessel, and my faith is the hand which presents the empty vessel to the flowing stream. Is it not grace, and not the qualification of the receiver, which saves the soul? And though I hold that pitcher with a trembling hand, and much of that which I seek may be lost through my weakness, yet if the soul be but held to the fountain, that so much as a single drop trickle into it, my soul is saved. —*Spurgeon.*

(1975.) It is often said that "faith is imputed for righteousness." But the special faith which justifies is faith in or on Christ Jesus. Its very essence, therefore, is trust upon Him and His sin-expiating and life-purchasing merits. Its very essence consists in its self-emptying, self-denying, Christ-grasping energy. The phrase to impute or reckon faith for righteousness represents no thinkable idea, unless it means to reckon as the righteousness of the sinner that righteousness which his faith trusts and appropriates. The mere act of leaning will never support a fainting man, unless he leans upon some object capable of supporting his weight. In that case it is the object which is reckoned his support, and not his act of leaning. The act of leaning is the same whether a man leans upon a broken reed or upon a rock, while the results differ. The act of trusting is the same whether a man trusts to a false foundation or to Christ. The difference in the result arises from the fact that the righteousness of Christ, upon which his faith reposes, is made his so far forth as to answer all the conditions and to secure all the rewards of the Covenant of Life. —*Hodge.*

6. In what sense it is the gift of God.

(1976.) As the earth engendereth not rain, nor is able by its own strength, labour, or travail, to procure the same, but receiveth it of the mere gift of God from above: even so faith, grace, forgiveness of sins, and Christian righteousness, are given us of God without our works or deservings.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1977.) Is faith the gift of God? "Certainly," answers a chorus of theologians. What says the text? "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourself, it is the gift of God." But a tyro in Greek knows that the pronoun translated "that" cannot refer to faith, and must refer to salvation by grace. Read the next verse. "Not of works, lest any man should boast!" What is not of works, faith, or salvation? To say that *faith* is not of works, is nonsense; to argue that salvation is not of works, is to do just what Paul is doing.

The grace of God, the pardon and sympathy and help of God, is God's free gift; it is nothing that we have earned or merited; it is gratuity; but the faith that appropriates the gift is not any part of the gift. God does not give us faith; He gives us salvation through faith, but we ourselves must believe. The Israelites in the wilderness might have said: "By this manna we are sustained through eating it; it is not any food that we have provided, it is the gift of God." But would that imply that the eating of the manna was the gift of God? The eating of the manna bore the same relation to the sustenance of the life of those who ate it, that faith bears to salvation. Faith is the act by which *we* appropriate God's forgiveness and God's saving help.

One who has just been rescued from drowning might say: "By the strength of this man I was saved, through taking hold of this rope. My deliverance from death was not wrought out by myself; I owe it all to my friend." But he would not by that testimony mean to imply that the taking hold of the rope was not his own act.

Salvation is a gift from God. But, as one has forcibly said, "a gift is not a gift until it is accepted." That which is forced upon another without his consent is not a gift, it is an imposition. A dose of medicine poured down the throat of an unconscious or a resisting patient is not in any sense a gift. The word implies two persons, one of whom is free either to bestow it or to withhold it; the other of whom is free either to accept it or to reject it. The act of accepting salvation is surely man's act, and that act is faith. The free act of God in bestowing salvation is grace; the free act of man in accepting it is faith.

—*Gladden.*

V. *PROOFS OF ITS REALITY.*

1. Holiness of heart and life.

(1978.) It was an unhappy division that has been made between faith and works. Though in my intellect I may divide them, just as in the candle I know there is both light and heat, but yet put out the candle, and they are both gone; one remains not without the other: so it is betwixt faith and works. Nay, in a right conception, *fides est opus:* if I believe a thing because I am commanded, that is *opus.*

—*The Table Talk of John Selden.*

(1979.) True faith is prolifical, it brings forth fruit; faith hath Rachel's beauty and Leah's fruitfulness. —*Watson,* 1696.

(1980.) True faith is never alone, but still joined with gospel-obedience: "As ye have received, so walk." He that would disjoin faith from obedience endeavours to walk with one foot, which is impossible. Faith and works, faith and holiness, are the two feet by which a man doth walk in Christ: and when the Spirit of Christ doth promote the one, He doth promote the other also. If a man should essay to go upon one foot, he could not walk, but only hop, which would be impossible for him to continue long in: neither can obedience be without faith, nor faith without obedience; but according to the measure of the faith, such will be the measure of the gospel-walk. As the fuller a vessel is, the faster will it run over at the top; so, the fuller views a man gets of Christ, by faith, the faster will he run in the way of evangelical obedience.

—*Erskine,* 1685–1752.

(1981.) Many talk of practical religion in our day, but few know what it is to walk in it; they are like the lark that sings with the highest, but builds with the lowest: some sing with the highest, as if they were almost angels; but where do they build? where are their affections? where are their hearts, their aims, their ends? They are low, earthly, and sensual. You that profess to be friends to the gospel, oh, let the mouths that reproach religion be stopped by the power of religion in your walk. If the world call us Antinomians; "It is the will of God, that by well-doing we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." We account them the greatest stars that give the greatest light; so men will account them still the greatest Christians that give the greatest light, by their gospel practice, in holiness toward God and righteousness toward men.

—*Erskine,* 1685–1752.

(1982.) Another reason why a gospel faith should have a gospel-practice is, because hereby the beauty of faith appears to others, and our light shines before men, so as they seeing our good works, do glorify God. The beauty of faith is seen by others, not in faith itself, but in the gospel-walk and practice that it produces. If a man would know in the morning whether the sun be risen in the east, he will readily look to the west, and see whether he can notice the reflection of the sunbeams upon the top of a house or the top of a hill; he looks the quite contrary way from the sun; and yet he does it ingeniously enough: even so here, if a man would know you to be a believer, he will not look into your faith, but will look out to your life, or look back to your conversation, and see what marks your faith makes there; hence saith the apostle, "Show me thy faith by thy works." Faith and works are contrary in point of justification, and yet when a man would see your faith, he will look to the contrary part, and see how it appears in your walk and work: and if it appears not there, the beauty of faith is not seen. —*Erskine,* 1685–1752.

(1983.) There is a grievous error in inquiring whether we have faith, instead of seeking "the obedience of faith." A child called to receive an apple is at no loss to proceed. Yet the grounds on which he acts are not more obvious and apprehensible than are the doctrines of the Gospel, in which we are called to go forth to that heaven which stands with an open gate, and a waving flag of invitation in the perspective before us. The child is exclusively led on by its regard to the object. Still there is another process going on in the recesses of its little bosom, though unconsciously. But it would be quite preposterous to require the child to

be quite sure that it had faith in the promise, before it does the plain thing that it is bidden. And it is childish folly to be inquiring whether we have faith, when we should be exclusively directing our attention to the object of promise, and going forwards at the voice of invitation.
—*Chalmers*, 1780–1847.

(1984.) The faith which purifies the heart is an active moving thing. Stagnant waters are dead; springing waters are wont to be called "living." Fountains purify themselves: standing waters do not so. What doth your faith do? Doth it move your heart? Doth it transform? It is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." But when any must say, "My faith lets my heart lie as a dead thing still, as dead as a stone; an impure thing still;" is this, indeed, the faith upon which you will venture for eternity? A faith that effects nothing, a mere negative faith; to wit, a faith which only stands in not believing the contrary, or not disbelieving such and such things. —*Salter.*

(1985.) So far from its being true that we have to trust only, to leave all in the hands of Jesus, having committed ourselves to Him, having put our faith in Him, we should now care more for His commandments than ever; we should feel more responsible than ever; we should feel that our obligations are heavier; and that, more than ever, we should be giving ourselves to the great work involved in the duties of the Christian life.

Take one or two human analogies, which, I think, aptly illustrate the case.

A sick man calls in a physician, in whom he has the most entire confidence. He believes that the physician can heal him: he commits himself into his hands. He tells him, "I leave it all with you; I am leaving it all with you." Well, is that all the sick man does? Does he, because he has left it all with the physician, do nothing more? Does not he listen to what the physician prescribes? Does not he take heed to follow the prescriptions? Does not he, just because he has such faith in the physician, does he not take care what he does, is he not careful about the medicines, is he not careful about the food he takes, is he not careful about the exercise prescribed to him, is he not more careful than ever he was just because he has such a very strong faith in this physician? If he were to say: "Now, I couldn't cure myself. I have tried many, and they couldn't cure me; and here is a physician at last who inspires me with confidence. He can, and will, cure me. I will give myself up to him; I will leave myself altogether with this physician, and do nothing at all,"—he could never get well—never, of course. But he never would do that. The more he trusted the physician the more attentive he would be to his prescriptions, the more careful he would be in his application, the more he would do, just because he had such a strong trust.

Or, a soldier is in a battle-field, and on the eve of battle, and his commander passes him by, and tells him to be of good courage and to trust in him, and he will go with and before him; he will carry him safely through, and give him the victory. And his words fire the soldier. He is full of confidence, cool and courageous in the front of the battle, because of his faith in the commander. But does that faith preclude his doing anything more? Should he not do all the more because he trusts the commander? Does he not fight the more strenuously? Does he not go now as if everything depended on him, just because of the faith he has in his commander? —*David Thomas, B.A.*

(1986.) "I am the way," says Christ. The way to walk in, not to look at, He means. If the night is overcast, if we are anxious to accomplish a journey, and a friend should hail us in the darkness, saying, "I am the way, or, "I will show you the way," we understand his meaning. We do not fold our hands and sleep. We rush into the night darkness, follow the sound of his footfall, and try to be so near as to catch the pantings of his breath. We follow, as we believe. Simple intellectual believing will never speed us on our journey, or bring us to a place of safety. So it is with Christ as the Way of Life. —*Townsend.*

2. Humility.

(1987.) Faith teacheth the creature to blot out his own name, and write the name of God in its room upon all he hath and doth. When the servants came to give up their accounts to the Lord, every one for his pound, those that were faithful to improve it, how humbly and self-denyingly do they speak! "Lord, Thy pound hath gained ten pounds," saith the first; "Thy pound hath gained five," saith another. Mark, not I have gained, but Thy pound hath gained ten, and five. They do not applaud themselves, but ascribe both principal and increase to God; Thy talent hath gained, that is, Thy gifts and grace, through Thy assistance and blessing, have gained thus much more. Only he that did least comes in with a brag and tells his Lord what he had done, "Behold, here is Thy pound which I have kept laid up in a napkin." Least doers are greatest boasters.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(1988.) Walking in Christ excludes a walking in self; for the more that a man walks in Christ, the more does he walk out of self; as Christ comes in, self goes out; when Christ is received, self is expelled. The self-righteous sinner is like an empty bottle filled with nothing but air; but pour wine into the bottle, and as the wine goes in, the air goes out; so, the soul is filled with nothing but airy speculations, and a light, vain esteem of himself; but let Christ in, let the wine of the Spirit be poured into the soul; as that wine goes in, the air will go out. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(1989.) You may measure your faith and interest in Christ, not by the degree of your persuasion concerning Him as a Saviour, but rather by the degree of this virtue and power in you as a Lord; it is better to measure it by the depth of His work in you than by the height of your confidence in Him, which may be too proud and bold. If you should meet a man travelling upon the way, and should ask him how many hours high the sun is, you need not marvel, if instead of looking up to the sun to see how high it is, he should look down to your shadow to see how short it is; for he can tell that way better than looking upon the sun itself; even so, if a man would judge how much of Christ is in him, the best way to try is rather to look downward than upward; look into your heart, and see what dash your pride hath got, and what abatement your corruption is brought under; for the

shorter these dark shadows are in you, the higher is the Sun of Righteousness. Now, the grand corruption of the heart of man, the great root-sin, which sets itself against Christ as a Lord, I will tell you what it is, it is that lord of all mis-rule, SELF; that is the lord that lords it over you; and all other sins are but the brats of Self; they are but under-servants to this great lord of self-love, self-pride, and self-righteousness. Now, a true believer is righteous by the righteousness of another; he lives by the life of another; he is acted on by the spirit of another; and, therefore, he, of any man in the world should have least of self in him; because Christ, as Lord, doth absolutely set Himself against this great corruption. And therefore, if you would know one excellent way of judging of Jesus Christ the Lord, His being in you, it is by the breaking and casting down of self; for the more full that a man is of self, the more empty is he of Christ; and the more full he is of Christ, the more empty he is of self; for the lord-self, and the Lord-Christ, cannot stand together: the lordship of Christ and the lordship of self are inconsistent: when you receive the Lord-Christ, then the lord-self is unthroned and thrown down.

—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

VI. *WEAK FAITH.*

1. May be true faith.

(1990.) The little finger lives the same life as the hand or the foot does. So a weak Christian who has little grace, he lives by the same faith in Christ that is in glory, as well as they that are stronger.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(1991.) Diversity of degrees in quantity of a thing does not annihilate the existence and true being thereof. A small drop of water is as well and truly water as the whole ocean; a little spark is as true fire, both in respect of substance and quality, as well as a mighty flame; a little man is as truly a man as a great giant. And so a little faith is as well a true faith as a full persuasion.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(1992.) Though it be evident that divers of the saints mentioned in the Scriptures had a far greater measure of faith, and brought forth much more plentiful fruits than we can perceive in ourselves, yet this is no good reason to prove that our weaker and smaller faith is no faith, or ineffectual for our salvation. For this is an absurd consequence—The moon gives much less light than the sun, therefore it gives no light at all; one hand is far greater than another, therefore the lesser is not a true hand; this man excels another in the use of reason, and therefore the other is unreasonable. The divers degrees in the quantity of things do not take away the truth of their being and existence, so long as they are of the same nature and quality.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(1993.) Smoke is of the same nature with flame, for what is flame but smoke set on fire? The least spark of fire, if cherished, will endeavour to rise above the air, as well as the greatest: so, a little grace may be true grace, as the filings of gold are as good as gold, though nothing so much of it, as the whole wedge. A reed shaken with the wind is taken for a thing very contemptible at the best; how much more when it is bruised? The wick of a candle is little worth, and yet less when it comes to smoke, as yielding neither light nor heat, but only stink and annoyance, such as men bear not with, but tread out. So doth not God, who hath a singular sagacity, and can soon resent the least of provocations; yet the bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench; nay, the very pantings, inquietations, and unsatisfiableness in the matter of grace spring from the truth of grace, and are such as God makes high esteem of.

—*Trapp*, 1601–1669.

(1994.) If a prince say to a beggar, Go out of thy own country with me in this ship, and trust me to convey thee to Mexico or China, and I will make thee a lord or prince; if he venture and go with him, though he trembles with fear at every wave or pirate in the voyage, he truly trusteth him, and shall speed accordingly. If a physician say, "Trust me and take my medicine, and I will undertake to cure you," if the patient take his medicine, he shall be cured, though he tremble with fear, and doubt of the success: he trusteth him practically, if he cast his hopes upon him, though with fear. Though faith and obedience be formally two things, faith, which will cause us to consent, venture, and follow or obey Christ: preferring heaven, whatever we lose by it, is saving faith, whatever doubts, fears, or disquietment remain. If this were better understood, timorous and melancholy Christians (who know there is none but Christ to trust to, and therefore resolve to be ruled by Him) would not so ordinarily think they have no true faith, because it doth not cast out all their doubts and fears, and quiet and comfort them; which indeed a strong faith would do, which is not hindered by error or diseases.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1995.) A weak faith may have a swooning fit, as to fail extraordinarily in an hour of temptation, so far as to deny Christ or shrink from Him in this fear: so did Peter; and not only he, but "all the disciples forsook Him, and fled." But yet he that, according to the habituated state of his soul, hath so much faith and love as will cause him to venture life and all upon the trust which he hath to the promises of the gospel, hath a true and saving faith. And here I desire all doubting Christians to lay by the common mistake in the trying of their faith or trust in Christ, and to go hereafter upon surer grounds. Many say, "I cannot believe or trust Christ for salvation, for I am full of doubts, and fears, and troubles; and surely this is not trusting God. The question is not, whether you trust Him perfectly, so as to have no fears, no troubles, no doubts; but whether you trust Him sincerely, so far as to venture all upon Him in His way. If you can venture all on Him, and let go all to follow Him, your faith is true and saving.

This would abundantly comfort many fearful, troubled Christians, if they did but understand it well; for many of them that thus fear would as soon as any forsake all for Christ, and let go all carnal pleasures and worldly things, or any wilful sin whatsoever rather than forsake Him; and would not take to any other portion and felicity than God, nor any other way than Christ and the Spirit of Holiness, for all the temptations in the world: and yet they fear because they fear; and doubt more because they doubt. Doubting soul, let this resolve thee; suppose Christ and His way

were like a pilot with his ship at sea; many more promise to convey thee safely, and many persuade thee not to venture, but stay at land: but if thou hast so much trust as that thou wilt go, and put thyself, and all thou hast into this ship, and forsake all other, though thou go trembling all the way, and be afraid of every storm and tempest and gulf; yet thou hast true faith though it be weak. If thy faith will but keep thee in the ship with Christ, that thou neither turn back again to the flesh and the world; nor yet take another ship and pilot (as Mahometans, and those without the Church), undoubtedly Christ will bring thee safe to land, though thy fear and mistrust be still thy sin.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(1996.) Although the pearl of faith be small, it shines gloriously in God's eye. A goldsmith values filings of gold. That little spark in that smoking flax is a ray and beam of God's own glory. The greatest grace was once but as a grain of mustard seed. The oak was once an acorn. Abraham's faith was once in its infancy. —*Watson*, 1696.

2. Is sufficient to save.

(1997.) As a little child doth as truly hold a precious ring with his finger as a giant with all the force of his hand, being one and the selfsame ring: so our faith, whether it be weak or strong, taketh hold upon the merits of Christ.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(1998.) Suppose that a prince be disposed to bestow on sundry malefactors a pardon, or some precious jewels (as signals of his civil respects) unto mere beggars, is not the one as fully acquitted from his offences, and the other made as actually rich by the possession of such jewels, though but received with a palsy-shaking hand, as they that receive them with one that is more strong and lusty? Even so the case is here: Hast thou such a hand as doth reach out unto Christ, and the pardon of sins offered in and by Him, and dost clasp it about Him with all thy feeble strength—make no doubt but that thou art justified in the sight of God, and dost stand clearly acquitted from all thy sins. For it is the possession of the jewel, not the strong holding of it, that made those beggars rich; and the king's pardon relieveth none but such as are willing to accept of it, and plead to it; and so it is not our strong or weak faith that is our righteousness and full discharge before God, but Jesus Christ and His obedience—that is it that doth all. This only is required on our part, that we accept of Christ offered in the gospel, and rely on Him for full righteousness and redemption; all which a weak and feeble faith doth as truly and entirely (if not more) as the strongest—nay, which is yet more for the comfort of such as are weak in faith, and cannot yet in an express and explicit manner believe on Christ, they have Christ, and enjoy Him unto righteousness, and the pardon of all their sins and transgressions committed. —*Bayne*, 1617.

(1999.) We must understand that faith does not justify and save us by itself, as it is a virtue or faculty of the mind and heart, or in respect of its own excellency, quantity, and worthiness (for what were this but to embrace again the doctrine of the Papists which we have rejected, and to seek for justification in ourselves, and for our own merits and worthiness?), but as an instrument, whereby we lay hold of and apply to ourselves Christ with His righteousness and merits, by which only we appear just before God. A small and weak hand, if it be able to reach up the meat to the mouth, as well performs its duty for the nourishment of the body as one of greater strength, because it is not the strength of the hand but the goodness of the meat which nourishes the body; so a weak faith laying hold of Christ, and, applying Him and His benefits to the believer, is sufficient to nourish him in everlasting life, as well as a stronger, because it is not the worthiness or excellency of the instrument, but of Christ which it apprehends that is effectual for our justification and eternal salvation.

A small and weak hand is able to receive an alms as well as a stronger and greater; and a little eye sees the whole body of the sun, or some great mountain, as well as a bigger; so our faith, though weak and small, apprehends Christ as truly and effectually for the salvation of the believer, as the greatest.

Our Saviour Christ compares Himself to the brazen serpent, and the believing Christian stung with the sting of sin to the Israelites who beheld it, to the end that they might be cured. (John iii. 14.) Now we know that all of them were not alike sharp-sighted; but some were pur-blind, some blear-eyed, some saw it exceeding dimly. But as many as looked on it were cured and healed, though they were never so weak-sighted. So whosoever being stung with sin do look upon Christ with the eye of faith, resting upon Him alone for their salvation, though they be never so weak-sighted, yet they shall be restored to health and be eternally saved, because it is not in their sight but in the object thereof, Christ Jesus, to justify them before God, and to purchase for them eternal salvation.
—*Downame*, 1644.

(2000.) God accepts the will and earnest desire to believe for faith itself; nor are we justified for the perfection of our faith, but for the perfection of that obedience which our faith apprehends. Among the Israelites stung with serpents, some (likely) had dim eyes, some were far off, yet by looking on the brazen serpent they were healed as well as the clear-sighted, to show that they were not cured for the virtue of their sight, but for the ordinance of God. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2001.) The act of faith is to apply Christ to the soul; and this the weakest faith can do so well as the strongest, if it be true. A child can hold a staff as well, though not so strongly, as a man. The prisoner through a hole sees the sun, though not as perfectly as they in the open air. They that saw the brazen serpent, though a great way off, yet were healed. The poor man's "I believe" saved him; though he was fain to add, "Lord, help my unbelief." So that we may say of faith, as the poet of death; that it makes lords and slaves, apostles and common persons, all alike acceptable to God, if they have it. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2002.) A friend complained to *Gotthold* of the weakness of his faith, and the distress this gave him. *Gotthold* pointed to a vine which had twined itself around a pole, and was hanging loaded with beautiful clusters, and said: Frail is that plant; but what harm is done to it by its frailty, especially as the Creator has been pleased to make it what it is? As little will it prejudice your faith, that it

is weak, provided only it be sincere and unfeigned. Faith is the work of God, and He bestows it in such measure as He wills and judges right. Let the measure of it which He has given you, be deemed sufficient by you. Take for pole and prop the cross of the Saviour and the Word of God; twine around these with all the power which God vouchsafes. A heart sensible of its weakness, and prostrating itself continually at the feet of the Divine mercy, is more acceptable than that which presumes upon the strength of its faith, and falls into security and pride. Can you suppose that the sinful woman who lay and wept at the Lord's feet, was less approved than the swelling and haughty Pharisee? (Luke vii. 38.) —*Scaver*, 1629–1693.

(2003.) What can be more feeble than the ivy, the jessamine, or the vine? Yet these, by the assistance of their tendrils or claspers, rise and are supported, until they sometimes mount as high as the tree that sustains them. So the weak believer, laying hold on Jesus by the tendril of faith, rises into the fulness of God, defies the storm, and becomes a fruitful vine upon the wall of an house.
—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

3. Though weak, is of all things most precious.

(2004.) As a dim, dazzling (wavering) eye that looked on the brazen serpent in the wilderness, was of more avail to a poor Israelite then stung with a fiery serpent, than any use that could possibly be made of all his other members—little could the swiftness of his feet, strength of body, nimbleness of hands, volubility of tongue, quickness of the ear, or anything else have prevailed, had there not been an eye to have looked on it: so, without faith, we lie dead in sins and trespasses, and cannot but perish of the mortal stings which Satan hath blistered us withal; so that, had we perfect repentance, sound knowledge, and sincere love, not one of them, nor all of them together, could possibly cure us, if there were not faith to apprehend Christ for our satisfaction and propitiation for all our sins. It is only faith in Christ—a true faith, though a weak, dim-sighted faith—that, looking up to the typified serpent, Christ Jesus, can cure our wounded, sin-sick souls, and make us here to live unto God, and hereafter in all happiness with Him.
—*Bayne*, 1617.

4. There may be faith where there is no assurance.

(2005.) Faith is not assurance. If it were, Saint *John* might have spared his pains, who *wrote to them that believe on the name of the Son of God, that they might know that they had eternal life.* They might then have said, "We do this already." What else is our faith, but a believing that we are such as through Christ are pardoned, and shall through Him be saved?" But this cannot be so. If faith were assurance; then a man's sins would be pardoned before he believes, for he must necessarily be pardoned before he can know he is pardoned. The candle must be lighted before I can see it is lighted. The child must be born before I can be assured it is born. The object must be before the act. Assurance is rather the fruit of faith, than faith itself. It is in faith as the flower is in the root; faith in time, after much communion with God, acquaintance with the Word, and experience of His dealings with the soul, may flourish into assurance. But as the root truly lives before the flower appears, and continues when that hath shed its beautiful leaves, and is gone again: so doth true justifying faith live before assurance comes and after it disappears. Assurance is, as it were, the cream of faith. Now you know there is milk before there is cream, (this riseth not but after sometime standing), and there remains milk after it is fleted off.

How many, alas, of the precious saints of God must we shut out from being believers, if there is no faith but what amounts to assurance. We must needs offend against the generation of God's children, among whom some are babes not yet come to the use of their reflect act of faith, so as to own the grace of God in them to be true, upon the review that they take of their own actings; and must not the child be allowed to be a child till he can speak for himself, and say he is so? Others there are in Christ's family, who are of higher stature and greater experience in the ways of God, yet have lost those apprehensions of pardoning mercy, which once they were (through the goodness of God) able to have shown; shall we say their faith went away in the departure of their assurance? How oft then in a year may a believer be no believer? even as often as God withdraws and leaves the creature in the dark. Assurance is like the sun-flower, which opens with the day and shuts with the night. It follows the motion of God's face; it that looks smilingly on the soul, it lives; if that frowns or hides itself, it dies. But faith is a plant that can grow in the shade, a grace that can find the way to heaven in a dark night. It can "*walk in darkness, and yet trust in the name of the Lord.*"

In a word, by making the essence of faith to lie in assurance, we should not only offend against the generation of God's children, but against the God and Father of these children; for at one clap we turn the greater number of those children He hath here on earth out of doors, yea, we are cruel to those that He is most tender of, and make sad the hearts of those that He would have chiefly comforted. Indeed, if this were true, a great part of gospel-provision laid up in the promises is of little use; we read of promises to those that mourn, "*they shall be comforted;*" to the contrite, "*they shall be revived;*" to him that walks in darkness (Isa. l.) and the like:—these belong to believers, and none else; surely then there are some believers that are in the dark, under the hatches of sorrow, wounded and broken with their sins and temptation for them; they are not such as are assured of the love of God; but their mourning is turned into joy, their night into light, their sighs and sobs into praise. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

5. How its strength is to be measured.

(2006.) Faith works by love, and therefore its strength or weakness may be discovered by the strength or weakness of that love it puts forth in the Christian's actings. The strength of a man's arm that draws a bow is seen by the force the arrow which he shoots flies with. And, certainly, the strength of our faith may be known by the force that our love mounts to God with. It is impossible that weak faith (which is unable to draw the promise as a strong faith can) should leave such a forcible impression on the heart to love God, as the stronger faith doth. If therefore thy heart be strongly carried out from love to God, to

abandon sin, perform duty, and exert acts of obedience to His command, know thy place, and take it with humble thankfulness; thou art a graduate in the art of believing. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

VII. *MUST BE STRENGTHENED.*

1. That we may not be overcome by temptation.

(2007.) The Christian's strength lies in his faith, as Samson's in his hair; if the uncircumcised one can deprive us of this, he may make sport enough with us. Hence it is that Satan's chiefest guns are shot against the royal fort of faith, knowing that that commands all; and if he can make a breach here, he fears not but to enter with success. The first mine which he ever sprang, to blow up the first Adam and his wife, and in them the whole race of mankind, was by weakening their faith: "*Hath* God said, In the day ye eat thereof, ye shall die?" When he came to the second Adam, he endeavoured to slay Him with the same sword; "*If* Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones, &c." —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2008.) If thou wouldst preserve thy faith, labour to increase thy faith. None are in more danger of losing what they have, than those poor-spirited men who are content with what they have. A spark is sooner smothered than a flame; a drop easier drank up and dried than a river. The stronger thy faith is, the safer thy faith is from the enemy's assaults. The intelligence which an enemy hath of a castle being weakly provided for a siege, is enough to bring him against it, which else should not have been troubled with his company. The devil is a coward, and he loves to fight on the greatest advantage, and greater he cannot have than the weakness of the Christian's faith; didst thou but know, Christian, the many privileges of a strong faith above a weak, thou wouldst never rest till thou hadst it. Strong faith comes conqueror out of those temptations, where weak faith is foiled and taken prisoner. Those Philistines could not stand before Samson in his strength who durst dance about him scornfully in his weakness. When David's faith was up, how undauntedly did he look death in the face! (1 Sam. xxx. 6.) But when that was out of his heart, oh, how poor-spirited is he! ready to run his head into every hole, though never so dishonourably, to save himself! (1 Sam. xxi. 13.) —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2009.) There is as real a difference between the strong believer and the weak, or rather, I should say, between the believer who exercises strong faith, and the believer who has but a partial and weak faith, as there is among the armies that fight human battles, between the veriest coward that ever disgraced the standard under which he fought, and the bravest soldier who was the admiration of his friends and foes. For the one who exercises strong faith is ready to fight the strong fight of this world: on the contrary, the man who is not able to exercise faith in God's promises is scarcely able to hide himself from those foes which surround him: his thoughts are not in achieving victory—his state is not fit for fighting the good fight of faith—he is altogether occupied in resisting those temptations to which his unbelief is daily exposing him.
—*Baptist Noel.*

(2010.) The ship does not ride the storm otherwise than by the hold her anchor takes of the solid ground. By that which lies in the calm depths below, as little moved by the waves that swell, and roll, and foam above, as by the winds that lash them into fury, she resists the gale, and rides the billows of the stormiest sea. But her safety depends on something else also. When masts are struck and sails are furled, and, anchored off reef or rocky shore, she is labouring in the wild tumult for her life, it likewise lies in the strength of her cable and of the iron arms that grasp the solid ground. By these she hangs to it; and thus not only the firm earth, but their strength also is her security. Let the flukes of the anchor, or strands of the cable snap, and her fate is sealed. Nothing can avert it. Powerless to resist, and swept forward by the sea, she drives on to ruin; and hurled against an iron shore, her timbers are crushed to pieces like a shell. And what anchor and cable are to her, the faith by which man makes God's strength his own is to believers in their times of trial. —*Guthrie.*

2. That all our other graces may be caused to flourish.

(2011.) The apostle says, "By faith ye stand." He does not say, by patience, or by hope, or the like. They are drawn from faith. Strengthen that, and strengthen all other that are infused from it. As a tree, we cast not water on the branches, but on the root. So strengthen faith. We strengthen love, and hope, and all, if we strengthen faith and assurance of God's love in Christ.
—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2012.) The decay of a plant, though it appears first from the withering of the twigs and branches, yet it chiefly arises from a decay in the root. So the decay of grace may appear to the view, first in our company, carriage, speeches, &c.; but the primitive and original ground of the same is weakness of faith in the heart. Therefore it should be our wisdom, especially, to look to the feeding of the root.
—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2013.) Christians are placed in this world in an inclement atmosphere; and there is as real a difference between him who exercises strong faith and he who is a weak and partial believer, as there is between the hardy and daring mountaineer when he carols in the mountain air and the poor consumptive sufferer who shivers in the summer breeze The one is able to withstand no temptation, he is so languid; he feels that his soul is sick, he feels that he has nothing of the vigour and thriving of a well-ordered soul; whereas the other, who exercises strong faith, is growing more and more powerful, experiencing the promise of God: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." —*Baptist Noel.*

3. That our comforts may be increased and our peace perfected.

(2014.) As two ships sailing together, the one sound and well tackled, the other leaking and wanting sails, though both do arrive at the same port, yet not both alike disposed—the one comes in merrily and confidently, the other with much dif-

ficulty and doubting: so the strong in faith doth singingly travel towards heaven, goes on comfortably and with full assurance; when they of little faith do but, as it were, creep thither with many doubts, great fears, and small joy. And, therefore, as it is no wisdom for any man to continue poor that may be rich, or to live in fear when he may be free from it, so it is no point of wisdom, no piece of Christian prudence, for a man to content himself with a weak faith when by any means he may increase it.

—*Williams.*

(2015.) All the Christian's strength and comfort is fetched without doors, and he hath none to send on his errand but faith, which goes to heaven and knocks God up; therefore, when faith fails, and the soul hath none to go to market for supplies, there must needs be a poor house kept at home.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2016.) Strong faith frees the Christian from those heartrending thoughts which weak faith must needs be oppressed with. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." So much inward peace and quietness. If little faith, then little peace and serenity, through the storms that our unbelieving fears will necessarily gather. If strong faith, then strong peace, for so the ingemination in the Hebrew, peace, peace, imports. It is confessed that weak faith hath as much peace with God through Christ as the other hath by his strong faith, but not so much bosom-peace. Weak faith will as surely land the Christian in heaven as strong faith; for it is impossible the least drachm of true grace should perish, being all incorruptible seed; but the weak, doubting Christian is not like to have so pleasant a voyage thither, as another with strong faith. Though all in the ship come safe to shore, yet he that is all the way sea-sick hath not so comfortable a voyage as he that is strong and healthful. There are many delightful prospects occur in a journey, which he that is sick and weak loseth the pleasure of; but the strong man views all with abundance of delight; and though he wisheth with all his heart he were at home, yet the entertainment he hath from these do much to shorten and sweeten his way to him.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2017.) The saint's safety lies in the strength and faithfulness of God who is the promiser; but the present comfort and repose of an afflicted soul is fetched in by faith relying on God as such. Hence it is, though all believers are out of danger, when in the saddest condition that can befall them, yet too many of them, alas, are under fears and dejections of spirit, because their faith acts weakly on a mighty God, timorously and suspiciously on a faithful God: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" You see the leak at which the water came in to sink their spirits, they had "little faith." It is not what God is in Himself, but what our apprehensions at present are of God, that pacifies and comforts a soul in great straits. If a man fear the house will fall on his head in a storm, though it be as unmovable as a rock, yet that will not ease his mind till he thinks it so. Were a man under the protection of never so faithful a friend, yet so long as his head is full of fears and jealousies to the contrary, that he will at last leave and cast him off, this man must needs have an uncomfortable life, though without cause. You see, then, of what importance it is to keep up the vigour and vivacity of thy faith on the power and truth of the promises; and if thou meanest to do this, banish sense and reason from being thy counsellors. How came Abraham not to stagger in his faith, though the promise was so strange? The apostle resolves us, "He did not consider his own body" (Rom. iv. 19). And what made Zacharias reel? He made sense his counsellor, and thought he was too old for such news to be true. This is the bane of faith, and consequently of comfort in affliction. We are too prone to carry our faith with Thomas, at our finger ends; and to trust God no further than our hand of sense can reach. It is not far that sense can reach, and but little further that reason's purblind eye can see. God is oft on His way to perform a promise, and bring joyful news to His afflicted servants, when sense and reason conclude their case desperate. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. How it is to be strengthened.

(2018.) The faith to which the Scriptures attach such momentous consequences, and ascribe such glorious exploits, is a practical habit, which, like every other, is strengthened and increased by continual exercise. It is nourished by meditation, by prayer, and the devout perusal of the Scriptures; and the light which it diffuses becomes stronger and clearer by an uninterrupted converse with its object and a faithful compliance with its dictates; as on the contrary it is weakened and obscured by whatever wounds the conscience or impairs the purity and spirituality of the mind.

—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(2019.) Activity in Christian life and work serves to defend and preserve the Christian faith. It does so because it is perpetually proving it. Christianity is a science. It is the knowledge of God. "This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. But Christianity is an applied science. It is a science put into daily and practical use; and the application of the science of the knowledge of God is walking with God. Now, it is with this just as it is with all other sciences, whenever you apply them practically. Every time you apply them successfully, it proves the truth of the science. Astronomy is a science. It teaches us the measurement of distances and the nature and movements of the heavenly bodies. Navigation is astronomy applied to practice; and by the help of what astronomy tells the sailor, he is able to steer his vessel from one port to another, and ascertain exactly from his chart the position of his vessel. Is it not clear that every time, out at sea, the sailor unfolds his map, and is enabled to mark on the chart the very spot where his ship is in the world's great space—every time he does that he has a fresh proof that astronomy is true? Every time he is able to bring his ship safely into port he has a fresh proof that science is true. And so with every practical art of life, whatever it may be. Every time science is worked out into your daily life, and you have a practical proof of its truth, your belief in the science becomes stronger and stronger. Can the sailor prove to us the truth of astronomy? There is many a captain or mate of a vessel who carries his vessel into port, who is quite sure his nautical tables are all true, although he cannot astronomically prove them. But he has a

practical proof; and the oftener he avails himself of that, the oftener he tests the science, the surer he is that it is so. So with our faith. It is a Divine, an abstract, an abstruse, a very mysterious truth, if you attempt to resolve it into the proof of the One in Three, the Three in One,—the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement. These are very mysterious things. How shall we prove them? We prove them as we find this to be true, that the faith that makes us know Him makes us know ourselves, and brings us into a nearer, and living, and a deeper communion with Him. The light from heaven shines upon the path, and as we take it step by step we feel a deeper and surer conviction that the light is from heaven. Prayer is a mystery —the deepest of all mysteries. Who can prove to us how and why prayer is answered? But who *knows* that prayer is answered? The man who has gone upon his knees before God and told Him all his needs; besought Him in his sorrow; cried for light in his darkness, and has risen up with a new light and a new strength that he knows has come from God. "So walk in Christ," so carry, so work, as it were, the Atonement, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the mysteries of your faith, into your life that they shall become living and continued proofs of the truth of your faith; and then that faith will have its daily proof from your daily life.

—*Magee.*

VIII. *ITS RELATIONS TO OTHER FACULTIES, EMOTIONS, AND GRACES.*

1. Sight.

(2020.) Some believe the better for seeing Christ's sepulchre; and when they have seen the Red Sea, doubt not of the miracle. Now, contrarily, I bless myself, and am thankful, that I live not in the days of miracles, that I never saw Christ nor His disciples. I would not have been one of these Israelites that passed the Red Sea, nor one of Christ's patients on whom He wrought His wonders; then had my faith been thrust upon me; nor should I enjoy that greater blessing pronounced to all that believe and saw not. 'Tis an easy and necessary belief to credit what our eye and sense hath examined: I believe He was dead and buried, and rose again; and desire to see Him in His glory, rather than to contemplate Him in His cenotaph or sepulchre.

—*Sir T. Browne*, 1605–1682.

(2021.) These three are like three members of the body—the hand, foot, and eye. Faith, like the hand, lays unremoved hold on Christ. Hope, like the foot, walks towards Him in a holy expectation, patiently enduring all wrongs, in hope of sweet issue. Sight, which belongs to the eye, shall fully apprehend Him, when it is glorified.

—*Adams*, 1653.

2. Reason.

(2022.) God does not expect us to submit our faith to Him without reason, or to subdue us to Himself by tyranny. But He does not intend to give us a reason for everything. And to reconcile these contrarieties, He is pleased clearly to show us those divine characters of Himself which may convince us of what He is, and to establish his authority by miracles and evidences that we shall be unable to resist,—in order that we might, afterwards, believe without hesitation whatever He teaches us, when we find no other reason to reject it, but because we are unable to know of ourselves whether it is true or not. —*Pascal.*

(2023.) Religion passes out of the law of reason only where the eye of reason has reached its own horizon; and faith is then but its continuation, even as the day softens away into sweet twilight, and twilight, hushed and breathless, steals into darkness, It is night, sacred night; the upraised eye views only the stary heaven, which manifests itself alone; and the outward beholding is fixed on the sparks, twinkling in the awful depth (though suns of other worlds) only to preserve the soul steady and collected in its pure act of inward adoration to the great "I AM," and to "the Filial Word," that reaffirmeth it from eternity to eternity, whose choral echo is the universe. —*S. T. Coleridge.*

(2024.) It is not scriptural, but fanatical, to oppose faith to reason. Faith is properly opposed to sense, and is the listening to the dictates of the higher part of our mind, to which alone God speaks, rather than to the lower part of us, to which the world speaks. —*Arnold*, 1795–1842.

3. Fear.

(1.) *There may be fear where there is no faith.*

(2025.) Legal terrors are no parts of faith or conversion; they are neither essential nor integral parts. Those are essential parts which make up the essence of a thing, as soul and body are the essential parts of a man. Those are integral parts which make up the entireness of a thing, as the several members are integral parts of a man's body.

Those parts which give the essence to a thing begin with it, and continue with it while it is in being, but these terrors cease as soon as faith begins, and so they are no essential parts. A thing cannot be complete without its integrals; the body, when it wants some members, is lame, or maimed, or defective; but faith may be entire without these; it is not defective when these are vanished; so they are not integrals. They are so far from being parts, as they are no degrees of faith; though some step to it, yet not the least degree of it. As the dryness of wood is no degree of heat or fire which kindles the wood, though it tend something to make it kindle more easily; so these, though they may something dispose a man towards faith, yet they are not any degree of faith. The least degree of true faith is saving, but these humblings may be in those who shall never be saved.

—*Clarkson*, 1621–1686.

(2026.) There may be the fear of hell, where there is not a spark of true faith; as we see in devils and reprobates. Their fear of the punishment of sin may take place, while their willingness to sin lives; and so this fear no more changes the inclination of their wills, than the whip or chain doth the nature of the fox or wolf. It is holy fear that works a godly sorrow, and it is this godly sorrow that brings forth those seven fruits you read of (2 Cor. vii. 11). And thus godly sorrow, which is the happy mother of so many good children, is caused, like Peter's weeping, by the looks of Christ. The reproofs, the frowns, the offences of a gracious God thaw the heart into melting fears, and would do so though there was no hell: as a

meek child needs no other house of correction than his father's looks. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(2027.) Sea-going ships do not trust to themselves in the windings of a river. Where they are hemmed in between rock and quicksand, grazing now the one and now the other, they take care to have a steam tug, both to bear them forward and guide them aright. They hang implicitly upon its power. They make no attempt at independent action. But I have also observed, that as soon as they get clear of the narrows—as soon as they have attained a good offing and an open sea, they heave off, and hoist their own sails. They never want a steamer until they come to narrow water again.

Such is the trust in God which the unreconciled experience. In distress they are fain to lean on the Almighty. While they are in the narrows, death seeming near on every side, conscious that they have no power and no skill, they would hang on the help of a Deliverer. "My God, we know Thee" (Hos. viii. 2), is then their cry. Most devout they are, and most earnest. At every hour of their day and night they are exercised in spirit about pleasing God, and gaining this help in their need. The line of their dependence seems ever tight by their constant leaning. But when they begin to creep out of these shoals of life—when the path opens wide and clear and safe again, they heave off, and throw themselves on their own resources. They become a god unto themselves, whenever dangers are out of sight. Forthwith and henceforth they live without God in the world, until they are driven into straits again. Then they remember God and pray, as a distressed ship makes signals for help when she is entering a tortuous channel. This is not to have confidence in God. This is to provoke Him to anger. —*Arnot.*

(2.) *But faith is usually preceded by fear.*

(2028.) Faith presupposes sense of misery. When the Lord brings a sinner to believe, He makes him thoroughly apprehensive of his miserable condition by reason of sin and wrath; he not only assents to it, but is sensible of it.

A man that has read or heard much of the sad effects of war, he may assent, believe that it is a great misery to be infected with war. Ay, but when the enemy is at his door, when they are driving his cattle, and plundering his goods, and firing his houses, he not only assents to it, but he sees, he feels the miseries of it; he has more sensible, more affecting apprehensions of it than ever.

A sinner that continues in unbelief, hearing the threatenings denounced against unbelievers, may assent to this, that unbelievers are in a miserable condition; but when the Lord is working faith, he brings this home to himself: he sees justice ready to seize on him, he feels wrath kindling upon him. He now not only believes it, but has a quick sense of it. He often heard how terrible the wrath of God is, but looking on it at a distance, it did no more affect him than a painted fire; ay, but now he feels the heat of it, it begins to kindle in his soul, and scorch his conscience. He heard of dreadful curses denounced against such and such sins, but he looked upon them as at a distance, as discharged at random; ay, but now he sees them levelled at himself, his soul in the butt, the mark to which those arrows are directed, and the poison thereof drinks up his spirits. He reads and hears the terrible things denounced against sin, as though he were another man, and is affected with them as though they were not the same things. He wonders at his former stupidity. This thunder is not afar off, but it startles him, as though he were even in the thunder-cloud.

Till it be thus in some degree, he will not come to Christ. The physician is neglected while the patient thinks himself in health. The whole, *i.e.*, those that think themselves whole, see no need of the Great Physician. The malefactor will never sue for a pardon to purpose till he be (or apprehend himself in danger to be) condemned. No flying to this Stronghold, till there be some fear of pursuers. Lot would never have fled to the mountain, but that the country was all in a flame (Gen. xix. 28).
—*Clarkson*, 1621–1686.

(2029.) The helpless bird pursued by the kite, in danger to be devoured, runs under the wing of the dam. Thus it is with a sinner at the first working of faith, he apprehends himself pursued by wrath and judgment; he knows if they seize on him he must perish without remedy. Oh, the sad condition of such a soul! Oh! but he sees Christ spreading His wings ready to secure perishing sinners; he hears Him inviting in the gospel to come under His shadow. Oh, how sweet is that voice to him (however, while senseless he neglected)! He hears, obeys, and runs to Christ for shelter, and so he is safe: "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." —*Clarkson*, 1621–1686.

4. Repentance.

(2030.) The consideration of God's truth humbles us,—without it we would be fearless; the consideration of His mercy supports us,—without it we would be hopeless. Truth begets fear and repentance; mercy, fear and hope; and these two, faith and repentance, keep the soul even and upright, and steady, as the ballast and sail do the ship, that for all the rough waves and weather that encounter her in the troublesome sea of this world, she miscarries not, but arrives safe and joyful in the haven where she would be. Faith without repentance is not faith, but presumption, like a ship all sail and no ballast, that tips over with every blast; and repentance without faith is not repentance, but despair,—like a ship all ballast and no sail, which sinks with her own weight. What is it then we are to do to turn away God's wrath from us, and to escape the judgments He threatens against us? even this, as, in His comminations He joins mercy and truth together, so are we in our humiliation to join faith and repentance together. His threatenings are true, let us not presume of forbearance; but fear, since He has threatened, that unless we repent He will strike us. Yet His threatenings are but conditional, let us not despair of forbearance, but hope, although He has threatened, that yet if we repent He will spare us.
—*Sanderson*, 1587–1662.

(2031.) As a prisoner that lies in hold for debt, if a man should promise him that he would take order to pay his debts, and thereby discharge him of his imprisonment, he first believes that he is both able and willing so to do it, then he hopes for it, and lastly, he is, as it were, dissolved into love, ravished with the thoughts of such an unexpected relief, and therefore seeketh to do all things that

may please him—so it is with a repenting convert: he first believes that God will do what He hath promised, that is, pardon his sins and take away his iniquities: then he resteth, that what is so promised shall be performed; and from that, and for it, he leaves sin, forsaketh his old course of life, which was displeasing, and, for the time to come, maketh it his work to do that which is pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

—*Stock*, 1568–1626.

(2032.) It is impossible that we should believe the doctrine of salvation by grace in an impenitent state of mind, or without feeling that we have forfeited all claim to the Divine favour. We cannot see things but as they are to be seen; to suppose that we first believe in the doctrine of free grace, and then, as the effect of it, perceive the evil of sin, and our just exposedness to Divine wrath, is like supposing a man first to appreciate the value of a physician, and by this means to learn that he is sick. It is true the physician may visit the neighbourhood, or the apartments, of one who is in imminent danger of death, while he thinks himself mending every day; and this circumstance may be held up by his friends as a motive to him to consider of his condition, and to put himself under his care. It is thus that the coming of Christ, and the setting up of His spiritual kingdom in the world, were alleged as motives to repentance, both to Jews and Gentiles. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent ye therefore." "The times past of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." But as it would not follow in the one case that the sick man could appreciate the value of the physician till he felt his sickness, neither does it follow in the other that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ precedes such a sense of the evil of sin as involves the first workings of repentance toward God.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

(2033.) The chief ground on which repentance toward God has been denied to precede faith in Christ in the order of nature, is, that no man can repent of sin till he entertain the hope of forgiveness. Nay, it has been said, "No man can repent unless he knows himself to be of God; and as this cannot be known till he hath received Christ, faith must precede repentance." . . .

If the principle that supposes this argument be true, it will hold good in reference to men as well as to God. And is it true that a man who is under just condemnation for breaking the laws, and who has no hope of obtaining a pardon, ought not to be expected to repent for his crime, and, before he die, to pray God to bless his king and country? On this principle, all confessions of this kind are of necessity mere hypocrisy. Even those of the dying thief in the gospel, so far as they respect the justice of his doom from his countrymen, must have been insincere; for he had no hope of his sentence being remitted. What would an offended father say, if the offender should require, as the condition of his repentance, a previous declaration of forgiveness, or even of a willingness to forgive? A willingness to forgive might be declared, and it would heighten the criminality of the offender if after this he continued hardened; but for him to require it, and to avow that he could not repent of his sin upon any other condition, would be the height of insolence. Yet all this is pleaded for in respect of God. "If I be a father, where is Mine honour?" Besides, how is a sinner to "know that he is of God," otherwise than as being conscious of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? Till he is sorry at heart for having dishonoured God, he is not of God, and therefore cannot know that he is so.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

(2034.) A discussion arose between some members of a Bible class, in reference to the *first* Christian exercise of the converted soul. One contended that it was penitence or *sorrow;* another that it was *fear*, another *love*, another *hope*, another *faith*, for how could one fear or repent without belief? Elder G——, overhearing the discussion, relieved the minds of the disputants with this remark:—"Can you tell me which spoke of the wheel moves first? You may be looking at one spoke, and think that it moves first, but they all start together. Thus, when the Spirit of God operates upon the human heart, all the graces begin to affect the penitent soul, though the individual may be more conscious of one than another."

5. Holiness.

(2035.) Wouldst thou preserve thy faith, look to thy conscience. A good conscience is the bottom faith sails in; if the conscience be wrecked, how can it be thought that faith should be safe? If faith be the jewel, a good conscience is the cabinet, in which it is kept: And if the cabinet be broken, the jewel must needs be in danger of losing.

—*Gurnall*, 1611–1679.

6. Faith and Love.

(2036.) Faith without love is, as it were, a dream, an image of faith; just as the appearance of a face in a glass is not a real face.

—*Luther*, 1483–1546.

(2037.) Flatter not thyself in thy faith to God, if thou wantest charity for thy neighbour; and think not thou hast charity for thy neighbour, if thou wantest faith to God: where they are not both together, they are both wanting; they are both dead if once divided. —*Quarles*, 1592–1644.

(2038.) Faith is the source; charity, that is, the whole Christian life, is the stream from it. It is quite childish to talk of faith being imperfect without charity; as wisely might you say that a fire, however bright and strong, was imperfect without heat; or that the sun, however cloudless, is imperfect without beams. The true answer would be, it is not faith, but utter reprobate faithlessness.

—*Coleridge*, 1772–1834.

(2039.) Faith is that nail which fastens the soul to Christ; and love is that grace that drives the nail to the head. Faith takes hold of Him and love helps to keep the grip. Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and He burns in the heart by love, like a fire melting the breast. Faith casts the knot, and love draws it fast. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

7. Faith, Hope, and Love.

(2040.) Faith believes the revelations of God; hope expects His promises; charity loves His excellences and mercies.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(2041.) Faith is the chief gospel grace, the head of the graces; as gold among the metals, so is faith among the graces. Alexandrinus calls the other graces the daughters of faith. Indeed, in heaven, love will be the chief grace; but, while we are here militant, love must give place to faith: love takes possession of glory, but faith gives a title to it. Love is the crowning grace in heaven, but faith is the conquering grace upon earth, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."
—*Watson*, 1696.

IX. *IN WHAT SENSE IT IS TO CEASE.*

(2042.) There is contained in this rest (Heb. iv. 9), a cessation from motion or action; not of all the actions, but of that which hath the nature of a means, and implies the absence of the end. When we have obtained the haven, we have done sailing. When the workman hath his wages, it implied he hath done his work. When we are at our journey's end, we have done with the way. All motion ends at the centre, and all means cease when we have the end. Therefore, prophesying ceaseth, tongues fail, and knowledge shall be done away; that is, so far as it had the nature of a means, and was imperfect. And so faith may be said to cease: not all faith, for how shall we know all things past, which we saw not but by believing? How shall we know the last judgment, the resurrection of the body beforehand, but by believing? How shall we know the life everlasting, the eternity of the joys we possess, but by believing? But all that faith, which, as a means referred to the chief end, shall cease. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

FEAR.

I. *ITS USES.*

1. The fear of God delivers us from the fear of man.

(2043). Noah is commanded by God to make such a vessel as should save him and his from a flood which should drown all the world beside; he sets upon the work; the people laugh at him, and think the poor old man doted, and had dreamed, not, as we say, of a dry summer, but a wet winter, and that he was no wiser than the prior of St. Bartholomew's, who, upon the vain prediction of an addle-headed astrologer, went and built him a house at Harrow-on-the-Hill to secure himself from a supposed flood that that astrologer had foretold. Many a broad jest, many a bitter scoff was, no doubt, broken upon Noah; yet, for all that, he went not only about, but through the work that God had enjoined: so did Abraham, Lot, David. And thus, he that truly feareth God careth not for the affronts of men. He is a fool, we say, that will be laughed out of his coat; but he is a fool indeed that will be laughed out of his skin—nay, out of his soul, out of his eternal salvation—because he is loth to be laughed at by lewd and wicked men. No, no! the true fear of God will make a man set light by such paper-shot; it will carry him through the pikes, not of evil tongues only, but of the most eager opposition that either Satan himself or any limb of his shall at any time be able to raise against him. —*Pinner.*

(2044.) Religious fear, when produced by just apprehensions of a Divine power, naturally overlooks all human greatness that stands in competition with it, and extinguishes every other terror.
—*Addison*, 1672-1719.

2. It restrains us from sin.

(2045.) Fear is the great bridle of intemperance, the modesty of the spirit, and the restraint of gaieties and dissolution; it is the girdle to the soul, and the handmaid to repentance; the arrest to sin, and the cure or antidote to the spirit of reprobation; it preserves our apprehensions of the Divine Majesty, and hinders our single actions from combining to sinful habits; it is the mother of consideration, and the nurse of sober counsels; and it puts the soul to fermentation and activity, making it pass from trembling to caution, from caution to carefulness, and carefulness to watchfulness, from thence to prudence, and by the gates and progresses of repentance, it leads the soul on to love, and to felicity, and to joys in God, that shall never cease again. Fear is the guard of a man in the days of prosperity, and it stands on the watch-towers and spies the approaching danger, and gives warning to them that laugh loud and feast in the chambers of rejoicing, where a man cannot consider by reason of the noises of wine and jest and music: and if prudence takes it by the hand, and leads it on to duty, it is a state of grace, and a universal interest to infant religion, and the only security of less perfect persons; and, in all senses, is that homage we owe to God, who sends often to demand it, even then, when He speaks in thunder, or smites by a plague, or awakens us by threatenings, or discomposes our easiness by sad thoughts, and tender eyes, and fearful hearts, and trembling considerations.
—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612-1667.

3. It leads to self-examination.

(2046.) Holy fear is a searching the camp that there be no enemy within our bosom to betray us, and seeing that all be fast and sure. For I see many leaky vessels fair before the wind, and professors who take their conversion upon trust, and they go on securely, and see not the under water till a storm sink them. —*Salter*, 1840.

4. It keeps us humble.

(2047.) As our fear excludeth not that boldness which becometh saints, so if our familiarity with God do not savour of fear, it draweth too near that irreverent confidence wherewith true humility can never stand. —*Hooker*, 1533-1600.

(2048.) The suspicions and fears which arise in an awakened mind proceed, in a good measure, from remaining unbelief; but not wholly so, for there is a jealousy and diffidence of ourselves, a wariness, owing to a sense of the deceitfulness of our hearts, which is a grace and a gift of the Lord. Some people who have much zeal, but are destitute of this jealous fear, may be compared to a ship that spreads a great deal of sail, but is not properly ballasted, and is therefore in danger of being overset whenever a storm comes. —*Newton*, 1725-1807.

(2049.) In the hands of a skilful husbandman even weeds are turned to good account. When rooted up and burnt, they are good manure, and conduce to fertilise the land they annoyed before. So the doubts and fears and the infirmities of the elect are overruled by Almighty grace to their pe-

sent and eternal good; as conducing to keep us humble at God's footstool; to endear the merits of Jesus, and to make us feel our weakness and dependence, and to render us watchful unto prayer.
—*Salter*, 1840.

II. *ITS ABUSES.*

1. Morbid fear enfeebles the soul.

(2050.) What a thrifty, robust plant is the potato when out in the field it grows beneath the sun. Its leaf so coarse and green, its stem so stout and succulent, it is a pleasure to look upon a thing which seems so to take hold of all the elements of life. But when it has sprouted in the cellar, which has but one north window, half closed, it is a poor, cadaverous, etiolated, melancholy vine, growing up to that little flicker of light; sickly, blanched, and brittle.

Like the cellar-growing vine is the Christian who lives in the darkness and bondage of fear. But let him go forth, with the liberty of God, into the light of love, and he will be like the plant in the field, healthy, robust, and joyful. —*Beecher.*

(2051.) Fear is far more painful to cowardice than death to true courage.
—*Sir P. Sidney*, 1554–1586.

(2052.) The thing in the world I am most afraid of is fear, and with good reason; that passion alone in the trouble of it exceeding all other accidents.
—*Montaigne*, 1533–1592.

2. It paralyses effort.

(2053.) A low and normal action of fear leads to forecast; its morbid action is a positive hindrance to effort. Water is necessary for the floating of timber; but if a log be saturated with water, it sinks in the very element which should buoy it up. Many men are water-logged with anxiety, and instead of quickening them, it only paralyses exertion.
—*Beecher.*

(2054.) Is there no argument of fear and doubt in the New Testament? Yes. "Let us," says the apostle, "labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the example of unbelief." There is argument of fear, but is it to be a paralysing, chronic fear? Is it to be anything more than a motive for us to make our calling and election sure? There is a kind of fear which spreads over the soul like a mist and fog. It neither rains nor is dispelled. Day and night it wraps the soul in its chilling and visionless embrace. That is a very disastrous form of fear. It is low, annoying, deadening. There is another kind which is like a sharp rain-storm in summer. A great deal of thunder and lightning comes with it, but it soon passes away, and everything is better for it. This kind of fear, instead of being deadening and paralysing, is quickening and vitalising, and it brings a man to see how important it is that he should examine his ground and know that he stands. It is a kind of fear which, so far from being injurious, is to the last degree salutary.

While, then, there is in the gospel a recognition of the function of fear, it is also taught that *with* it, and in part *by* it, we are to come to a state in which we have an abiding confidence that our souls shall be saved through the Lord Jesus Christ.
—*Beecher.*

3. Leads to superstition.

(2055.) This excellent grace is soon abused in the best and most tender spirits; in those who are sottened by nature and by religion, by infelicities or cares, by sudden accidents or a sad soul; and the devil observing that fear, like spare diet, starves the fever of lust, and quenches the flames of hell, endeavours to heighten this abstinence so much as to starve the man, and break the spirit into timorousness and scruple, sadness and unreasonable tremblings, credulity and trifling observations, suspicion and false accusations of God: and then vice being turned out at the gate returns in at the postern, and does the work of hell and death by running too inconsiderately in the paths which seem to lead to heaven. But so have I seen a harmless dove made dark with an artificial night, and her eyes sealed and locked up with a little quill, soaring upward and flying with amazement and fear, and an undiscerning wing; she made toward heaven, but knew not that she was made a train and an instrument to teach her enemy to prevail on her and all her defenceless kindred: so is a superstitious man; jealous and blind, forward and mistaken, he runs towards heaven, as he thinks, but he chooses foolish paths; and out of fear takes anything that he is told; or fancies and guesses concerning God by measures taken from his own diseases and imperfections. But fear, when it is inordinate, is never a good counsellor, nor makes a good friend; and he that fears God as his enemy, is the most completely miserable person in the world.
—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(2056.) In morals, what begins in fear usually ends in wickedness; in religion, what begins in fear usually ends in fanaticism. Fear, either as a principle or a motive, is the beginning of all evil.
—*Mrs. Jameson.*

4. Ensures failure.

(2057.) Hundreds of men fail by the nervous scrupulosity by which they mean to prevent failure. For we do best the things which we do without special thinking. Were a man to attempt to walk upon a beam six inches wide, lifted eighty feet above the ground, he would begin to think, "What would become of me, and of my family, if I should fall?" He would endeavour to put forth skill in walking; and the moment he did that his steps would be loose, tremulous, and uncertain. But lay that beam upon the ground, and he would walk it from end to end as if it had the width of the whole floor in its six-inch face. In the one case he would fall because he took so much care, and in the other case he would succeed because he took so little care. —*Beecher.*

(2058.) You have probably noticed that when men walk across a stream on stilts, if they look at their feet to see where they step, their head begins to swim, and very soon they have to swim or drown; whereas, if they fix their eyes upon a single object on the opposite bank, and never look at their feet at all, they reach the other side in safety. Now if a man stands looking at this world, he gets dizzy and intoxicated, and falls; whereas, if he fixes his eye upon the bank of the eternal world, he walks straighter in this world, and is more sure of reaching the other side in safety. —*Beecher.*

III. *IS MERELY REPRESSIVE IN ITS INFLUENCE.*

(2059.) The fear of visible vengeance, that some-

times strikes the wicked, or the apprehension of judgment to come, may control the licentious appetites from breaking forth into actual commission of sins. But as when the lions spared Daniel, it was not from the change of their wild devouring nature, for they destroyed his accusers immediately, but from the suspending their hurtful power; so when a strong fear lays a restraint upon the active powers, yet inward lust is the same, and would licentiously commit sin, were the restraint taken away. —*Salter*, 1840.

(2060.) Just like a frost, fear will hinder the breaking forth of carnal lusts into notorious acts, as the cold of winter binds the earth that noxious weeds cannot spring up; but love, like the summer heat, is productive of all good fruits.
—*Salter*, 1840.

IV. *DISTINCTION BETWEEN LEGAL AND EVANGELICAL FEAR.*

(2061.) But you will say, "May not a man that is of a gospel spirit, and that is come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, be full of fears about his condition?"

I answer, He may; but his fears arise from the weakness of his adherence and faith. The other's fears rather arise from the weakness of the ground he stands upon. As for example: two men are afraid of drowning, one stands upon a rock, and he is afraid of being drowned; the other stands upon a quicksand, and he is afraid of being drowned; both are afraid. He that stands on a rock is afraid of drowning, why? because he is afraid he shall be washed off; his fear arises from the weakness of his adherence. But the other's fear arises from the unsoundness of the ground he stands upon, for it is upon a quicksand. So here are two fears: a gracious gospel-heart fear, and a legalist fear. One fears from the weakness of his adherence: I am upon the Rock, but I am afraid I shall be washed off. But the other's fear arises from the weakness of the ground he stands upon; he stands upon the quicksand, upon his own duties, and his own works. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

V. *SLAVISH AND FILIAL FEAR.*

(2062.) There is a virtuous fear, which is the effect of faith; and there is a vicious fear, which is the product of doubt. The former leads to hope, as relying on God in whom we believe; the latter inclines to despair, as not relying on God in whom we do not believe. Persons of the one character fear to lose God; persons of the other character fear to find Him. —*Pascal*, 1622–1662.

(2063.) There are two kinds of fear; one full of suspicious watchfulness, of anxious apprehension, of trepidation, terror and dismay; the other such as can dwell in the same heart with confidence and love, and is but another form of reverence. Filial fear of God is a duty; slavish and servile dread of Him is a sin. Filial fear shrinks from sin, servile fear only from the smart of punishment. Filial fear keeps men from departing from the living God, servile fear drives them from Him, even as it impelled our first parents to hide themselves amongst the trees when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden. By filial fear men are made like the Man Christ Jesus, upon whom rested "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;" by servile fear they may be scared from iniquity, as the wolf from the sheepfold by the shepherd's gun, but it does no more to make them holy than the fright does to destroy the wolf's ferocity. Filial fear animates us to avoid whatever would be offensive to our Heavenly Father, and, if the expression may be allowed, to consult His feelings and desires; but servile fear, as it springs from selfishness, causes us only to care for ourselves, and at best makes us not better, but only a little more prudent than the devil.
—*R. A. Bertram.*

FEELING.

1. Is necessarily variable.

(2064.) No one's spirit is always in an equal degree of health and even complexion; the wheels do not always move with an equal swiftness; reflection on a state of sin and the blackness of transgressions sometimes make us shrink and tremble; the wonderful greatness of God's mercy, like the light of the sun, sometimes dazzles and blinds our eye. Yet if we believe in Him with all these palsies, it will go well with us. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2065.) Christians are creatures of changeful frames; sometimes high, and at others low, according to circumstances. When the health is firm, and all things agreeable to the feelings, then the frames are in the ascendant: when troubles come, then, like the mercury in the thermometer, the spirits sink—sometimes below zero.

Let us not calculate on steady frames in this ever-changing world: but let us take the comfort, that our salvation is not effected by our frames, nor depends upon our creature stability, but on the atonement of Christ and the faithfulness of Him who is "without variableness, or shadow of turning." —*Bowden.*

(2066.) "Mother,"—said a little limpet sticking to the rock; "mother,—what has become of the sea? I am so dry here!"

"Nothing unusual has taken place, dear," said the old limpet affectionately.

"Oh, it was so nice to be in the deep water," said the little one. "Is the sea all gone?"

"It will come again by and by, love," replied the kind old limpet, who had had long experience of ebb and flow.

"But I am so thirsty and almost faint, the sea has been away so long."

"Only wait awhile in hope, little one; hold fast to the rock, and the tide will soon come back to us."

And it did come, soon came; rolling up the beach, and humming over the sands, making little pools, and forming tiny rivers in the hollows; and then, it rolled up against the rocks, and at last, it came to the limpet; bathed it with its reviving waters; and so amply supplied its wants that it went to sleep in peace, forgetting its troubles.

Religious feeling has its ebbings and flowings. But when former sensible comforts are departed, still to hold fast unto the immovable, unchangeable Rock, Christ Jesus, is the soul's support and safety.
—*Bowden.*

(2067.) "What a lamentable change has taken place in my condition!" said the frozen brook. "Only a short while ago I ran along a lively stream, glistening in the sunshine, dancing in the shade, and doing my work with joyous pleasure; but now, alas! I am cold and motionless!—what a melancholy change has come over me; and oh! what if I should never recover from this torpor; never flow again!"

A sturdy oak, which had outlived a hundred winters, and now also stood bare and comparatively leafless, overhearing, tried to comfort it.

"Don't despair," said the oak, whose branches reached forward towards the sorrowing brooklet, "Don't despair; these changes are common to seasons and affect you now so powerfully because you are so shallow. As long as streams have been exposed to climates of this nature, they have endured what you now suffer. But, the glorious sun retains his power in the heavens; and depend on it, that by and by we shall both again feel his quickening influences—myself to put on a new dress of foliage, and you to flow with the freedom and freshness of the genial spring."

The old oak was not mistaken. In due time the sun poured forth bright beams from the sky. The atmosphere underwent a happy alteration. The air became soft and balmy. The little rivulet, too, had burst its icy bonds, and again coursed through the meadows, glittering in the sunlight, and leaped its way over the pebbles, "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," till, in the end, it reached and united with the mighty ocean, and was no longer subject unto the ills which had so powerfully affected it while but a feeble rivulet.

The Christian has his wintry season, when, cold and lifeless, as it were, and lamenting the absence of former spiritual enjoyments, he prays, "O Lord, revive Thy work." "Quicken me in Thy way, according to Thy Word." "Lift Thou up on me the light of Thy countenance." "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart."

How precious to know the Lord is in His place above—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." And then at last, when the days of the believer's earthly warfare are ended, he shall endure no more changes; heaven will be his home, God his rest, "and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." —*Bowden.*

2. The connection between faith and feeling.

(2068.) There is as much connection between faith and hallowed feeling as there is between the root and the flower. Faith is permanent, just as the root is ever in the ground; feeling is casual, and has its seasons. Just as the bulb does not always shoot up the green stem, far less is it always crowned with the many, many coloured flowers. Faith is the tree, the essential tree; our feelings are like the appearance of that tree during the different seasons of the year. Sometimes our soul is full of bloom and blossom, and the bees hum pleasantly, and gather honey within our hearts. It is then that our feelings bear witness to the life of our faith, just as the buds of spring bear witness to the life of the tree. Anon, our feelings gather still greater vigour, and we come to the summer of our delights; again, perhaps, we begin to wither into the sear and yellow leaf of autumn; nay, sometimes the winter of our despondency and despair will strip away every leaf from the tree, and our poor faith stands like a blasted stem without a sign of verdure. And yet, my brethren, so long as the tree of faith is there we are saved. Whether faith blossom or not, whether it bring forth joyous fruit in our experience or not, so long as it be there in all its permanence we are saved. Experience, if I may so speak, is like a sundial. When I wish to know the time of the day with my spirit I look upon it. But then there must be the sun shining, or else I cannot tell by my sundial what and where I am. If a cloud passes before the face of the sun, my dial is of little service to me; but then my faith comes out in all its excellency, for my faith pierces the cloud, and reads the state of my soul—not by the sunshade on the dial, but by the position of the sun in the heavens themselves. Faith is a greater and grander thing than all experience, less fickle, more stable. It is the root of grace, and these are but the flowers, the germs, the buds. Yet let us not speak against experiences; let us value them, for it is a grand thing to sit in the sunshine of God's presence; it is a noble thing to eat the grapes of Eshcol even while we are in the wilderness. —*Spurgeon.*

3. Undue importance is not to be attached to it.

(2069.) As we feel the calamities of war more than the pleasures of peace, and diseases more than the quietness of health, and the hardness of poverty more than the commodities of abundance; even so we ought not to marvel if we feel the stingings and pricks of sin a great deal more than the consolations of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, seeing that sin dwelleth in us, and not righteousness, which is the cause that the one is more sensible than the other. Notwithstanding, we must not think that sin can be more able to condemn and destroy us than the righteousness of Jesus Christ and the grace of God is to justify and save us. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2070.) As we have sometimes in the end of our finger some pain, which we feel a great deal more than the health that is all over the rest of the body, yea, though it be much greater than the pain of our finger: even so we must not esteem the greatness or the strength, whether it be of righteousness or sin, according to that feeling we have, because the one—that is, sin—is more sensible than the other; and specially, forasmuch as we embrace righteousness only by faith, which is of those things that are not outward and sensible.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2071.) The heir of a great estate, while a child, thinks more of a few shillings in his pocket than of his inheritance: so a Christian is often more elated by some frame of heart than by his title to glory.

—*Newton*, 1725-1807.

4. Not the measure of God's love for us.

(2072.) Measure not God's love and favour by your own feeling. The sun shines as clearly in the darkest day as it does in the brightest. The difference is not in the sun, but in some clouds which hinder the manifestation of the light thereof. So God loves as well when He shines not in the brightness of His countenance upon us as when He does. Job was as much beloved of God in the midst of

his miseries, as he was afterwards when he came to enjoy the abundance of His mercies.
—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

5. It is neither possible nor desirable that it should always be intense.

(2073.) Our most exalted feelings are not meant to be the common food of daily life. Contentment is more satisfying than exhilaration; and contentment means simply the sum of small and quiet pleasures. We ought not to seek too high joys. We may be bright without transfiguration. The even flow of constant cheerfulness strengthens; while great excitements, driving us with fierce speed, both rack the ship and end often in explosions. If we were just ready to break out of the body with delight, I know not but we should disdain many things important to be done. Low measures of feeling are better than ecstasies, for ordinary life. God sends His rain in gentle drops, else flowers would be beaten to pieces. —*Beecher.*

(2074.) One of the things which men learn by a Christian experience is how to work from a lower intensity of motive-power. When young persons begin their course as Christians they are said to have exaggerated ideas. It is with a religious life as it is with colours. We laugh at negroes, Indians, and uncultivated people because they love flashy colours. It is true that their fondness in that direction is in part owing to their balance of organisation; but it is in a great measure owing to the fact that it requires intense excitement to make an impression on that faculty in them which appreciates colour. It is only by the most glaring yellows and reds that their sense of colour can be waked up. But as persons become cultivated, they take in lower tones, until by and by they have what is called *an exceedingly refined taste*. And what is the meaning of that? Simply that it does not take one-tenth part as much colour to excite the feeling of colour in them as at first. They see beauty in lower tones, because their susceptibility to colour is increased.

Now, Christian duty, in the beginning, requires intense specific moral feeling; but as the work goes on, and habit comes in, it does not require one-tenth part of the feeling to put a person on a certain course of conduct that it did in the beginning. His moral susceptibilities are so raised that less fire is necessary to make him boil.

A Christian is like a man who has been out in the cold all night, and is brought in chilled through. When he gets thawed out a little, he complains of the cold, and says, "I cannot keep warm," although the thermometer is up to eighty degrees, such is his reduced state. After a while the heat begins to penetrate his system, and he is stronger; and although the thermometer has gone down to seventy degrees, he says, "Why, I am sweating!" At last, when he is warmed through, and his accustomed vigour has returned, he can let the thermometer go down to sixty degrees, and not be as cold as when it was at eighty degrees. When the body is in a healthy state, it can work in a low temperature better than when it is unhealthy. And what is true of physical life in this regard is true of Christian life. Many Christians commit the mistake of wanting high feeling when it is against nature that they should have it. It is an ordinance of God that the sensibility of your soul should enable you to live and work well with low measures of joy and feeling, and that this should give a much more healthy Christian development than where there are high reaches of feeling that touch only one or two points. I have told you that it is well to live in an atmosphere of high religious feeling in the realisation of God's presence. So it is. But it is also true that the experience of Christian life should so educate and refine the soul in its moral sense that it can appreciate and make use of all the lower ranges of incitement. —*Beecher.*

6. Should not be separated from action.

(2075.) It is a perilous thing to separate feeling from acting; to have learnt to feel rightly without acting rightly. It is a danger to which, in a refined and polished age, we are peculiarly exposed. The romance, the poem, and the sermon teach us how to feel. Our feelings are delicately correct. But the danger is this:—feeling is given to lead to action; if feeling be suffered to awake without passing into duty, the character becomes untrue. When the emergency for real action comes, the feeling is as usual produced: but accustomed as it is to rise in fictitious circumstances without action, neither will it lead on to action in the real ones. "We pity wretchedness and shun the wretched." We utter sentiments, just, honourable, refined, lofty—but somehow, when a truth presents itself in the shape of a duty, we are unable to perform it. And so such characters become by degrees like the artificial pleasure-grounds of bad taste, in which the waterfall does not fall, and the grotto offers only the refreshment of an imaginary shade, and the green hill does not strike the skies, and the tree does not grow. Their lives are a sugared crust of sweetness trembling over black depths of hollowness: more truly still, "whited sepulchres"—fair without to look upon, "within full of all uncleanness." —*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(2076.) "I have often blamed myself," said Boswell, "for not feeling for others as sensibly as many say they do." "Sir," replied Johnson, "don't be duped by them any more. You will find these very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They *pay* you by *feeling*."
A. P. Russell.

FORMS AND CEREMONIES.

1. Their necessity and value.

(2077.) The external part of religion is, doubtless, of little value in comparison with the internal; and so is the cask in comparison with the wine contained in it; but if the cask be staved, the wine must perish. If there were no Sundays or holy days, no ministers, no churches or religious assemblies, no prayers or sacraments, no scriptures read, or sermons preached, how long would there be any religion left in the world: and who would desire to live in a world where there was none?
—*Horne*, 1730–1792.

(2078.) Forms are necessary to religion as the means of its manifestation. As the invisible God manifests His nature, His power, wisdom, and goodness, in visible material forms, in the bright orbs of heaven, in the everlasting hills, in the broad earth with its fruits and flowers, and in all the living

things which He has made,—so the invisible soul of man reveals its convictions and feelings in the outward acts which it performs. As there could be no knowledge of God without the visible forms in which He reveals Himself, so there could be no knowledge of the religion which exists in the soul of man without the outward forms in which it expresses itself. A form is the flag, the banner, the symbol of an inward life; it is to a religious belief what the body is to the soul; as the soul would be utterly unknown without the body, so religion would be unknown without its forms, a light hidden under a bushel, and not set up in a candlestick that it may give light to all that are in the house.

Forms are necessary not only to the manifestation of religion, but to its nourishment and continued existence. A religion which expressed itself in no outward word or act would soon die out of the soul altogether. The attempt to embody truth and feeling, to express it in words and actions, is necessary to give it the character of living principle in the soul: in this respect forms are like the healthy exercise which at once expresses and increases the vigorous life of the body, or they may be compared to the leaves of a tree, which not only proceed from its inward life, but catch the vitalising influences of the light, the rain and the atmosphere, and convey them down to the root.

What, then, is that formalism which is everywhere in the scripture, and especially in the discourses of our Lord, described as an offence and an abomination in the sight of God? I answer, formalism is the substitution of the outward rite in the place of the inner spirit and life of the soul; it is the green leaf which still hangs upon the dead branch which has been lopped off.

—*David Loxton.*

(2079.) The Church must avoid all *formalistic tendencies.* Forms, creeds, liturgies are indispensable. Apples must have rinds; nuts must have shells; corn must have husks; rising walls must have scaffolding; and Christianity must have these outside forms and decencies. But mere outward proprieties will not make a useful Church.

—*Talmage.*

2. How their value is to be estimated.

(2080.) In every work are two things to be regarded; the end and the means. The thing is to be chosen as being good in itself; the means as being good for attaining that end. The husbandman sows not for the sake of sowing, but of procuring food for man. The factory is constructed, and the road laid down, with a view to something quite distinct from themselves: the clothing which the one is to prepare, the distant town which the other is to enable us to reach. There is a work of God to be done on earth through the Church; which, like all other works, can be understood only by looking to its end, and to its means severally. Its end is called in scripture man's being made "one with God," and thereby, also, one with his fellow-man. It is fulfilled in the condition of human spirits ruled by faith, that worketh by love; and in the harmony which this establishes in their relation one to another. The Gospel is committed to the Church as the grand means to this end being accomplished, both in and through the Church. But the Church as a body of men placed in circumstances, some common to all men, some temporary and local, must use this grand means in a vast diversity of methods and channels. Hence are preaching and teaching, arrangements for worship, variety of office, and ministration in the Church; whatever belongs to its ordering for the achievement of its great end. And, as in things natural, so in the grand spiritual society also, the means are good, because of their fitness to attain the end, and for no other reason: the machine for the work it does; the road for the ease and safety with which it takes us to our destination; the Church order and services for their aptness to strengthen and diffuse, in the Church and through the Church, the life of God in the soul of man, and at the heart of a human society. —*A. J. Scott*, 1866.

(2081.) None, I suppose, will contend, if the principle of expediency, that is of fitness to an end, were admissible as a foundation for rules of the Church during scriptural times, that it is inadmissible now: that plans adopted for their usefulness' sake three thousand or eighteen hundred years ago, may not for usefulness' sake be changed for others at the present day. It seems hardly needful to say, that the evidence of expediency being the scriptural ground for such arrangements, would not in any instance be a reason for change, but only a proof of the lawfulness of change, if sufficient reason can be shown. What was suited to a given purpose in Judea, A.D. 34, may be the best way of effecting the same thing in England, A.D. 1845: then in the strength of such reasonableness let it abide. But if, on the contrary, being chosen for its adaptation to certain circumstances, these have passed away, its fitness has passed along with them; and therefore let it not abide. The sundial, if it stand now surrounded by walls that shut out the rays, must be shifted into the sunshine. If the sea has receded by miles from the ancient harbour, let every stone of it be carried down within the water-mark. The Church is too venerable in her primeval and eternal essence for her to need or to care to amuse an antiquarian curiosity with the maintenance of mere monuments of necessities that exist no longer.

—*A. J. Scott*, 1866.

(2082.) Those forms are best which have been longest received and authorised in a nation by custom and use. *Sir W. Temple*, 1628-1699.

(2083.) Forms of piety, judiciously used, keep up the life of piety. The nut that has too thick a shell will have a wasted kernel, and that which has too thin, will have its meat liable to accident and decay, while in due proportion the one will help the life and growth of the other.

3. Ancient forms are not needlessly to be revived.

(2084.) The faithful minister is not zealous for the introducing of old useless ceremonies. The mischief is, some that are most violent to bring such in are most negligent to preach the cautions in using them; and simple people, like children in eating of fish, swallow bones and all, to their danger of choking. —*Fuller*, 1608-1661.

4. Ancient forms are not necessarily serviceable now.

(2085.) True reverence for antiquity seeks a Church presenting the clearest image of eternity in

the midst of the mutations of time. This she is to do by the inward vigour of the essential principles of her life, dropping off forms no longer useful, as the oak has done the leaves of last summer. The live oak abides the same by its vitality, while it changes form and dimensions by growth: the mass of squared timber has lost its power of assimilation, its command of resources; death enables it to remain unchanged in form, till death brings decay that changes form and substance. What is dead is changed from without—what lives changes from within. Even in forms and methods, the old is not to be set aside for being old; nay, this is of itself so far in its favour. Let its antiquity be considered as a reason, not as foreclosing all reasoning about it.

I am far from maintaining that there are no ordinances of the Church which are unalterable. What is adapted to humanity, as such, will abide through all periods of human history. Sometimes this eternal adaptation is watched over by express declaration of the authority which originally established the rule—sometimes by the wisdom bestowed on the succeeding ages, to discern that it is still suitable for them. Otherwise, the mere existence of a regulation in the Church, or its existence during the biblical ages, or the wisdom of the spirit in him who introduced it, or its express Divine authority at the season and in the place of its introduction, constitutes of itself *no* authority, divine or human, for that constitution abiding in the actual state of things. That a minister, for instance, wore a certain dress in the second century may be a good example for a minister in the nineteenth wearing a different dress: because that worn in the second may have been the ordinary dress of decent citizens, and to wear the ordinary respectable dress of our own time is to follow that example. But the priest who puts on the chasuble in the nineteenth century, appearing in a piece of strange antiquity to strike the beholder, acts on a contrary principle. With as good reason a modern soldier might think he resembled Julius Cæsar by instituting the balista and the ram in the place of field-pieces and battering-cannon, and in encountering a foe who used these new resources of war.

This mistaken formality in the use of tradition shows itself in all quarters. Because George Fox wore the homeliest common dress of his time, setting an example of thrifty simplicity, the modern Quaker must put on a dress which is not at all homely, and not at all common. Because Roman court-houses were granted centuries ago for the meeting-places of the Christian Church—which, for convenience, the Church thankfully accepted—churches nowadays must have the ground-plan of a Roman court-house, whether convenient or not. In short, because it was wise and good to act in a certain manner in certain circumstances, we fancy it wise and good to mimic the mere outward details of that procedure, when all the determining circumstances are changed: as if, because protection against rain in the great need of our climate, missionaries were to be prepared with garments of water-proof for the dry heats of Egypt: as if some traditionary chemist were to apply, as a remedy for gunshot wounds, some proved antidote to the poisoned arrows of the Picts, with whom our ancestors made war at the venerable distance of fourteen hundred years.

—*A. J. Scott*, 1866.

5. Are powerless to revive a declining faith.

(2086.) To expect to revive a declining faith merely by multiplying ceremonies, is as hopeless as to multiply pumps in a dry well or to try to restore the dead by more garments. The life to refill these empty veins must come from another source. It must come by prayer, from the Spirit of God.

—*Huntington.*

6. A multiplication of forms is hostile to religion.

(2087.) The right knowledge of God vanishes when men's inventions in His ordinances come to be honoured. As painted glass in your windows hinders the light, so the more inventions of men there are in God's worship, the less light comes into the hearts of the people. As some, not contented with ordinary plain letters, make such flourishes about them that you can scarcely tell what they are, and write their names so that you cannot tell what to make of them,—so many men that will not content themselves with plain ordinances,—with the ordinances of Christ,—but must have flourishes of their own invention, at length darken the right understanding of the mind and truths of God, so that you know not what to make of them. "To the law and to the testimony," saith the prophet; "if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." If they will leave the law and the testimony, and will do according to their own inventions in Divine worship, it is because there is no light in them, and they will bring darkness upon the people. In Col. ii. 22, it is said of the rudiments of the world and the ordinances of men that they "perish with the using,"—that is, there is no efficacy at all in them to do any good unto the souls of men.

"Our adversaries call images and picture books to teach laymen; but the Scriptures tell us they teach a lie. And if they be layman's books, they are full of errata in every page,—yea, there are more errata than true lines. The best that we can say of any ceremonies brought into the Church by men (because people would endeavour to excuse the first Reformers) is, that they thought at that time they were required because of the dulness of men; for so they say in the preface to the Common Prayer-book—that it was to stir up the dull minds of men. But, mark, if it could possibly be imagined that there could be any use in them in the first Reformation (which, indeed, there was not, but rather they did hurt, and made men's minds more dull, as I dare appeal to you who have lived under such inventions of men in God's worship),—but if possibly (I say) there could be imagined any use of them at the first, they were at best but as horn-books and fescues [pointers] for the childhood and infancy of the Church. They say themselves that they needed such things, but they could have needed them only as children need horn-books and fescues. And is it seemly always to learn upon them? What knowledge will be acquired if, when you set your children to learn to read, they shall be kept ten, twenty, or thirty years to their horn-books? Now, thus would our prelates [to-day our Puseyites] have debased people to keep them continually to learn the knowledge of God by these their beggarly elements." —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(2088.) The Christian dispensation is distinguished for its simplicity in the worship of God. Supersti-

tion delights in introducing carnal rites, and values itself upon its own opinionative goodness. These men mistake the swelling of a dropsy for a substantial growth, and presume themselves to be more holy than others, for their proud singularity. Superstition is like ivy that twines about the tree, and is its seeming ornament, but draws its vital sap, and under its verdant leaves covers a carcass. Thus carnal ceremonies seem to adorn religion, but really dispirit and weaken its efficacy.

—*Salter*, 1840.

(2089.) It is in the nature of a religion of many forms to degenerate into one of form. By occupying and indeed engrossing the attention of the worshipper they withdraw it from the state of his heart, and prove as pernicious to true piety as a superabundance of leaves to the plant whose sap is spent on feeding the leaf, to the detriment of the fruit: and perhaps some churches might be benefited by a free use of the knife with which the gardener prunes away the flush of green wood to increase the crop of fruit.

Let us never forget that forms are not religion, but only its drapery; and that, as they dress children lightly who wish to brace their frames, as the labourer throws off his coat to work, and as in the ancient games the candidates stepped into the racecourse unencumbered with many, or heavy, garments, the fewer forms which religion wears, consistent with decency and order, the more robust she will grow—she will work with greater energy—and, like one of the beautiful mould and symmetry, she will walk with more native, queenly grace—when

"Unadorned, adorned the most."

—*Guthrie.*

7. Scripture authority is not to be demanded for every minute detail of ecclesiastical arrangement.

(2090.) If any be so vain, as to demand a scripture-proof of this; [*i.e.*, the keeping a register of the Church members], let him first bring me a scripture-proof that he may read with spectacles, or write a sermon from the preacher's mouth, or use notes in the pulpit, or print, &c., and then I will give him proof of this. —*Baxter.*

8. The folly of an indiscriminating zeal concerning them.

(2091.) There are some matters of opinion and practice that are but in the skirts of religion and godliness, far from the heart of it, *e.g.*, the less considerable questions about rites, order, discipline, &c. If these take up as much or more of the vitals of godliness, we are like but to make an inconsiderable improvement in the main. And then whatever our proficiency be in minute things, and such as are not material, it will turn to no great account when God comes to seek for fruit. If we be more busy about the fringe and lace than the body and soul of religion, or if that which is but as the hair be of more regard with us than the head of it, we may be fruitful in trifles, but barren in what is of greatest value and consequence. This is as if a gardener should take much pains in watering and pruning one small branch or sprig, but should do nothing at all to the main arms, or the body or the root of the tree. That is not the way to make it bear well.

—*Clarkson*, 1621–1686.

9. Are not to be enforced by penalties.

(2092.) I must confess I am still guilty of so much weakness as to be confident "that some things, not evil of themselves, may have accidents so evil as may make it a sin to him that shall command them." Is this opinion inconsistent with all government? Yea, I must confess myself guilty of so much greater weakness, as that I thought I should never have found a man on earth, that had the ordinary reason of a man, that had made question of it; yea I shall say more than that which hath offended, viz. "That whenever the commanding or forbidding of a thing indifferent is like to occasion more hurt than good, and this may be foreseen, the commanding or forbidding it is a sin." But yet this is not the assertion that I am chargeable with, but that "some accidents there may be that may make the imposition sinful." If I may ask it without accusing others, how would my crime have been denominated if I had said the contrary? Should I not have been judged unmeet to live in any governed society? It is not unlawful of itself to command out a navy to sea; but if it were foreseen that they would fall into the enemy's hands, or were like to perish by any accident, and the necessity of sending them were small, or none, it were a sin to send them. It is not of itself unlawful to sell poison, or to give a knife to another, or to bid another do it: but if it were foreseen that they will be used to poison or kill the buyer, it is unlawful; and I think the law would make him believe it that were guilty. It is not of itself unlawful to light a candle or set fire to straw; but if it may be foreknown, that by another's negligence or wilfulness, it is like to set fire to the city, or to give fire to a train and store of gunpowder that is under the parliament house, when the king and parliament are there: I crave the bishop's pardon, for believing that it were sinful to do it, or command it; yea or not to hinder it (in any such case,) when "qui non vetat peccare cum potest, jubet." Yea, though going to God's public worship be of itself so far from being a sin, as that it is a duty, yet I think it is a sin to command it to all in time of a raging pestilence, or when they should be defending the city against the assault of an enemy. It may rather be then a duty to prohibit it. I think Paul spake not anything inconsistent with the government of God or man, when he bid both the rulers and people of the Church, not to destroy him with their meat for whom Christ died: and when he saith that he hath not his power to destruction, but to edification. Yea, there are evil accidents of a thing not evil of itself, that are caused by the commander: and it is my opinion that they may prove his command unlawful.

But what need I use any other instances than that which was the matter of our dispute? Suppose it never so lawful of itself to kneel in the reception of the sacrament, if it be imposed by a penalty that is incomparably beyond the proportion of the offence, that penalty is an accident of the command, and maketh it by accident sinful in the commander. If a prince should have subjects so weak as that all of them thought it a sin against the example of Christ, and the canons of the General Councils, and many hundred years practice of the Church, to kneel in the act of receiving on the Lord's day, if he should make a law that all should be put to death that would not kneel, when he foreknew that their consciences would command them all, or most of

them, to die rather than obey, would any man deny this command to be unlawful by this accident? Whether the penalty of ejecting ministers that dare not put away all that do not kneel, and of casting out all the people that scruple it, from the Church, be too great for such a circumstance (and so in the rest), and whether this, with the lamentable state of many congregations, and the divisions that will follow, being all foreseen, do prove the impositions unlawful which were then in question, is a case that I had then a clearer call to speak to than I have now. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

FRIENDSHIP.

1. Defined.

(2093.) Friendship is a strong and habitual inclination in two persons to promote the good and happiness of each other.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

2. Its pleasures and advantages.

(2094.) Friendship improves happiness, and abates misery, by the doubling of our joy, and the dividing of our grief. —*Cicero.*

(2095.) A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fulness of the heart which passions of all kinds do cause and induce.

—*Lord Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(2096.) A man hath a body, and that body is confined to a place; but where friendship is all offices of life are, as it were, granted to him and his deputy; for he may exercise them by his friend. How many things are there which a man cannot, with any face or comeliness, say or do himself! A man can scarce allege his own merits with modesty, much less extol them; a man cannot sometimes brook to supplicate, or beg, and a number of the like: but all these things are graceful in a friend's mouth which are blushing in a man's own.

—*Lord Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(2097.) Heraclitus saith well in one of his enigmas, "Dry light is ever the best," and certain it is that the light that a man receiveth by counsel from another is drier and purer than that which cometh from his own understanding and judgment; which is ever infused and drenched in his affections and customs. So there is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer; for there is no such flatterer as is a man's self, and there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self as the liberty of a friend. —*Lord Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(2098.) A friend shares my sorrow, and makes it but a moiety; but he swells my joy, and makes it double. For so two channels divide the river, and lessen it into rivulets, and make it fordable, and apt to drink up at the first revels of the Syrian star; but two torches do not divide, but increase the flame. And though my tears are the sooner dried up when they run on my friend's cheeks in the furrows of compassion; yet when my flame has kindled his lamp, we unite the glories, and make them radiant, like the golden candlesticks that burn before the throne of God; because they shineby numbers, by unions, and confederations of light and joy. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(2099.) Get some Christian friend (whom thou mayest trust above all others) to be thy faithful monitor. Oh, that man hath a great help for the maintaining the power of godliness that hath an open-hearted friend that dare speak his heart to him. A stander-by sees more sometimes of a man than the *actor* can do of himself, and is more fit to judge of his actions than he of his own; sometimes self-love blinds us in our own cause, that we see not ourselves as bad as we are; and sometimes we are over-suspicious of the worst of ourselves, which makes us appear to ourselves worse than we are. Now, that thou mayest not deprive thyself of so great help from thy friend, be sure to keep thy heart ready with meekness to receive, yea, with thankfulness embrace, a reproof from his mouth. Those that cannot bear plain dealing hurt themselves most; for by this they seldom bear the truth.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1619.

(2100.) Love is the greatest of human affections, and friendship the noblest and most refined improvement of love. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(2101.) Friendship is the shadow of the evening, which strengthens with the setting sun of life.

—*La Fontaine*, 1621–1695.

(2102.) Friendship hath the skill and observation of the best physician; the diligence and vigilance of the best nurse; and the tenderness and patience of the best mother.

—*Lord Clarendon*, 1608–1673.

(2103.) We learn our virtues from the bosom friends who love us; our faults from the enemy who hates us. We cannot easily discover our real form from a friend. He is a mirror, on which the warmth of our breath impedes the clearness of the reflection. —*Richter*, 1763–1825.

(2104.) He who has made the acquisition of a judicious and sympathising friend may be said to have doubled his mental resources.

—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(2105.) A man in adversity is like a shipwrecked and dismantled ship upon the desert strand, he needeth much reparation and outfit before he can be of use to any one. A man in prosperity is like a ship full-laden with costly goods, which is a prize to every one that is needed, and an honour to every one who has in her any share of interest. A man who is rejected and despised of the world is like a ship that is not seaworthy, in which no one will risk an atom of his wealth, and which proves a clog upon the course of any free and fair sailing vessel; whereas, a man whom the world embraceth with its favours, and who flourisheth in prosperity, is like a convoy ship, under whose lofty and unarmed sides many sail in safety.

Who is he that hath had the world set against him, or whom the world hath dashed from his anchorage ground, that hath not known, amidst these backwaters of the soul, the good and the strength of heart there is in a friend upon whom to fall back, and by whom to be received as into a haven, and fitted out again for another encounter? Happy is he who hath one into whose ear his soul may tell its calamities, show its weakness, and lay

open its wounds; from whose lips it may receive the consolation and tender counsels it needeth; at whose hand accept the help, and if need be, the medicine which cures adversity, and whose bitterness is savoury when administered by the hand of a friend. —*Irving*, 1792–1834.

3. True friendship is rare.

(2106.) Some, through a kind of lightness in them, use their friends like nosegays, which longer than they are fresh are in no reckoning.

—*Bayne*, 1617.

(2107.) The friendship of most men is like some plants in the water, which have broad leaves on the surface of the water, but scarce any root at all; like lemons, cold within, hot without; full expressions, empty intentions; speak loud, and do little; like drums and trumpets and ensigns in a battle, which make a noise and a show, but act nothing—mere friendship in pretence and compliment, that can bow handsomely, and promise emphatically, and speak plausibly, and forget all. But a true, real, active friend, whose words are the windows of his heart, σύμβολα παθήματα (the notifiers of his affections)—such a friend is rare and hardly to be found.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(2108.) There are some drugs very wholesome, but very bitter, good in the operation, but unkind in the palate: as the common saying is, "wholesome, but not toothsome." Such are some friends in the world, real in their love, but morose in their expressions of it, that a man is almost afraid of their very kindnesses. But it is the good fortune of few to meet with a man who shall be as full of sweetness as fidelity, whose love is not like a pill that must be wrapped in something else before a man can swallow it, but whose candour and sereneness make his love as amiable as useful to his friend; so that he may very well be said to deserve the character given to one of the Roman emperors, "*Neminem unquam dimisit tristem:*" of such a disposition, made up of love and sweetness, of such a balsamic nature, that is all for healing and helpfulness.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(2109) People young and raw and soft-natured think it an easy thing to gain love, and reckon their own friendship a sure price of any man's; but when experience shall have shown them the hardness of most hearts, the hollowness of others, and the baseness and ingratitude of almost all, they will then find that a friend is the gift of God, and that He only who made hearts can unite them.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(2110.) When a man shall have done all that he can to make one his friend, and emptied his purse to create endearment between them, he may, in the end, be forced to write vanity and frustration.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(2111.) A long life may be passed without finding a friend in whose understanding and virtue we can equally confide, and whose opinion we can value at once for its justness and sincerity. A weak man, however honest, is not qualified to judge. A man of the world, however penetrating, is not fit to counsel. Friends are often chosen for similitude of manners, and therefore each palliates the other's failings because they are his own. Friends are tender, and unwilling to give pain; or they are interested, and fearful to offend.

—*Dr. S. Johnson*, 1709–1784.

(2112.) When Socrates was building himself a house at Athens, being asked by one that observed the littleness of the design, why a man so eminent would not have an abode more suitable to his dignity? he replied, that he should think himself sufficiently accommodated if he could see that narrow habitation filled with real friends. Such was the opinion of this great master of human life, concerning the unfrequency of such a union of minds as might deserve the name of friendship, that among the multitudes whom vanity or curiosity, civility or veneration, crowded about him, he did not expect that very spacious apartments would be necessary to contain all that should regard him with sincere kindness or adhere to him with steady fidelity.

So many qualities are indeed requisite to the possibility of friendship, and so many accidents must concur to its rise and its continuance, that the greatest part of mankind content themselves without it, and supply its place as they can with interest and dependence. —*Dr. S. Johnson*, 1709–1784.

4. True and false friendship.

(2113.) False friendship is like the ivy, decays and ruins the wall it embraces; but true friendship gives new life and animation to the object it supports. —*Robert Burton*, 1556–1640.

(2114.) You may distinguish worldly friendship from that which is holy and virtuous, as the poisonous honey of Heraclea is known from the other: for as the honey of Heraclea is sweeter to the tongue than the ordinary honey, because of the juice of the aconite, which gives it an additional sweetness, so worldly friendship, ordinarily, produces a great profusion of sweet words, passionate expressions, with admiration of beauty, behaviour, and other sensual qualities, whereas holy friendship speaks a plain and sincere language, and commends nothing but virtue and the grace of God, the only foundation on which it subsists.

As the honey of Heraclea, when swallowed down, occasions a giddiness, so false friendship breeds a vertigo in the mind, which makes persons stagger in chastity and devotion, carrying them on to affected, wanton, and immoderate looks, sensual caresses, &c. But holy friendship has no looks but what are simple and modest; no caresses but pure and sincere; no sighs but for heaven; no familiarities but spiritual; no complaints but when God is not beloved,—infallible marks of honesty.

As the honey of Heraclea is troublesome to the sight, so this worldly friendship dazzles the judgment to such a degree that they who are infected, therewith think they do well when they do ill, and believe their excuses and pretexts for two reasons. They fear the light and love darkness. But holy friendship is clear-sighted, and never hides herself, but appears willingly before such as are good.

In fine, the honey of Heraclea leaves a great bitterness in the mouth; so false friendships change into lewd and carnal words and demands, or, in case of refusal, into injuries, slanders, imposture, sadness, confusion, and jealousies, which often terminate in downright madness. But chaste friendship is always equally honest, civil and amiable,

and never changes, but into a more perfect and pure union of spirits. —*Francis De Sales.*

5. Should neither be formed hastily, nor carried to excess.

(2115.) Procure not friends in haste, and when thou hast a friend part not with him in haste.
—*Solon.*

(2116.) Too much friendship makes way for hatred. Yea, in truth there is no enmity so dangerous as that which has its foundations upon the ruins of love. And as in nature, the purest substance is turned into the most loathsome corruption; so the hottest love, which has no other ground but carnal respect, degenerates oftentimes into the most deadly and hurtful enmity. For being privy to all their friends' secrets, counsels, and conditions, they are the more enabled thereby to do them the greater mischief when their love is turned to malice. Even as a traitor is much more dangerous than a professed enemy; and a fugitive soldier more pernicious in time of war than he that assaults with open violence. —*Downame*, 1644.

(2117.) Let friendship creep gently to a height: if it rush to it, it may soon run itself out of breath.
—*T. Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(2118.) I will take heed both of a speedy friend and a slow enemy. Love is never lasting that flames before it burns. And hate, like wetted coals, throws a fiercer heat when fire gets the mastery. As the first may quickly fail; so the latter will hardly be altered. Early fruits rot soon. As quick wits have seldom sound judgment, which should make them continue; so friendship kindled suddenly is rarely found with durability of affection. Enduring love is ever built on virtue; which no man can see in another at once. —*Fellthan*, 1668.

(2119.) In the choice of a bosom friend, some respect ought to be had to his prudence. Some men, though holy, are indiscreet, and in point of secrets are like sieves—can keep nothing committed to them, but let all run through. A blab of secrets is a traitor to society, as one that causes much dissension. It is good to try him whom we intend for a bosom friend before we trust him; as men prove their vessels with water before they fill them with wine: if we find them leaking, they will be useless to that purpose. Many complain of the treachery of their friends, and say, as Queen Elizabeth, that in trust they have found treason; but most of these men have greatest cause, if all things be duly weighed, to complain of themselves for making no better choice. He is rightly served in all men's judgments, who has his liquor running out, which he puts into a leaking vessel or riven dish.

Too many are like the Dead Sea, in which nothing sinks to the bottom, but everything thrown into it swims at the top, and is in sight.

Companions of my secrets are like locks that belong to a house: whilst they are strong and close, they preserve me in safety; but weak and open, they expose me to danger, and make me a prey to others.

If thou hast found a man false once, beware of him the second time. He deserves to break his shins that stumbles twice at one stone. That proverb of the Italians is worthy of consideration: "If a man deceive me once, it is his own fault; if a second time, it is my fault." He had need to sit sure who backs that horse which once has cast his rider. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2120.) A long novitiate of acquaintance should precede the vows of friendship.
—*Lord Bolingbroke*, 1678–1751.

(2121.) We ought always to make choice of persons of such worth and honour for our friends, that if they should ever cease to be so, they will not abuse our confidence, nor give us cause to fear them as enemies. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(2122.) Real friendship is a slow grower, and never thrives unless engrafted upon a stock of known and reciprocal merit.
—*Lord Chesterfield*, 1694–1773.

6. Should be formed only with the good.

(2123.) Not to sin the sins of the place we live in, is as strange as for pure liquor tunned up in a musty vessel not to smell of the cask. Egypt will teach even a Joseph to swear: a Peter will learn to curse in the high priest's hall. A good example hath not so much power to make us good, as a bad one hath to make us evil. One man sick of the plague will sooner infect ten sound ones than ten sound men can cure him. The flocks feeding among the bushes will leave some of their wool behind them: it is hard to live in the forest of impiety and to reserve integrity. Sin upon earth is in its own soil, grows without planting or any pains bestowed on it; much more when it is manured with applauses and practice. But virtue is like some precious seed fetched from Paradise, which will hardly grow here without special care and indulgence. It is not safe venturing among the wicked in confidence of our own strength; no more than it is to run among thieves, in hope that they will not rob us. How many breathe in this world like men sleeping in a boat, carried down the stream even to their grave's end without waking to think where they are! Therefore, if we may be our own disposers, seek we our lot among the righteous.
—*Adams*, 1654.

(2124.) All company with unbelievers or misbelievers is not condemned. We find a Lot in Sodom, Israel with the Egyptians, Abraham and Isaac with their Abimelechs; roses among thorns, and pearls in mud; and Jesus Christ among publicans and sinners. So neither we be infected, nor the name of the Lord wronged, to converse with them, that we may convert them, is a holy course. But still we must be among them as strangers: to pass through an infected place is one thing, to dwell in it another. The earth is the Lord's, and men are His; wheresoever God shall find the merchant, let him be sure to find God in every place.
—*Adams*, 1654.

(2125.) It is thy interest to choose only the godly for thy friends. Others will one time or other prove false. These men will stick closer than a brother: Greet them that love us in the faith! such love will be firm. Ungodly men may be about us, as mice in a barn, whilst something is to be had; but when all the corn is gone, they are gone too; if thou ceasest to give, they will cease to love. When the weather is foul, as swallows, though they chattered about our chimneys, and chattered in our chambers,

they will take their flight, and leave nothing behind but dirt and dung as the pledge of their friendship. Haman's friends, who when he was in favour were ready to kiss his feet, no sooner saw the king incensed against him, but they were as ready to cover his face, and help him to a halter. There is no faith in that man who has no fear of the great God. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2126.) Hasten out of evil company, if thou hast no hopes of doing good. That company may well be to thee as the torrid zone, where wickedness sits in the chair, and religion is made a footstool. Though thou mayest pass through such a climate as thy occasions require, yet it is not safe to dwell in so unwholesome an air; men that are forced to walk by unsavoury carcases, hold their breath, and hasten away as soon as they can. It is ill being an inhabitant in any place where God is an exile. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2127.) Birds of a feather will flock together. Servants of the same Lord, if faithful, will join with their fellows, and not with the servants of His enemy.

When a man comes to an inn, you may give a notable guess for what place he intends by the company he inquires after; his question,—"Do you know of any travelling towards London? I should be heartily glad of their company,"—will speak his mind and his course. If he hear of any bound for another coast, he regards them not; but if he know of any honest passengers that are to ride in the same road, and set out for the same city with himself, he sends to them, and begs the favour of their good company. This world is an inn, all men are in some sense pilgrims and strangers, they have no abiding place here. Now the company they inquire after, and delight in, whether those that walk in the "broad way" of the flesh, or those who walk in the "narrow way" of the Spirit, will declare whether they are going towards heaven, or towards hell. A wicked man will not desire the company of them who walk in a contrary way, nor a saint delight in their society who go cross to his journey. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

The young partridges hatched under a hen, go for a time along with her chickens, and keep them company, scraping in the earth together; but when they are grown up, and their wings fit for the purpose, they mount up into the air, and seek for birds of their own nature. A Christian, before his conversion, is brought up under the prince of darkness, and walks in company with his "cursed crew," according to the course of this world; but when the Spirit changes his disposition, he quickly changes his companions, and delights only in the "saints that are on earth." —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2128.) A Christian should always be giving good or taking good, and that company is not for him that will neither give nor take this. What should a merchant do where there is no buying or selling? —*Gurnall*, 1607–1679.

(2129.) When a man is in a strange country a thousand miles off, it doth him good to meet with his own countrymen, and talk with them about his friends, and family, and his estate and inheritance, and home which he must return to; one hour of this discourse is sweeter to him than a hundred with the strangers of the country about matters that are little to him: so is it here; a Christian that knoweth he is a stranger in this world, and that his God, his salvation, his home, his inheritance are all in the world to come; he had far rather discourse with a heavenly-minded man about his Father and everlasting works and blessedness, than with worldly men about this world. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2130.) We insensibly slide into the manners of those with whom we daily converse and constantly live: we catch the flame of virtue from them, by being always near them. For goodness does not only communicate favours and kindness; it even in some measure communicates itself. Just as those who have been long among the most fragrant objects not only are delighted with the odour that breathes from them, some of the very fragrancy cleaves to and remains with them; they become fragrant themselves by staying long among objects that are so. —*Seed*, 1747.

7. Profitlessness of friendship with the ungodly.

(2131.) Such friends as are tied unto us in mere worldly bonds are not to be esteemed, for when the bonds are broken the friends are scattered: like chaff or some such light matter, which lies with the good wheat in the sunshine and calm, but separates itself and flies away when the least blast of wind blows; or like unto the reed which stands upright and seems stiff and strong in fair weather, but bows and bends any way when the storm comes. So these worldly friends, whilst the sun of prosperity shines, adhere to us and seem firm and constant, as though they would never leave us; but when the least tempest of trouble comes, and when the world seems to frown, they either hang down the head, and will not see us, or frame idle excuses why they cannot help us. Or, like Job's comforters, they make poverty a crime, and argue and infer our faultiness, because we are fallen into affliction. And therefore let us not make choice of such friends if we have them not, nor trust unto them if we have them. For like the reed they will bow and flee from us, when being almost drowned in misery, we labour to catch hold of them,—or else breaking in our hands will wound us when we rely upon them. Or like the briar, they will fleece us of our wool when we flee to them for succour. Or like an old ruinous house, when we come to them for protection against the storm, they will fall upon us and beat us to the ground with their oppressions. —*Downame*, 1642.

(2132.) Worldly friends are like hot water, that when cold weather comes, is soon frozen. Like cuckoos, all summer they will sing a scurvy note to thee, but they are gone in July at furthest: sure enough before the fall. They flatter a rich man, as we feed beasts, till he be fat, and then feed on him. —*Adams*, 1654.

(2133.) The leaves drop from the trees in the beginning of autumn; such is the friendship of this world: whilst the sap of wealth and honour lasts with me, and whilst I enjoy a summer of prosperity my friends swarm in abundance; but in the winter of adversity they will leave me naked. Oh, how miserable is that person who has no friend but of this world. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2134.) The heat and light of a wicked man's love, as a lamp, is fed with and flows from some earthly substance, and is extinguished when that is denied; but the heat and light of a saint's friendship, as the solar rays, spring from a heavenly cause, and therefore will continue.

My ungodly companion may abound in frothy words, but I must expect no faithful deeds from him, if ever I come to sufferings. Like a drum in a battle, he may make a grand sound, but will act nothing for my succour. Like a cipher, though now in prosperity he stands for thousands, in any adversity he will stand for nothing.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2135.) If I converse with great or rich men, what disdainful looks do they give me! at what a distance do they behold me! It is hard to obtain the liberty of speaking to them; but if I would obtain their favour, it will cost me more than it did the chief captain for his Roman freedom; unless I can gratify their lusts, I must not expect their love. Their friendship can hardly be got without a breach with my God; and what wise man would lose the good will of the Lord for the gain of the whole world? When I have by many friends, and with much difficulty, and even danger to my soul, procured their favour, how little am I the better for it! The most rotten tree is not so hollow; for, as cunning wrestlers, they will get within me to give me a fall. The wind itself is not more wavering than they are; except I can be contented to be their footstool, that by their treading upon me, they may be lifted higher in the world, I must expect to be quite cast by. It is possible, whilst they may make some use of me to decoy and trepan others, or to raise and advance themselves, they may carry me upon their shoulders, as men do their ladders, when there is hope thereby of climbing to their desired heights; but when that is done, or if the ladder prove too short, they will throw it upon the ground!

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2136.) Friendship contracted with the wicked decreases from hour to hour, like the early shadow of the morning; but friendship with the virtuous will increase like the shadow of the evening, till the sun of life shall set. —*Herder.*

(2137.) Such amities, being but transitory, melt away like snow in the sun. —*Sales.*

8. Perilousness of friendship with the ungodly.

(2138.) As some little creatures do bite us, and we scarcely feel it, but afterwards we shall well perceive that they have bitten us; so, though we perceive not the hurt that cometh by ill company at the first, yet we shall find it afterwards.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2139.) Let not any so much presume upon their own strength, as to imagine that they can retain their sincerity, though they keep wicked company, and rather convert them to good, than be perverted by them to evil, seeing this is a matter of great difficulty. "To be good among the good," says Bernard, "has in it health and safety; among the wicked to be so, is also commendable and praiseworthy; in that, happiness is joined with much security; in this, much virtue with difficulty." For as he who is running down the hill can sooner pull with him one that is ascending, than he who is going up can cause him to ascend that is running down: so he who holds an headlong course in wickedness can more easily carry with him one that is ascending the hill of virtue, being a motion contrary to natural disposition, than he can cause him to ascend with him. For in common experience we see, that the worser state prevails more in altering the better to its condition, than the better to make the worse like itself. The infected are not so soon cured by the sound, as they are tainted with their contagion. Rotten apples lying with the sound are not restored to soundness, but the sound are corrupted with their rottenness. Dead carcases united to living bodies are not thereby revived, unless it be by miracle, as we see in Elijah and Peter; but the living, if they continue any time united to the dead, partake with them in their mortality and corruption. And thus it is in our spiritual state, wherein the worse more prevails to corrupt the better, than the better to reform the worse. —*Downame*, 1644.

(2140.) "That friendship," says Basil, "is very harmful which is contracted with maliciousness. For it is the law and condition of this friendship, by a similitude of nature, to infuse wickedness into those who are in amity with them. For as in pestilent places, the air stealingly, and by little and little, infects the whole body with a hidden disease; so through wicked acquaintance, we suck in manifold evils, although we do not presently perceive the discommodity of it." In which respect we are to contemn, yea, to hate this friendship of wicked worldlings, as being but like sugar which entices us to drink the poison of sin; and the devil's most prevailing orator, in persuading us to neglect all duty, and to set our hearts open for the entertaining of sin. Manifold evils come unto us through the familiar society of wicked worldlings.

Against which, if any shall object their own experience, namely, that they have frequented such company and entertained such love and amity, and yet feel themselves never the worse, to such I answer, that either they are so bad already, that they cannot be made much worse; or have but a little while been linked in this fellowship, and so the poison has not as yet its operation; or if longer time they have consorted with them and feel no ill, it is because wickedness has grown on them by degrees, and has therefore through their negligence been insensible, they having rather declined by little and little, than suddenly fallen into these mischiefs. But let not this encourage them in their course. Great floods do not suddenly rise, but after much dropping; metals are not presently melted as soon as they are put into the furnace; green wood does not forthwith flame out as soon as it is laid on the fire; but yet within a while with much and often raining the water arises, with great and continual heat the metals melt, and the green wood after some weak resistance is consumed. And so, although the fire of God's grace is not quenched at first with this water of worldly wickedness, yea, rather, perhaps it may through opposition make it to gather strength and burn more hotly; but yet if it be much and often cast upon it, it will in the end put it out. "Although," says Isodorus, "thou wert made of iron, yet standing continually before a great fire, thou wouldst at last be dissolved; and he that still dwelleth at the next door to danger cannot long

be safe." . . . . As therefore those diseases which grow upon us by degrees upon small and not apparent causes are of all others the most dangerous and incurable, so these spiritual diseases of the soul which steal upon us little by little are not easily cured, and most endanger us, because they are not discerned until custom has given them full possession, and as it were turned them into nature. And as men are no less fearful of a lingering consumption than of a hot burning ague, because it doth more certainly destroy us, though it doth not assault us with like violence; so that corruption, which stealingly infects us through the familiarity and near friendship which we have with a civil worldling, doth oftentimes more endanger us than all the violent provocation of men notoriously wicked, whereby they labour suddenly and all at once to plunge us headlong into wickedness.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(2141.) There is a generation of men that lavish their estates, as we say, fling the house out at the windows, that call themselves good fellows. But good fellows and evil men are incompatible. They are like Simon and Levi, sworn brothers, but brethren in evil. Perhaps they have more society than honest men, but not so good society. Briars and thorns twine more together than good plants. God is not in this fellowship; you shall meet Him at the church, not at the ale-house. But Satan puts in for a part: sometimes one drunkard plays the devil with another, in stabbing or overloading with drink; but if there be not always a personate devil, there is always a personal devil; Satan himself stands by. In this fellowship, riot is the host, drunkenness the guest, swearing keeps the reckoning, lust holds the door, and beggary pays the shot.

—*Adams*, 1654.

(2142.) It is opportunity that makes thieves. Look what a clear fountain is to the thirsty, what a shade to the scorched traveller; such is occasion to a man that is accustomed to do evil. Physicians may converse with sick men, and cure them; but if their disease be dangerous or contagious, they will not easily adventure on them, lest that in curing others they should kill themselves. Vices are of the same nature, and vicious persons and places are alike dangerous, and therefore to be shunned.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(2143.) In infected places we get a disease, though we feel it not presently; so secretly our hearts are tainted by examples; as a man that walks in the sun, unawares, before he thinks of it, his countenance is tanned.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2144.) Familiarity with the ungodly will be a blemish and scandal upon your good name. Every man's company declares what he is. Birds of a sort flock together. So that if they wrong not the conscience they wound the reputation.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2145.) Man, being a sociable creature, is mightily encouraged to do as others do, especially in an evil example; for we are more susceptible of evil than we are of good. Sickness is sooner communicated than health; we easily catch a disease off one another, but those that are sound do not communicate health to the diseased. Or rather, to take God's own expression that sets it forth thus,—by touching the unclean the man became unclean under the law, but by touching the clean the man was not purified. The conversation of the wicked has more power to corrupt the good, than the conversation of the virtuous and holy to correct the lewd.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2146.) If thou choosest the ungodly for thy friends, thou art in danger of suffering, as well as of sinning with them. The wheat has many a blow for being among the chaff. The gold would not be put into the fire if it were not for the dross with which it is mingled.

It is ill being in a fellow's company when the officer of justice overtakes him. He may come to suffer for the treason, who harbours and abets the traitor.

He that would not be found amongst sinners in the other world, must take heed that he do not frequent their company in this. Those whom the constable finds wandering with vagrants, may be sent with them to the House of Correction.

O Lord, guard Thy servant so powerfully by Thy grace, that I may avoid all appearance of evil. As I would avoid Thy batteries, let me avoid the camp of Thine enemies. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2147.) Flee unholy company, as baneful to the power of godliness. Be but as careful for thy soul, as thou wouldst for thy body. Durst thou drink in the same cup, or sit in the same chair, with one that hath an infectious disease? And is it not sin as catching a disease as the plague itself?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2148.) As that honey is best which is gathered from the bosom of the most exquisite flowers, so that love which is founded upon the most exquisite communication is the most excellent. And as there is honey in Heraclea of Pontus, which is poisonous and makes those mad that eat it, because it is gathered from the aconite, which abounds in that country; even so the friendship grounded upon the communication of false and vicious goods, is altogether false and vicious. —*Sales*.

9. By the choice of our friends, we reveal our own character.

(2149.) You may depend upon it that he is a good man whose intimate friends are all good, and whose enemies are characters decidedly bad.

—*Lavater*, 1741–1801.

10. Youthful friendships.

(2150.) For my own part, I found such friendships, though warm enough in their commencement, surprisingly liable to extinction; and of seven or eight whom I had selected for intimates out of about three hundred, in ten years' time not one was left me. The truth is that there may be, and often is, an attachment of one boy to another that looks very like friendship, and, while they are in circumstances that enable them mutually to oblige and assist each other, promises well and bids fair to be lasting; but they are no sooner separated from each other, by entering into the world at large, than other connections and new employments, in which they no longer share together, efface the remembrance of what passed in earlier days, and they become strangers to each other for ever. Add to this, the man frequently differs so much from the boy—his

principles, manners, temper, and conduct undergo so great an alteration—that we no longer recognize in him our old playfellow, but find him utterly unworthy and unfit for the place he once held in our affections. —*Cowper*, 1731–1800.

11. Is rarely formed late in life.

(2151.) It may be worth noticing as a curious circumstance, when persons past forty, before they were at all acquainted, form together a very close intimacy of friendship. For grafts of *old* wood to *take*, there must be a wonderful congeniality between the trees. —*Whately*, 1787–1863.

12. Tested by adversity.

(2152.) Whilst you are prosperous, you can number many friends; but when the storm comes, you are left alone. —*Ovid.*

(2153.) True friends visit us in prosperity only when invited, but in adversity they come without invitation. —*Theophrastus.*

(2154.) Affliction, like the wind or fan, severs the chaff of flattery from the solid grain of faithful friendship; making parasites to flee from us, as smoke drives away bees, when they can raise from us no further advantage. And, as the only true touchstone, it discerns a lover of a man's self from him who is a lover of us; for, according to the proverb, "He who is a friend in need is a friend indeed," and evidently shows that our person, and not our prosperity, was the object of his love. In this respect, our afflictions are profitable, as they pluck from us false-hearted parasites, who, like the ivy, cling about us, to suck our sap, and to make themselves fat with our spoil; and to discover to us our true friends, who are hardly discerned from the other till this time of trial; for, as the son of Sirach says, "A friend cannot be known in prosperity, and an enemy cannot be hidden in adversity."
—*Downame*, 1644.

(2155.) As it is with the deer that is hunted, when the huntsman goes into the park, he rouses the whole herd, and they all run together; but, if one be shot, and they see the blood run down, they will soon push him out of their company. Or as a man, being in his travel upon the road, and there being a sundial set up in the way, if the sun shine, he will step out of his way to take notice of it, but if the sun do not shine, he will go by a hundred times and never regard it. So, let but the sun of prosperity shine upon a man, then who but he?—he shall have friends more than a good many; but if a cloudy day come, he may easily number his acquaintance. When a man goes on in the credit of the world, he shall be welcome into all companies; but if he come once to be shot, and disgrace put upon him, then he shall soon perceive a cloud in every man's face, no one so much as regarding him.
—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(2156.) What is sweeter than a well-tuned lute, and what more delightful than a friend—one who can cheer us in sorrow with his wise and affectionate discourse! Nothing, however, is sooner untuned than a lute; and nothing is more fickle than human friendship. The tone of one changes with the weather, that of the other with fortune. With a clear sky, a bright sun, and a gentle breeze, you will have friends in plenty; but let fortune frown, and the firmament be overcast, and then your friends will prove like the strings of the lute, of which you will tighten ten before you will find one that will bear the stretch and keep the pitch.
—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(2157.) Oh, but a man is well off for friends while things flourish with him! The great world is always ready with its friendly ministry for whatever he may need. But sure as David, who harped in the palace of Saul, and had Saul's daughter to wife, had to take the wilderness of Sin for his refuge, and the rock of Machpelah for his habitation, when the countenance of Saul turned against him, so surely shall the man whom prosperity hath exalted have to shift for himself, forlorn and abandoned, when adversity setteth in upon him. And his talents shall now be discovered to have been nought, and his accomplishments to have been nought, and his services to have been nought. All the cords which lifted him on high and held him in his place, shall untwist rapidly, and he shall find himself solitary and unbefriended of all that fashionable crew who heretofore delighted to do him honour. Therefore, let every man rising in the world's favour look to his ways, and deal faithfully by his former friends and associates, and most faithfully by his God, that he may have a hiding-place and a secure refuge when the time of his trial and the days of his darkness come. —*Irving.*

(2158.) "Who is a friend like me?" said the shadow to the body. "Do I not follow you wherever you go? Sunlight or moonlight I never forsake you."

"It is true," said the body; "you are with me in sunlight and moonlight, but where are you when neither sun nor moon shines upon me? The true friend abides with us in darkness."

(2159.) Sentiments of friendship which flow from the heart cannot be frozen in adversity.

13. Its surest proof is also its severest test.

(2160.) Thou mayest be sure that he that will in private tell thee of thy faults is thy friend, for he adventures thy dislike, and doth hazard thy hatred; for there are few men that can endure it; every man for the most part delighting in self-praise, which is one of the most universal follies that bewitcheth mankind.
—*Sir W. Raleigh*, 1552–1618.

(2161.) The noblest part of a friend is an honest boldness in the notifying of errors. He that tells me of a fault, aiming at my good, I must think him wise and faithful: wise, in spying that which I see not; faithful in a plain admonishment, not tainted with flattery. —*Fellthan*, 1678.

(2162.) It is one of the severest tests of friendship to tell your friend of his faults. If you are angry with a man, or hate him, it is not hard to go to him and stab him with words; but so to love a man that you cannot bear to see the stain of sin upon him, and to speak painful truth through loving words,—that *is* friendship. But few have such friends. Our enemies usually teach us what we are at the point of the sword. —*Beecher.*

14. Is easily destroyed.

(2163.) Life is full of paradoxes. There are

some slight causes which will destroy the strongest friendship. Great causes will not always impair it. A sarcastic and disparaging speech made by a friend concerning his friend in his absence, and repeated by some mischief-maker, will invariably disturb friendship; while an angry altercation, or some injury to person or to property, will often leave friendship unharmed.

When alienation begins, it increases at a very rapid rate. The rust-spot multiplies apace. The mildew spreads quickly. The rift in the lute becomes longer and longer. —*S. Martin.*

15. The difficulty of repairing its breaches.

(2164.) A rupture in the friendship of sensitive and refined nature is generally serious in its consequences. Coarse stones, when fractured, may be cemented again; precious ones less easily.
—*E. Cook.*

16. How it is to be maintained.

(2165.) There is not anything eats out friendship sooner than concealed grudges. If between my friend and myself a private thought of unkindness arise, I will presently tell it, and be reconciled: if he be clear, I shall like him the better when I see his integrity; if faulty, confession gains my pardon, and binds me to love him; and though we should in the discussion jar a little, yet I will be sure to part friendly. Fire almost quenched, and laid abroad, dies presently; put together, it will burn the better. Every such breach as this will unite affection faster: a little shaking prefers the growth of the tree. —*Felltham*, 1668.

(2166.) He that doth a base thing in zeal for his friend, burns the golden thread that ties their hearts together. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(2167.) It is a noble and great thing to cover the blemishes and to excuse the failings of a friend; to draw a curtain before his stains, and to display his perfections; to bury his weaknesses in silence, but to proclaim his virtues upon the house-top. —*South*, 1663–1716.

(2168.) Those, though in highest place, who slight and disoblige their friends, shall infallibly come to know the value of them, by having none when they shall most need them.
—*South*, 1633–1716.

(2169.) It is decreed by Providence that nothing truly valuable shall be obtained in our present state but with difficulty and danger. He that hopes for that advantage which is to be gained from unrestrained communication must sometimes hazard, by unpleasing truths, that friendship which he aspires to merit. The chief rule to be observed in the exercise of this dangerous office, is to preserve it pure from all mixture of interest or vanity; to forbear admonition of reproof when our consciences tell us that they are incited, not by the hopes of reforming faults, but the desire of showing our discernment, or gratifying our own pride by the mortification of another.
—*Dr. S. Johnson*, 1709–1784.

17. The best friend.

(2170.) When I see leaves drop from their trees in the beginning of autumn, just such, think I, is the friendship of the world; just such are the comforts and joys of this life. While the sap of maintenance lasts, my friends will swarm in abundance, my joys and comforts will abide with me; but when the sap ceases, the spring which supplies them fails; in the winter of my need they leave me naked. And those few leaves which I see falling, remind me of the coming winds, and rains, when those trees shall be wholly stripped of their leaves; and of that season, that evil day, when all that administers to the gaiety and comfort of life shall fall from under me. Happy he who has that "Friend which," saith the Scriptures, "sticketh closer than a brother," and that peace, and those pleasures, which are at God's right hand, and which shall never fade away. —*Salter*, 1840.

18. Is not limited to this life.

(2171.) The friendship of high and sanctified spirits loses nothing by death but its alloy; failings disappear, and the virtues of those whose "faces we shall behold no more" appear greater and more sacred when beheld through the shades of the sepulchre. —*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(2172.) I am convinced that the extension and perfection of friendship will constitute great part of the future happiness of the blest. Many have lived in various and distant ages and countries, perfectly adapted (I mean not merely in their being generally estimable, but in the agreement of their tastes, and suitableness of their dispositions) for friendship with each other, but who, of course, could never meet in this world. . . . I should be sorry to think such a wish absurd and presumptuous, or unlikely to be gratified. —*Whately*, 1781–1863.

FUTURE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

I. *REASONABLENESS OF BELIEF IN THEIR REALITY.*

(2173.) As sure as there is an earth for thee to tread upon, and as sure as there is a sun whose light thou seest; so sure is there a heavenly everlasting glory for every converted, persevering soul. There can be no better ground of assurance than the Word of God. I know that man, whilst he is in this flesh, is strange to things beyond his sense, and hath a natural desire to have his senses themselves to be the inlets of his knowledge; and therefore he is apt to think that either he is uncertain of all that he seeth not (unless he hath seen the like that may help him to understand it), or else that his knowledge of it is as no knowledge; but this is a weakness unworthy of a man. What if you had never seen London, or any such city, and should hear the glory of it described by others; would you think it uncertain that there is such a place, because you have not seen it? Nay, further, you have not seen your souls, do you think it therefore uncertain whether you have a soul or no? A man that is born blind did never see the sun, and yet he will not doubt whether there be a sun, when all the world about him telleth him so: and shall not the Word of God be taken as soon as the word of a man? You never saw God Himself, and yet it is the grossest error in the world to think that there is no God when we see every day the works that He hath made; and which we know could none of them make themselves: you see that which assureth you of the things that are unseen. You see the Word of God; you see His works and daily providences; you see a Divine

testimony, the sufficient ground of your belief. Noah did not see the flood when he laboured so many years in making the ark. But though the unbelieving world might deride him in the beginning, at the last the flood came and did convince them. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2174.) We have abundantly more assurance of the recompense of another world than we have of many things of this world, which yet have a greater influence upon our actions, and govern the lives of the most prudent and considerate men. Men generally hazard their lives and estates upon terms of greater uncertainty than the assurance which we have of another world. Men venture to take physic upon probable grounds of the integrity and skill of their physician, and yet the want of either of these may hazard their lives: and men take physic upon greater odds; for it certainly causeth pain and sickness, and doth but uncertainly procure and recover health; the patient is sure to be made sick, but not certain to be made well; and yet the danger of being worse, if not of dying, on the one hand, and the hope of success and recovery on the other, make this hazard and trouble reasonable. Men venture their whole estates to places which they never saw, and that there are such places, they have only the concurrent testimony and agreement of men; nay, perhaps have only spoken with them that have spoken with those that have been there. No merchant ever insisted upon the evidence of a miracle to be wrought, to satisfy him that there were such places as the East and West Indies, before he would venture to trade thither: and yet this assurance God hath been pleased to give the world of a state beyond the grave, and of a blessed immortality in another life.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(2175.) Let it be granted, that the assurance which we have of future rewards falls short of the evidence of sense. . . . [Yet] we have as much as is abundantly sufficient to justify every man's discretion, who, for the great and eternal things of another world, hazards or parts with the poor and transitory things of this life. The greatest affairs of *this* world, and the most important concernments of *this* life, are all conducted only by moral demonstrations. Men every day venture their lives and estates only upon moral assurance. For instance, men who were never at the East or West Indies, or in Turkey or Spain, yet do venture their whole estate in traffic thither, though they have no mathematical demonstration but only moral assurance that there are such places. Nay, which is more, men every day eat and drink, though I think no man can demonstrate out of Euclid or Apollonius, that his baker, brewer, or cook, has not conveyed poison into his meat or drink. And that man that would be so wise and cautious, as not to eat or drink until he could demonstrate this to himself, I know no other remedy for him but that in great gravity and wisdom he must die for fear of death. And for any man to urge that, though men in temporal affairs proceed upon moral assurances, yet there is greater assurance required to make men seek heaven and avoid hell, seems to me to be highly unreasonable. For such an assurance of things as will make men circumspect and careful to avoid a lesser danger, ought in all reason to awaken men much more to the avoiding of a greater; such an assurance as will sharpen men's desire and quicken their endeavour for the obtaining of a lesser good, ought in all reason to animate men more powerfully, and to inspire them with a greater vigour and industry in the pursuit of that which is infinitely greater. For why the same assurance should not operate as well in a great danger as in a less, in a great good as in a small and inconsiderable one, I can see no reason, unless men will say, that the greatness of an evil or danger is an encouragement to men to run upon it, and that the greatness of any good and happiness ought in reason to dishearten men from the pursuit of it.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

II. *ARE NECESSARY TO RESTRAIN MEN FROM CRIME.*

(2176.) If man have no life to live but this, and no further end of his actions than a beast, nor any further account to give, then he is indeed but one of the higher sorts of beasts, differing but gradually from a dog, as a dog doth from a swine. And if this be indeed thy judgment of thyself, I demand, whether or no thou be content to be used as a beast? wilt thou not take it ill to be called or judged a beast by another? Or wouldst thou have others judge better of thee than thyself? wouldst thou have no man regard thy prosperity or life any more than a beast is to be regarded? a beast hath no property, no, not of that which nature hath given him. You accuse not yourselves of doing him any wrong, when you deprive the sheep of his fleece, or when you make a constant drudge of your horse or ox. And do you think it lawful before God for any one that can but master you to do the like by you? To strip you naked, and to make packhorses of you, and use you as their slaves? we take it to be no sin to take away the lives of beasts, if it be but for our own commodity. We kill oxen, and calves, and sheep, and swine, and fowl, and fishes for our daily food. And is it lawful before God for others to do so by you? Should nothing restrain them but want of power to overcome you? If you say that you are beasts, as beasts you should be used. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

III. *ARE NECESSARY TO VINDICATE THE JUSTICE OF GOD.*

(2177.) There is no such execution in this life of the laws of God, as are sufficient to the ends of government. The wicked prosper, and destroy the just: the best do most deny their flesh, and are oppressed by others. You see this in yourselves, and make it an argument for your infidelity. But stay a little till the assizes come. It follows not that there is no government or justice, because the thief or murderer is not hanged before the assizes, or as soon as he hath done the act.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

IV. *WHY THEY ARE HIDDEN FROM US.*

(2178.) If any shall here say, "But why would not God let us have a sight of heaven or hell when He could not but know that it would more generally and certainly prevail for the conversion and salvation of the world. Doth He envy us the most effectual means?"

I answer, "Who art thou, O man, that disputest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

Must God come down to the bar of man to render an account of the reason of His works! Why do you not also ask Him a reason of the nature, situation, magnitude, order, influences, &c., of all the stars, and superior orbs, and call Him to an account for all His works? When yet there are so many things in your own bodies of which you little understand the reason, is it not intolerable impudence for such worms as we are, so low, so dark, to question the eternal God, concerning the reason of His laws and dispensations? Do we not shamefully forget our ignorance and our distance?

But if you must have a reason, let this suffice you. It is fit that the government of God be suited to the nature of the reasonable subject. And reason is made to apprehend more than we see, and by reaching beyond sense, to carry us to seek things higher and better than sense can reach. If you would have a man understand no more than he sees, you would almost equalise a wise man and a fool, and make a man too like a beast. Even in worldly matters, you will venture upon the greatest cost and pains for the things that you see not, nor ever saw. He that hath a journey to go to a place that he never saw will not think that a sufficient reason to stay at home. The merchant will sail a thousand miles to a land and for a commodity that he never saw. Must the husbandman see the harvest before he plough his land, and sow his seed? Must the sick man feel that he hath health before he use the means to get it? Must the soldier see that he hath the victory before he fight? You would take such conceits in worldly matters to be the symptoms of distraction; and will you cherish them where they are most pernicious? Hath God made man for any end, or for none? If none, he is made in vain: if for any, no reason can expect that he should see his end before he use the means, and see his home before he begin to travel towards it. When children first go to school, they do not see or enjoy the learning and wisdom which by time and labour they must attain. You will provide for the children which you are like to have before you see them. To look that sight, which is our fruition itself, should go before a holy life, is to expect the end before we use the necessary means. You see here, in the government of the world, that it is things unseen that are the instruments of rule, and motives of obedience. Shall no man be restrained from felony or murder, but he that seeth the assizes or the gallows? It is enough that he foreseeth them, as being made known by the laws. It would be no discrimination of the good and bad, the wise and foolish, if the reward and punishment must be seen. What thief so mad as to steal at the gallows, or before the judge? The basest habits would be restrained from acting, if the reward and punishment were in sight. The most beastly drunkard would not be drunk; the filthy fornicator would forbear his lust; the malicious enemies of godliness would forbear their calumnies and persecutions, if heaven and hell were open to their sight. No man will play the adulterer in the face of the assembly: the chaste and unchaste seem there alike: and so they would do if they saw the face of the most dreadful God. No thanks to any of you all to be godly if heaven were to be presently seen; or to forbear your sin if you saw hell fire! God will have a meeter way of trial. You shall believe His promises if ever you will have the benefit; and believe His threatenings if ever you will escape the threatened evil. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2179.) It further reconcileth me to this disposure and will of the blessed God, and this necessary natural distance and darkness of our mind, when I consider that if God, and heaven, and hell, were as near and open to our apprehensions as the things are which we see and feel, this life would not be what God intended it to be, a life of trial and preparation to another—a work, a race, a pilgrimage, a warfare; what trial would there be of any man's faith, or love, or obedience, or constancy, or self-denial? If we saw God stand by, or apprehended Him as if we saw Him (in degree), it would be no more praiseworthy or rewardable for a man to abhor all temptations to worldliness, ambition, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, cruelty, &c., than it is for a man to be kept from sleeping that is pierced with thorns, or for a man to forbear to drink a cup of melted gold which he knoweth will burn out his bowels, or to forbear to burn his flesh in fire. It were no great commendation to his chastity, that would forbear his filthiness if he saw or had the fullest apprehensions of God; when he will forbear it in the presence of a mortal man. It were no great commendation to the intemperate and voluptuous to have no mind of sensual delights if they had but such a knowledge of God as were equal to sight. It were no thanks to the persecutor to forbear his cruelty against the servants of the Lord if he "saw Christ coming with His glorious angels, to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel, and to be admired in His saints, and glorified in them that now believe." I deny not but this happily necessitated holiness is best in itself, and therefore will be our state in heaven. But what is there of trial in it; or how can it be suitable to the state of man, that must have good and evil set before him, and life and death left to his choice; and who must conquer if he will be crowned and approve his fidelity to his Creator against competitors, and must live a rewardable life before he have the reward?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

V. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE IMPENITENT IS ETERNAL.

1. This declaration is not inconsistent with what we know of God.

(2180.) If Scripture be certainly true, then the most terrible passages in it are certainly true; nothing is more hardly believed by men than that which will be most tormenting to their minds when it is believed, that none shall be saved but the regenerate and holy; and those that live not after the flesh, but the Spirit, and love God in Christ above all the world, even their own lives; and that, besides these few, all the rest shall be tormented in hell for ever. This is the doctrine that flesh and blood will hardly down with. They say or think they will never believe that God will be so unmerciful; as if God must needs be less merciful than man, because He is more just and holy, and will not be so indulgent to their flesh and sin as they are themselves, and would have Him to be. And I have known even godly men, through the remnant of their corruption and darkness in the things of God, and the violence of temptation, much troubled with their unbelief in this particular. But God cannot lie: the

Scripture being true, and the Christian religion certainly true, every part of it must needs be true. But because sensual nature looks for sensible demonstration or proof, let me ask the unbelievers this one question—"Do you believe that which you see and feel, and all the world feels as well as you?" You know that all mankind liveth here a life of trouble and misery; we come into the world in a very poor condition, and we pass through it in daily labour and sorrow, and we pass out of it through the dreadful pangs of death. What incessant labour have the most of them, how much want and misery, how much care and grief! Do you not see and feel how sicknesses do torment us? When one pain is over, another is at hand. Have you not seen some under such terrible fits of the gout, or stone, or other diseases, that they thought no torment could be greater; some with their legs rotting, and must be cut off; some with loathsome cancers and leprosies on them many years together; some that have lost their eyesight, have lost almost all the comfort of life; some that never could see; some that never could hear or speak? I have known some in such pain that they have cried out they did not believe there was greater in hell; some are mad, and some idiots: are not all these in a very miserable case? Now, I would ask you further if God may, without any unmercifulness, do all this to men, and that as a chastisement in the way to bring them to repentance; if He may, without unmercifulness, make a David cry out in misery, and wash his couch with his tears; and make a Job to lie scraping his sores on a dunghill; why should you think He cannot, without unmercifulness, torment incurable sinners in hell? Further, I would ask you this question: Suppose you had lived in Adam's paradise, or some condition of pleasure and rest, where you never had tasted of sickness, or labour, or want, or feared death, if God's Word had there told you, but that man shall endure so much misery as I have here mentioned and men daily suffer, and should die at last for his sin, would you have said, "I will never believe God would be so unmerciful"? You that say so now, would likely have said so then in this case; for feeling the pleasure yourselves, you would on the same ground have said, "God is unmerciful if He should make man so miserable;" and yet you see and feel that God doth it, and we know that He is not unmerciful. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2181.) "The character of God is Love; which is expressly against the horrible idea of the endless misery of any of His rational creatures." So, sir, you are pleased to assert. Another might from the same premises infer that the punishment of any of His rational creatures in hell, for ages of ages, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth (and this notwithstanding the death of His Son, and the omnipotence of His grace, which surely was able to have saved them from it), is horrible and incredible? Is it inconsistent with the benevolence of a supreme magistrate that he dooms certain characters to death? Rather, is it not an exercise of his benevolence? Should a malefactor persuade himself and his companions in guilt that His Majesty cannot possibly consent to their execution, without ceasing to be that lovely and good character for which he has been famed, would not his reasoning be as false in itself as it was injurious to the king? Nay, would it not be inimical to his own interest and that of his fellow-criminals; as, by raising a delusive hope, they are prevented from making a proper and timely application to the throne for mercy?

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

(2182.) They take for granted a certain notion of the mercy and goodness of God, with which everlasting punishment is inconsistent. Now the question is, whence this notion is derived by them, that they should be so confident of its truth as for its sake to efface the plain meaning of Scripture. The mercy and goodness of God need not to be lauded here, after what hath been written in the third part of this discourse. But though exceeding great, and greatly to be adored, and sufficient for the salvation of all the earth, these attributes do consist with others of a firmer texture and a sterner mood. Here are we, the sons of men, suffering daily pain, misery, and death, although we were not instrumental to the fall. God looks upon our case, and doth not hinder it. He hath sent a remedy, but by far the greater portion of men have never heard of it. Contemplate the condition of whole continents of the earth sweltering in sultry toil, or raging in fierce contests of mutual misery and destruction, oppressed by the wilfulness of single men, at whose pleasure they are bought and sold, imprisoned and put to death without knowledge of better things to come, or cheerful hope of any redress of wrong. All for what? for the sin of our first great parents, over whom we had no control; let them contemplate this, and see what stern attributes dwell by the side of Divine mercy and goodness. I confess, when I contemplate the administration of this woful world since the fall, so far as it is recorded in the annals of nations, I feel a shrinking terror of the sternness of Him in whose hands the government rests. The world hath been a very furnace of hot and murderous passions, a seething vessel of blood, which hath never rested, but smoked to heaven in vain. Even still, after the great propitiation and atonement for the world's sins it never resteth. Every day men are immolated upon a bloody altar, and their unshrived spirits pass in most desperate moods into eternity. Wickedness rageth, princes combine against the Lord and His Anointed, they filch the sacred authority of God, they plant their scornful foot upon the neck of noble nations, and they defy the tears and groans of millions to melt their stony hearts. Oh, my God! when will this have an end? when wilt Thou dash them in pieces like the potsherd, and vex them in Thy hot displeasure? Thus, when I look upon and remember from what small beginnings it arose, I, for one, cannot doubt of the Almighty's force of character to carry anything into effect. If God can exist with such a blighted region and tormented people under His government, why may He not also exist in the knowledge and permission of hell?

—*Irving.*

(2183.) Those who oppose the doctrine of future punishment, future chains and darkness, are accustomed to say they cannot believe that God will take pleasure in for ever punishing the sinner. They claim that He will provide some expedient, either annihilation at death, universal salvation, or restoration. But does He take pleasure in witnessing the terrible woe and pain which sin

entails upon its victims in this world? Does He take pleasure in seeing the inebriate and the sensualist irredeemably enslaved to their appetites and passions? And yet they are enslaved. In consequence of these things, men suffer. The world is full of misery. Why does He not prevent it? Are antecedent probabilities valid in opposition to facts? All believe that it will not be any personal gratification for God to withhold forgiveness from the finally impenitent merely for the sake of withholding it. That would not be Godlike. But may not some other motives influence Him? We know, from the very best authority, that sin is to be an eternal fact in the universe of God. As such, must it not have its own awful and isolated development, its own awful and isolated history? The majesty of God's natural laws requires that violations of them shall be followed by the infliction of penalties—An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Are these moral and spiritual laws less important? Would it be safe to admit certain characters into a place of which one of the primal ideas is security? Does not the peace of heaven demand that those who are selfish, and have not the spirit of Christ, which alone destroys selfishness; that those who are impenitent, unmerciful, and unforgiving beyond recovery; that those who choose darkness rather than light, because they have continued to love evil deeds, until they have learned to love nothing better;—does not safety require that such men be allowed to chain themselves outside the gates of the city? Lax administration towards such a class will work the ruin of any government. Heaven is no exception. Do not God's providence and revelation justify the conclusion that He is too wise and decisive to follow the pusillanimous course of a people who fail in a first conception of what treason means? Will He not make it odious throughout His domains? Will He not put such a stamp upon sin and treason that they will be known anywhere? To do it, is it not His duty? Will the righteous verdict of the universe excuse Him for not vindicating His broken laws by the enslavement of wilful and hardened traitors? Are not the traitors of His government those who deliberately and wilfully reject and resist Him? Sin is treason. It is of no use to say such traitors do not exist; they do exist. Mix well with the world, and you will see them. God's object in the punishment, the self-imposed punishment, of the sinner is not personal gratification or vindictiveness, but is resorted to as an extreme measure. It is a plan by which to prevent another catastrophe in His kingdom. One such is enough, full enough. The heart sickens at the thought of another. Loyalty throughout His vast empire, henceforth, is His grand design. The safety of an ever-progressive and ever-increasing kingdom is the problem. Extreme measures which now exist, but which were not commenced before Satan fell, and before sin entered the universe, can effect this. Shall God employ them, or not? They are in process of execution already: shall He arrest their normal action? Shall the event of death reverse all law, and make treason glorious? Shall an impenitent Satan be reinstated in Paradise? Shall the lights of heaven be reintrusted to his bloody and deathly hand? Universal and eternal interests hang trembling upon the answer "Yes," and "Farewell, heaven!" must be spoken in the same breath. Many earthly governments have stood for centuries, which would have had an early extinction but for their salutary and vigorous enactments against treason. Ostracism or loyalty, chains and granite walls or obedience, are the right and left ventricles of a nation's heart. The future, if our conclusions be correct, lies between one hell and one heaven, or two hells and no heaven.

—*Townsend.*

(2184.) Sometimes, in dark caves, men have gone to the edge of unspeaking precipices, and wondering what was the depth, have cast down fragments of rock, and listened for the report of their fall, that they might judge how deep that blackness was, and listening—still listening—no sound returns; no sudden splash, no clinking stroke as of rock against rock—nothing but silence, utter silence! And so I stand upon the precipice of life, I sound the depths of the other world with curious inquiries. But from it comes no echo and no answer to my questions. No analogies can grapple and bring up from the depths of the darkness of the lost world any distinct probable truths. No philosophy has line and plummet long enough to sound the depths. There remains for us only the few authoritative and solemn words of God. These declare that the bliss of the righteous is everlasting; and with equal directness and simplicity they declare that the doom of the wicked is everlasting.

And therefore it is that I make haste, with an inconceivable ardour, to persuade you to be reconciled to your God. I hold up before you that God who loves the sinner and abhors the sin; who loves goodness with infinite fervour, and breathes it upon those who put their trust in Him; who makes all the elements His ministering servants; who sends years, and weeks, and days, and hours, all radiant with benefaction, and if we would but hear their voice, all pleading the goodness of God as an argument of repentance and of obedience. And remember that this is the God who yet declares that He will at last by no means clear the guilty! Make your peace with Him now, or abandon all hopes of peace. —*Beecher.*

2. Guilt is not to be measured by the time occupied in transgression.

(2185.) Do not, because the sin is committed in a small moment, calculate that therefore the punishment also must be a matter of a moment. Seest thou not those men, who for a single theft, or a single act of adultery, committed in a small amount of time, oftentimes have spent their whole life in prisons, and in mines, struggling with continual hunger and every kind of death? And there is no one to set them at liberty, or to say, "The offence took place in a small amount of time: the punishment too should have its time, equivalent to that of the sin." —*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

(2186.) It is objected that there is no proportion between time and eternity, and, consequently, that to punish man eternally for doing wrong in his short lifetime is inequitable. While it is not denied that punishment is merited, it is contended that there should be some proportion between the crime and the penalty.

In answer to this objection, let us examine the law of proportion in the light of social laws. Does the idea of proportion amount roughly to this, that

a day's crime should be met by a day's punishment; that a man who does wrong to-day should be punished to-morrow, and restored to confidence the day after? The objector will probably say, "No, not exactly that; but say that a day's crime should be met by a month's punishment, or a year's; only let there be some proportion between the crime and the penalty." The answer does not relieve the difficulty. What is the moral proportion between one day and a month, or one day and a year? Does nothing depend on the nature of the crime? For example: a man commits a petty larceny; would the objector say that a month's imprisonment would be enough? Another man, say, commits murder; would the objector say that a year's punishment would suffice? But why should the one criminal be punished a month and the other a year? It is urged that the nature of the crime determines that. Let this be granted; then it will appear that the proportion is really not one of time but of turpitude. In reality society proceeds upon the principle that the extent of time occupied in perpetration of a criminal act is not to be taken into account in considering the punishment which is to be awarded. Nor ought it to be accounted of. Less time may be occupied in taking away a life than in committing a burglary; but, on the principle of strict proportion (which sophistically proceeds on the idea of mere duration), the burglar should undergo a longer punishment than the murderer. But society will not allow this; its moral instincts overrule its sentimentalities, and demand that the gravity of the crime should determine the gravity of the punishment.

An illustration may be useful here. Thirty years ago, let it be supposed, a criminal forged the reader's name to a cheque for a thousand guineas. He did it in a few moments; a stroke or two of the skilled pen, and the deed was done. The criminal never confessed the act; never uttered a penitential word; he suffered imprisonment for ten years; and now for twenty years he has been at large. Has the reader forgiven him? Has he restored him to confidence? Has he invited the offender into his family circle? Has he replaced him at the commercial desk? The reader says, "No." But what becomes of the argument of proportion? Let it be remembered that the criminal was imprisoned ten years for a crime committed in less than ten minutes. Was not the punishishment sufficient? Think of ten minutes being multiplied into ten years, and then say whether more can be reasonably demanded. But it may be urged that the criminal is impenitent; he never owns his sin, never asks forgiveness, and treats the injured man as if he himself had been injured. The injured man is so far philanthropic as to say that he will meet the criminal on the first sign of contrition—he only waits an acknowledgment of the guilt and promise of better behaviour. Nothing can be more humane,—nothing more reasonable; and the point to be specially remarked is that this is the very principle upon which the divine government in relation to sin proceeds: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Man's own heart being witness, he proceeds upon the very principle of adjudication which he condemns in the government of God.

The sum of the answer is this: if a criminal continue to be impenitent respecting any crime, he is as guilty of that crime on the last day of his life as he was in the very hour of its committal, though he may have survived that hour fifty years. Time has no mitigating influence upon guilt. The question between the criminal and society is not one of time, but of penitence, and, so long as he is impenitent, society must, by a compulsion deeper than all formal law, mark and avoid him. Society does this. If particular members of society do not do so, they are immoral—connivance with unrepented guilt being an affront to the spirit of virtue. Society punishes (more or less lightly, more or less directly) all impenitent offenders against its laws, and punishes them throughout their whole lifetime, which is as much of eternity as its retributive influence can encompass. In very grave cases, indeed, society will not allow the penal shadow to pass from the reputation even after death; so truly is this the case that there are names which cannot now be pronounced, though they represent long extinct lives, without bringing a frown upon the countenances of all who hear them. Is this eternal punishment, or is it not?

The question of proportion may be looked at in another light. A citizen who has maintained a good reputation for half a century as a pure, upright, noble man; who has figured on subscription lists as a generous benefactor of the poor; whose name obtained the highest credit on the Exchange,—has been proved guilty of a crime: the crime was being perpetrated in imagined secrecy; the criminal had no idea that any eye was upon him; the fact, however, becomes known; and the question is, How does society treat the tower which was fifty years in building? Society razes the very foundations, and forgets half a century of unchallenged life in one day's discovered villany. But where is the law of proportion? Why not deduct one day from the fifty years' reputation, or regard the crime but as a spot on the disc of a brilliant life? The law of proportion founded on mere duration would, if strictly interpreted, require this deduction; but society happily forgets its formal logic when under the influence of high moral inspiration, and in its own arbitraments reproduces the government of God.

The argument of proportion as to time is obviously fallacious. No crime is self-contained. All actions are influential. What is done in an hour may affect society through many generations. Long after the pebble is at the bottom of the lake, the circles multiply and expand on the surface. The lifting of a hand sends a vibration to the stars.

—*Parker.*

3. Those who are consigned to it have already proved themselves incorrigible.

(2187.) Say not unto me, "Where is the rule of justice preserved entire, if the punishment has no end?" Rather when God does anything, obey His decisions, and submit not what is said to human reasonings. But, moreover, how can it be anything else than just, for one who has experienced innumerable blessings from the beginning, and then committed deeds worthy of punishment, and neither by threat nor benefit improved at all, to suffer punishment? For if thou inquire what is absolute justice; it was meet that we should have perished immediately from the beginning, according to the definition of strict justice. Rather not even then according to the

rule of justice only, for the result would have had in it kindness too, if we had suffered this also. For when any one insults him that has done him no wrong, according to the rule of justice he suffers punishment: but when it is his benefactor, who, bound by no previous favour, has bestowed innumerable kindnesses, who alone is the Author of his being, who is God, who breathed his soul into him, who gave ten thousand gifts of grace, whose will is to take him up into heaven;—when, I say, such an one, after so great blessings, is met by insult, daily insult, in the conduct of the other party; how can that other one be thought worthy of pardon? Dost thou not see how He punished Adam for one single sin?

"Yes," you will say; "but He had given him Paradise, and caused him to enjoy much favour." Nay, surely it is not all as one, for a man to sin in the enjoyment of security and ease, and in a state of great affliction. In fact, this is the dreadful circumstance, that thy sins are the sins of one not in any Paradise, but amid the innumerable evils of this life; that thou art not sobered even by affliction, as though one in prison should still practise his crime. However, unto thee He has promised things yet greater than Paradise. But neither has He given them now, lest He should unnerve thee in the season of conflicts; nor has He been silent about them, lest He should quite cast thee down with thy labours. As for Adam, he committed but one sin, and brought on himself certain death; whereas we commit ten thousand trangressions daily. Now if he by that one act brought upon himself so great an evil, and introduced death, what shall not we suffer who continually live in sins, and instead of Paradise have the expectation of heaven?

—*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

4. They are punished for ever, because they would sin for ever.

(2188.) Two men playing at tables by an inch of candle in the night time, and being very earnest in their game, the candle goeth out, and they perforce give over, who, no doubt, if the light had lasted, would have played all night very willingly. This inch of candle is the time of life allotted to a wicked man, who is resolved to spend it all in sinful pleasures and pastimes; and if it would last perpetually, he would never leave his play: and, therefore, since he would sin eternally (though by reason the light of his life goeth out, he cannot), he deserveth eternal punishment. —*Inchinus.*

(2189.) How is eternity of punishment inconsistent with the goodness of God. Nay, how can God be good without it? If wickedness always remain in the nature of man, is it not fit the rod should always remain on the back of man? Is it a want of goodness that keeps an incorrigible offender in chains, in a bridewell? While sin remains, it is fit it should be punished.

—*Charnock*, 1620–1680.

5. A universal amnesty is morally inadmissible.

(2190.) A third objection urges that God should issue a universal amnesty,—open every prison door in the universe,—say to devils, "You are forgiven," and to lost men, "Be free." This would be considered magnanimous as to be worthy of God. The objection is not without plausibility. Two things, however, appear to be forgotten. (1) That an amnesty could not, in itself, work any moral change. Look at the case from a national point of view. Suppose that the monarch were to proclaim a universal amnesty: would the thief, the murderer, the incendiary, or any other criminal, be thereby constituted a virtuous member of society? Such an amnesty, instead of being a blessing, would be a curse; liberty would degenerate into licentiousness. If the insane idea of a universal amnesty were seriously proposed, all virtuous men would protest against throwing back the flood-gates and liberating torrents of crime. What, then, would God's amnesty do? Would a demon be less a demon on one side of a prison door than on another? Does the door make the demon? The second thing that is forgotten by the objector is (2) That forgiveness requires the consent of two parties. The term "forgiveness" is often used with a most inadequate conception of its meaning. An enemy cannot by any act of so-called forgiveness be turned into a friend.

—*Parker.*

6. A second probation is inconceivable.

(2191.) Is it suggested that a second probation might meet the case? A second probation is an impossibility; but even assuming the possibility, where would be the equity? Give men to know that there would be a second probation, and how many of them would care for the first? And if they neglect the first, they are so much weaker in moral nerve to encounter the discipline of the second. And if there should be two probations why not three?

"But say I could repent, and could obtain
By act of grace my former state; how soon
Would height recall high thoughts, how soon unsay
What feigned submission swore! ease would recant
Vows made in pain, as violent and void."

How do men regard this probationary idea as it comes up in the concerns of daily life? There is one seed-time in the year; an indolent farmer neglects it, and then sets up the theory that to have only an annual seed-time is ridiculous! When poverty comes as "an armed man," does society pity or reproach him? It may be suggested that possibly the sufferings might have a good effect upon the lost; it might cause them to reflect; it might bring them to repentance. It is forgotten, however, that everything has been done for them which even God could do: they have resisted the whole system of redeeming love; thrust away the bleeding and dying Christ; and, if mere suffering will save any man, God has made a stupendous mistake in sending His Son to save sinners. Hell would then be more successful than the Son of God.

—*Parker.*

7. The fact is not affected by our belief or disbelief.

(2192.) Human opinions and human feelings have no bearing on this doctrine. They do not, they cannot affect it. The Bible travels on from age to age bearing the same fearful doctrine, and is unchanged in its warnings and appeals. Some of each generation listen, are admonished; and saved;—the rest pass on and die. Human opinion does not alter facts. Human opinion does not remove deathbeds, and graves, and sorrows, nor will it remove and annihilate the world of woe. Facts stand un-

affected by the changes of human belief; and fearful events roll on just as though men expected them.

Nine-tenths of all the dead expected not to die at the time when in fact they have died, and more than half now listen to no admonition that death will ever come. They who have died had an expectation that they would live many years. But death came. He was not stayed by their belief or unbelief: he came steadily on. Each day he took a stride towards them—and step by step he advanced, so that they could not retreat or evade him till he was near enough to strike; and they fell. And so, though the living will not hear, death comes to them. And so the doom of the sinner rolls on. Each day, each hour, each moment it draws near. Whether he believes it or not makes no difference in the fact: it comes. It will not recede. In spite of all attempts to reason, or to forget it, the time comes; and at the appointed time the sinner dies. Cavil and ridicule do not affect this. There is no power in a joke to put away convulsions, and fevers, and groans. The laugh and the song close no grave, and put back none of the sorrows of the second death. The dwellers in Pompeii could not put back the fires of the volcano by derision, nor would the mockery of the inhabitants of Sodom have stayed the sheets of flame that came from heaven. The scoffing sinner dies; and is lost just like others; the young man that has learned to cavil and deride religion dies just like others. No cavil has yet changed a fact; none has ever stayed the arrow of death. —*Barnes.*

GIFTS.

1. Their variety.

(2193.) There is not greater variety of colours, and qualities in plants and flowers, with which the earth like a carpet of needle-work is variegated for the delight and service of man, than there is of gifts in the minds of men, natural and spiritual, to render them useful to one another, both in civil societies and Christian fellowship. The Christian, as well as man, is intended to be a sociable creature; and for the better managing this spiritual commonwealth among Christians, God doth wisely and graciously provide and impart gifts, suitable to the place every one stands in to his brethren; as the vessels are larger or less in the body natural, according to their place therein.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2194.) As no key can open all locks, so no one man possesses all talents. God distributes His gifts according to His holy will, this to one, that to another; and none is of himself sufficient for all emergencies, and independent of the help of others.

—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(2195). Amongst the trees of the wood there is a great variety: the sturdy oak; the flexile willow; the solid maple; the graceful ash; the terraced cedar, with cones uprising through each grassy-looking lawn of tender leafery; the larch, in lieu of bells hanging its scarlet blossoms from every pointed arch of its green pagoda; the stiff stout holly, disdainful of the breeze; the fidgety aspen, all in a flutter at the faintest sigh; the spacious chestnut, enclasping the glebe in its bountiful branches; the strict solemn cypress, with every appressed twiglet pointing straight up to heaven. As with the form, so with the bark or the timber; the ebony sinking like stone, the cork riding on the crest of the billow, the elder so soft and spongy, the box in his firm structure retentive of the finest engraving; the homely deal, the thyine veneer emulating the spots of the panther or the plumes of the peacock—beautiful some, but useful all, and not to be interchanged with advantage. An ashen bow would be no better than a yew-tree lance. You do not choose the fir for the prince's table, and even England's oak would make a sorry mast for "some great ammiral."

Through all God's kingdoms we trace the like variety, and still we find it when we rise to the minds of men. There is endless diversity in their nature, and for every form and style abundant use; and it is best when they are not transposed. Melancthon would have made a poor substitute for Luther, but the absence of Melancthon would have left a poor Reformation. Great as was the invention of the Sunday-school, it was not revealed to Bishop Butler, but was reserved for Robert Raikes; and yet if the former had not written the "Analogy," it may be doubted if the latter could have supplied the desideratum. And although Jeremy Taylor and John Bunyan had each a fine fancy, the world is now agreed that if they had changed places they could have made it no better; we are quite content with the Pilgrim of the one and the Golden Grove of the other. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(2196.) The plough is fatal to the picturesque. A country under husbandry, with its farms and formal divisions, each field throughout its whole extent of the same crop and colour, with all God's beautiful flowers cut down and cast out under the name of weeds, is as inferior in point of beauty as it is superior in point of profit to moor or mountain. How tame your levelled fields of wheat or barley compared with the rudest hill-side, where green bracken, and the plumes of the fern, and the bells of the foxglove, and brown heath with its purple blossoms, and the hoar, grey, rugged stones that lie scattered in wild confusion, unite to form a mantle, in richness and variety of hues, such as loom never wove and queen never wore. This variety should minister to more than taste. A pious mind, extracting food for devotion from the flowers which supply honey to the bee, finds profit where others find only pleasure, and, rising from nature up to nature's God, exclaims with David, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all!"

Without this variety, how tame our gardens with every flower in form and colour the counterpart of another; and how monotonous the music of early morn did every lark in the sky, linnet in the bush, rook and ringdove in the woods, all utter the same notes! But variety characterises every department of nature. Each lamb of the flock has a bleat known to its own mother; each rose on the bush has its own shape and shade of colour; and there is not a lark that hangs carolling in the clouds but has a voice recognised by the brood above whose grassy nest she sings her morning hymn, calling the drowsy world to rise for worship and for work. Nor is this variety anywhere more remarkable than in mankind. It is calculated that there are ten hundred millions of our race scattered over the five continents and countless islands of the globe. Now, while in their grand characteristics, in their features,

organs, voices, limbs, and general form these all resemble each other, yet there are not two faces, for instance, out of these ten hundred millions, which are exactly alike. Nor does a rich, boundless, divine variety characterise and adorn only this world of ours in the living creatures of its lands and seas, the shells which strew its shores, the flowers and fruits of its fertile plains, its shaggy mountains, up to their snowy crests. It shines above us—in stars fixed or moving, stars single, stars in pairs, stars in clusters, some sparkling with borrowed, others with native light; in the sun that runs his daily round, and comets, that with fiery locks streaming out behind them rush away into darkness, nor return for a hundred, perhaps for a thousand years. And high above that starry firmament, amid the splendour of the upper sanctuary, in angels and archangels, in cherubim and seraphim, in saints on higher thrones and crowns of brighter glory, in the various orders of unfallen and the various honours of ransomed spirits, we see a manifold and magnificent diversity in the works of God.

From this we might conclude that the kingdom of grace would present something of the same variety as that which distinguishes all His other works; and that as neither all angels nor all insects are formed alike, no more would all Christians be so. And thus it is; for variety is one of the many points at which the kingdoms of grace and nature touch. Christians have individual peculiarities which, as much as their faces, distinguish them from each other; and this is rather a beauty than a blemish—a charm rather than a fault. Some have one grace and some another, in such prominence, that John's love, and Peter's ardour, and Paul's zeal, and Job's patience, and Moses' meekness, and Jeremiah's tenderness, and Abraham's faith, have become proverbial. Nor is this variety, as among the flowers of moor and meadow, an element merely of beauty. It is a power; an element of the highest utility in the Church. Hence the mistake of those who would have all Christians modelled on their own pattern, as, for example, of some modest, retiring, gentle spirits, who cannot appreciate the worth and usefulness of those whom God has cast in a rough mould and made of stern stuff.

In the early ages of the Church, when she is endowed with supernatural powers, and some have the gift of wisdom, others of knowledge, others of faith, others of healing, others of miracles, others of prophecy, others of tongues, others of interpretation, Paul, by a beautiful analogy, recommends mutual respect—illustrating the advantages of variety, and showing how people with very different gifts may nevertheless be true members of Christ's true Church. "If the foot," he says, "shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." We live in an age of ordinary gifts; but it is as true of these ordinary as of those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, that there is as much utility as beauty in the diverse temperaments and endowments of Christian men. What is diverse is not of necessity adverse. God has different kinds of work to do; and since He chooses to employ men, He has need of different kinds of instruments.

—*Guthrie.*

(2197.) Men have different spheres. It is for some to evolve great moral truths, as the heavens evolve stars, to guide the sailor on the sea and the traveller on the desert; and it is for some, like the sailor and the traveller, simply to be guided.

—*Beecher.*

(2198.) Such people forget that there are diversities of gifts. He who taught the lark to trill, taught the eagle to scream; He who moulded the dewdrop and caused it to hang in silence on the fringe of the flower, poured out the boundless sea and caused it to roar night and day as if uttering the prayer of all earthly trouble. We should allow more for all this marvellous diversity. The foot and hand, the eye and ear, are members of the same body, and there should be no schism.

—*Joseph Parker.*

2. We are neither to envy nor to despise those whose endowments are different from our own.

(2199.) This work of Christ's House is varied to different individuals. "The Son of Man gave to every one," that is, to each one, his work. In one respect there is something common in the work of all, as there is a common salvation, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent."—"This is the will of God, even your sanctification." We have said this is common work for each one, and yet even here there may be variety in the form. There is a different colour of beauty in different stones that are all of them precious. One man may be burnishing to the sparkle of the diamond, while another is deepening to the glow of the ruby. For this reason there are such different temperaments in Christian character and varying circumstances in Christian life, that the foundation of the wall of the city may be garnished with all manner of precious stones. Each Christian has his own place and lustre in that temple, and therefore, there is no ground to disparage our neighbour, and none to despair of ourselves, if we are both in the hand of Christ. When we look from the individual life to the practical work, the variety is still more marked. There are different members, and all have not the same office. Some are there to teach—some to counsel and administer—some to tend the young—some to visit the sick-bed—some to conduct the temporal affairs of the Church—some to be liberal givers as God has prospered them, and some, without any formal mode of action, come under this description, which applies to them all: "Sons of God, without rebuke, shining as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life." It is very beautiful to see how the God who has bound His world into a grand harmony by its very diversity, has arranged for this same end in His Church, by giving the members their different faculties of work;—how the pure light that comes from the sun breaks into its separate hues when it touches the palace-house of Christ, with its varied cornices and turrets, till every colour lies in tranquil beauty beside its fellow. If it is not so it should be so; and as the Church grows it

will be so. Use and ornament, the corner-stone and the cope-stone, shall both be felt to have their due place. To see how this may be, is to perceive that an end can be put to all jealousies and heart-burnings, and may help us even now to take our position calmly and unenviously, working in our department, assured that our labour shall be found to contribute to the full proportion of the whole

—*Ker.*

(2200.) All men cannot work in the same way. "There are diversities of operation." Upon the face of a watch you may see an illustration of my meaning. On that small space you have three workers: there is the second-pointer, performing rapid evolutions; there is the minute-pointer, going at a greatly reduced speed; and there is the hour-pointer, tardier still. Now, any one unacquainted with the mechanism of a watch would conclude that the busy little second-pointer was doing all the work; it is clicking away at sixty times the speed of the minute-pointer; and as for the hour-hand, *that* seems to be doing no work at all. You can see in a moment that the first is busy, and in a short time you will see the second stir; but you must wait still longer to assure yourself of the motion of the third. So is it in the Church. There are active, fussy men, who appear to be doing the work of the whole community, and others who are slower. But can we do without the minute and hour-pointer? The noisy second-hand might go round its little circle for ever, without telling the world the true time. We should be thankful for all kinds of workers. The silent, steady hour hand need not envy its noisy little colleague. Every man must fill the measure of his capacity. Your business is to do your allotted work so as to meet the approbation of the Master.

—*Joseph Parker.*

3. Every man should devote himself to the task for which he is peculiarly qualified.

(2201.) Sanguine and non-sympathetic natures insist not only that every one, if he likes, may do the things which they do, but may do so easily. To a man like Lord Thurlow, coarse and contemptuous of mankind, it must have been a simple amazement when his kinsman Cowper resigned the clerkship of the Lords because he had not courage to read aloud minutes and petitions; but although the brazen Chancellor was a stranger to all trepidation, and it would have cost him no effort to read his own rhymes to the peers of Parnassus, it may be questioned if, even to secure the Great Seal, he could have written the "Task" or "John Gilpin." And although nothing can be more true than that talents increase by trading, it is also true that their right investment, the sort of trade best suited to each merchantman, is indicated by the natural turn or faculty; and we shall serve God and our generation best by turning to account the gift which He Himself has given. You who are fond of children, as most frank, true natures are, give yourself to teaching; and you who have a fervid forceful spirit, and find that spirit stirred by the state of our godless multitude, go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in. And you who cannot arrest or keep the children's ear, and to whom ought like preaching would be useless martyrdom, seek out some other ministry, consecrate the business talent, and in the savings' bank or provident fund, in the committee or council of the Church, "rule with diligence." Or, go forth and visit. The tired watcher in the sickroom release for a few hours of needful slumber. Take to the bed-rid child some plaything, to the destitue family some comfort. And whether you offer the brief prayer or read the words of Jesus to the invalid, "show mercy with cheerfulness;" try to do it as if you came and went in Christ's own company, and then, long after you have left, the consolation will remain.

It is thus that by each following out his own line of things the world's best work has been done, and in the free development and loving consecration of gifts, the Church has exhibited a diversity both useful and beautiful. It was thus that wherever John Macdonald went in perambulating the Highlands, a wave of spiritual influence went with him; and it was thus that, like a Baptist and a beloved disciple combined, George Whitefield startled and melted all England. It is thus that in our own day one Christian lady has sought out the prisoned, and another has softened and civilised the neglected navvy, and a third has mended "ragged homes," and a fourth has invented the Bible and Domestic Mission, and a fifth has rallied to the task of nursing so arduous yet so angel-like the refined and well trained amongst her countrywomen. And it is thus that in an employment however commonplace, and in a corner however inconspicuous, if you take up the task which your hand finds to do, and throw into it the might which God gives, the result will be genuine, solid, enduring. Let each do his own work in his own way, and as all good work is God's, you will soon see a more beautiful Church and a better world. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

4. Entail responsibility.

(2202.) The husbandman looks for more fruit from some of his fruit-trees than from others; those upon which he bestows most time, cost, and labour, from these he expects most fruit; and is displeased if his expectation be not answered accordingly.

This shadows out unto us that God expects greater returns of duty from some persons than from some others, and neglect thereof provokes God against them.

In the ceremonial law God required more sacrifices from the rich than from the poor: such as had great store of oxen, sheep, and other things to be offered in sacrifice, should not have been accepted had they offered "a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons," which yet were accepted from the poorer sort of persons. So also under the gospel, "to whom much is given, of them doth He require the more." God had done great things for Eli, and David, and expected (accordingly) greater returns of duty and obedience all their lives after; but they failing in some great particulars, God is sore displeased with them, and reckons up the great benefits and particular engagements they had received, and tells them he expected other returns from them. So also Hezekiah received much, and God looked for answerable returns; but he rendered not according to the benefits received, and God was displeased with him upon that account.

God planted a vineyard, and bestowed much care and pains about it, and looked for an answerable return of good fruits, but because it brought forth wild grapes instead of good and pleasant grapes, He laid it waste. Some have received more, and

lie under greater engagements from God than others, therefore God looks to receive more. This shows us the great danger such persons lie under who have received much from God, and return but little; having received many talents, and not making an answerable return by improving of them to the honour of God and advantage of His people; nay, who perhaps use all against God and His people. God gives to some many gifts of nature and common graces, much knowledge, learning, wisdom, great riches, honours, offices, places, much time, liberty, great and choice means of grace, special providences, and dispensations, and many other talents which others have not: of these God requires more than of those who have fewer and less of these things, and the not making suitable returns provokes God against them.

If God spared not His choice servants, Eli, David, Hezekiah, &c., if judgment begin at the house of God, how shall the ungodly and sinner escape? Let every one of us consider what we have received, that so we may make unto God some answerable returns: God looked for more (and received more) from him that had the five talents, than from him that had received but two.

No one (not the lowest, or meanest) is freed from making returns of duty to God: though God requires much from those who have received much, yet the mean person, who has but a little, must return of that little. "Let him work with his hands, that he may have something to give to him that needeth;" and it will be "accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." So, also, of the use and improvements of all other talents, gifts, graces, liberty, power, and the rest. —*Austen.*

5. To whom they are a blessing.

(2203.) As the high hills after much tillage are often barren, whereas the low valleys, by the streams of waters passing through them, are very fruitful; even so the gifts of God joined with a swelling heart are fruitless, but joined with love and the grace of humility they edify. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

6. For what purpose they are to be used.

(2204.) Good parts employed ill are weapons that, being meant for our own defence, we madly turn their edges and wound ourselves: they might make me fair in show, but in substance more polluted: they would be but a saddle of gold to the back of a galled horse; adorn me they might, better me they could not. —*Felltham*, 1668.

(2205.) Every man should use his intellect, not as those who study in their libraries, when all the world is asleep, use their lamps, for their own seeing only; but as lighthouses use their lanterns, that those who are far off upon the deep may see the shining, and learn their way. God appoints our graces to be nurses to other men's weaknesses. —*Beecher.*

(2206.) Is there not danger that powers, capable of conferring, and therefore intended to confer, great benefits on our brethren and the Church of Christ, may be left to slumber amidst the quiet enjoyment of literary leisure: and that a life, envied by others, and not without its gratifications, may be as profitless, and not much less selfish than that of the covetous or of the voluptuary? Here, indeed, in the pursuits of learning and science, intellect trains its faculties and finds its weapons. But he would be an ill workman who was ever sharpening the tools he never used: nor would he be worthy of a warrior's name, who sat at home, while the enemy was in the field, polishing over again his untried armour, and pleased with the graceful drooping of his plume. And when God has given powers of genius to discover, or of reasoning to defend, or of imagination to illustrate the truth, where there are faculties and personal endowments, no less than station and opportunities to influence, to persuade, to originate or advance plans of good, and to carry on God's work of regenerating and blessing this fallen world; and all are allowed to terminate in the tranquil enjoyment of aimless, and perhaps, desultory study, or are concentrated with misplaced industry on some trifling and fruitless object: it can hardly be without misgiving and uneasy fear that the approach can be regarded of that awful day, when the hidden talent shall condemn its owner, and when not to have done good will rank the careless, indolent, and self-indulgent, on the left hand of the Judge, together with the workers of iniquity. —*Jackson.*

(2207.) In a little village at the foot of Mount Carmel lived a wise man, to whom the Spirit of God had given the power to comfort and to heal. He went into every dwelling where a sick man was lying, and healed him, or he comforted and strengthened the dying with gentle words, and soothed the complaints of those that wept, for he knew the hidden power of salutary herbs, as he knew the hearts of men, though he had hardly attained to manhood. Therefore he was loved by all men; each one besought him to come to his dwelling, and his fame was spread far and wide.

But behold, there came from the land of Mizraim a pestilence into the village of Mount Carmel and the adjacent country, and many people fell sick and died, for it was a grievous pestilence. But wheresoever any one fell sick of the evil disease, they sent for the wise man, that he might come to heal and to console by day and by night.

Then his strength failed him; and his soul was troubled, because the pestilence was often mightier than the strength of his art and of the medicinal herbs, and he began to fear for his own life. For he wanted humility, the crown of wisdom, so that he trusted in himself and in his knowledge, but not in the Lord.

Then the Spirit led him forth to Mount Carmel, and he doubted in himself if he should remain in the mountain and not return, or whether he should gather salutary herbs and plants for the comfort and refreshment of the sick. So he went, and said in his heart: "Nature has been my guide from the days of my youth. Therefore now she shall teach me what to do." He was standing before a flower, more beautiful in its bloom than Solomon in all his glory. Then he said: "This flower, with all her beauty and fresh young charms, blooms only *for herself;* she opens her blossom to the rays of the sun and the breeze, which comes from the west over the sea. What should man do more, but live for himself, without caring for others? I will remain on Mount Carmel and bloom among

the flowers, till, when my race is run, I fade at last like a flower, imperceptibly and gently.

Now a butterfly fluttered over the flower. He beheld it, and said: "No, thou dost teach me another thing. I will return to mankind, to the great and rich cities; I will go into the palaces, to earn the sweet fruit of joy and pleasure from my knowledge. As the butterfly hovers over the graceful flower, thus my life shall spread itself over my arts."

Saying this, he bent over the flower. Behold, there was a dead bee in the calyx. Too heavily laden with the delicate dust, she had breathed forth her little soul, in the midst of her labours.

He beheld, and gazed silently on the lifeless form of the insect, while the deep crimson of shame mantled his cheek. "Spirit of the Lord," exclaimed he at last, "I acknowledge Thee in Nature; pardon my anger and my folly! From henceforth I will follow Thee, and return, a faithful disciple, to Thee and my calling."

Then he collected the rarest plants and herbs of the mountain, and went humbly and with cheerful countenance back to the village, to the dwellings of the sufferers. —*F. A. Krummacher.*

7. How they are to be valued.

(2208.) The apostle considered *that* gift most desirable by which men might most edify one another. And hence that noble declaration of one of the most gifted of mankind: "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

Our estimate is almost the reverse of this: we value a gift in proportion to its rarity, its distinctive character, separating its possessor from the rest of his fellowmen; whereas, in truth, those gifts which leave us in lonely majesty apart from our species, useless to them, benefiting ourselves alone, are not the most godlike, but the least so; because they are dissevered from that beneficent charity which is the very being of God. Your lofty uncommunicable thoughts, your ecstasies, and aspirations, and contemplative raptures—in virtue of which you have estimated yourself as the porcelain of the earth, of another nature altogether, than the clay of common spirits—tried by the test of Charity; what is there grand in these if they cannot be applied as blessings to those that are beneath you? One of our countrymen had achieved for himself extraordinary scientific renown; he pierced the mysteries of nature, he analysed her processes, he gave new elements to the world. The same man applied his rare intellect to the construction of a simple and very common instrument—that well-known lamp which has been the guardian of the miner's life from the explosion of fire. His discoveries are his nobility in this world, his trifling invention gives him rank in the world to come. By the former he shines as one of the brightest luminaries in the firmament of science, by the latter, evincing a spirit animated and directed by Christian love, he takes his place as one of the Church of God.

And such is ever the true order of rank which graces occupy in reference to gifts. The most trifling act which is marked by usefulness to others is nobler in God's sight than the most brilliant accomplishment of genius. To teach a few Sunday-school children, week after week, commonplace simple truths—persevering in spite of dulness and mean capacities—is a more glorious occupation than the highest meditations or creations of genius which edify or instruct only our own solitary soul.

—*F. W. Robertson,* 1816–1853.

8. Are not to be gloried in.

(2209.) How nimbly does that little lark mount up, singing towards heaven in a right line! whereas the hawk, which is stronger of body and swifter of wing, towers up by many gradual compasses to his highest pitch. That bulk of body and length of wing hinder a direct ascent, and require the help both of air and scope to advance his flight; while the small bird cuts the air without resistance, and needs no outward furtherance of her motion.

It is no otherwise with the souls of men in flying up to their heaven. Some are hindered by those powers which would seem helps to their soaring up thither: great wit, deep judgment, quick apprehension, send about men, with no small labour, for the recovery of their own incumbrance; while the good affections of plain and simple souls raise them up immediately to the fruition of God. Why should we be proud of that which may slacken our way to glory? Why should we be disheartened with the small measure of that, the very want whereof may (as the heart may be affected) facilitate our way to happiness? —*Hall,* 1574–1656.

(2210.) When Solomon observes that there is "no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever," it is evidently not of the wise man's mere name he designs to speak. The name may be remembered while the man and his works are, to all practical purposes, forgotten. The world goes on just as if he had never been. The space he filled, when alive, was so large, his influence made itself felt in so many ways—his skilful and weighty hand touched and regulated so many of the springs that animate and govern human affairs, that it seemed as if his death must bring society to a stand. And yet the grave has scarcely closed over his mortal remains, when the place that knew him knows him no more. As the setting of the midnight moon brings stars into view, whose feebler rays were quenched before, even so does it come to pass that names which the wise man's, while it shone, threw into the shade, now take their place in the social firmament; and, though the light be less, the world moves on under it, as if none better or brighter had been ever known. "Let not, therefore, the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." —*Buchanan.*

9. Are not the highest good.

(2211.) Gifts do not commend us nor our services to God.

When you have good meat in a dish, possibly you will lay flowers upon it, cut oranges and lemons and lay upon the side of the dish; but a wise man knows that the meat is never the better for these flowers, or for the sugar that lies on the side of the

platter; a wise man knows that if those were wanting, the meat were never the worse.

Beloved! God our Father is of infinite wisdom: parts and gifts are flowers indeed, and they help to cook out a duty, and to make it more acceptable to men, but the Lord, who is Wisdom, knows that the duty is never the better for them; and He knows that when these flowers are wanting, the duty is never the worse. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

10. Are not an unmixed good.

(2212.) Joseph's coat made him finer than his brethren, but it caused all his trouble; so great gifts lift a saint up a little higher in the eyes of men, but they occasion many trials, from which thou who art low art exempt.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

11. Are not identical with grace.

(2213.) It is not every prayer evidenceth God's Spirit in us. Such as have no grace may excel in gifts, and affect the hearts of others in prayer, when their own hearts are not affected; as the lute makes a sweet sound in the ears of others, but itself is not sensible. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2214.) Sin, in the reign and power of it, may cohabit with the most excellent natural gifts under the same roof, I mean in the same heart. A man may have the tongue of an angel, and the heart of a devil. The learned Pharisees were but painted sepulchres. Gifts are but as a fair glove drawn over a foul hand. —*Flavel*, 1627–1691.

(2215.) As among the weeds of unmanured earth some are painted with alluring colours, but they are only weeds still; so among the fruits of unsanctified minds one may carry a more specious appearance than others; but they are all, spiritually considered, no other still than sins and vices, the growth of "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God." —*Salter*, 1840.

12. Apart from grace will but insure our condemnation.

(2216.) Though a man have never such parts and gifts, yet if he have not grace withal, he may go to hell and perish to all eternity; for by his gifts he is not united to Jesus Christ, nor made the child of God, nor estated into the covenant of grace (Matt. vii. 21–23). You see how it is with children playing in the day,—when night comes, one child goes to his father, and the other to his father; it may be all the day they are so like that you cannot say, whose child is this, or that: but when night comes, the father then comes to his child, and says, "Come, my child, come in doors:" and if the other offers to go in there, "No, child, you must go home to your father." So, while we are living, grace and gifts are mingled together; some men have gifts, and some men have graces, and they look very like: ah, but when night comes, and when death comes, then says God to those that have grace, "Come, my children, enter in;" but if those that have gifts only come, He sends them away. And if a man do go to hell and perish, the more gifts he has the deeper will he sink into hell. As it is with a man that is in the water, sinking in the water, the more he is laden with gold the more he sinks, and as he is sinking, if he have any time to cry out, he says, "Oh take away these bags of gold, these bags of gold will sink me, they will undo me:" so I say, these golden parts and golden gifts will undo men; when men come to hell, and shall perish indeed, the more golden gifts and parts they have had, the deeper they shall sink in hell.

—*Ambrose*, 1592–1644.

13. Are less influential than grace.

(2217.) Of course, the operation of God on human souls must be proportioned to their capacity; it is not every nature that can be divinely gifted: a piece of hollow stick may be put into the ground, and left to all the gracious influences of sun and shower, of dew, and the spring and autumn seasons, but it will never be a tree: and the nettle and the briar, however they may be trained, can never be jasmine or oak. There are souls too narrow in their spring and their foundation to have much opened in them, still less to open the natures or minds of others. God's mightiest work must be done by largest souls; and when there is a soul in which already has been awakened all that native genius can awaken by delicate sympathies, and a power to unwind the flexible harmonies of our being; when you find the lofty judgment, and the stately march of thought, and the overflowing language, and the happy imagery, and then superadd to all these, and fill all these with the force and power of divine genius, how mighty then becomes the character! Before, the power was existent but undeveloped, but *piety—holiness*—develops power. The truth is, the quality of holy and unholy genius is different. The masters of criticism might institute a comparison between the genius of *Homer* and *David;* but the nature of the inspiration introduces an essential difference into all our estimates of the men. The genius kindled from the altar of nature is one, and the genius kindled from the altar of God is another. I must and do maintain this, the writings of all heathendom essentially differ from the writings of our Holy Scriptures in the quality of the thoughts and the emotions communicated; and, at all times, the smaller and more limited genius, inflamed by holiness, is able to open things to us far more wonderful than the unhallowed flight of the most lofty spirit. Let any man, as an illustration of this, contrast the writings of Watts and Byron. Byron was a man the native majesty of whose genius leaves Watts far behind; but never will Byron's power equal that of the sweet singer of Stoke Newington. —*R. Paxton Hood.*

14 The greatest gifts do not render us indispensable to the Church or the world.

(2218.) It is a humbling lesson to human vanity, and tends to check the growth of self-importance, to consider how well the world will go on when we are laid in the dust and no longer partake in the direction of its affairs. Leaves fall in autumn; trees are felled in the spring; but the next vernal season renews the foliage; another age replaces the veteran oak removed by the axe or the tempest, and the forest still presents its broad expanse and deep shade to the eye of the traveller. So it is with the Church of God; its members and its ministers die, but others are baptized for the dead, and fill up their vacant seats in the spiritual house. —*James.*

(2219.) Christ can do much by the weakest instrument, and He can do altogether without the strongest. "It is a piece of divine royalty and

magnificence," said John Howe, "that when He hath prepared and polished a mighty instrument, so as to be capable of some great service, He can lay it aside without loss, and do as well without it." He that could do without apostles and prophets, after He had removed them by death, can dispense with us. We are none of us axles of His chariot wheels. This should check the inflation of some men's minds, and repress that overweening conceit by which they destroy in part their own usefulness. It would surprise and mortify many, could they come out of their graves ten years after they had entered them, and still retain the ideas they once entertained of their own importance, to see how well the world goes on without them. If the death of ordinary individuals be but as the casting of a pebble from the seashore into the ocean, which is neither missed from the one nor sensibly gained by the other, the death of the more extraordinary ones is but as the foundering of a piece of rock into the abyss beneath: it makes at the time a rumbling noise and a great splash; but the wave which it raises soon subsides into a ripple, the ripple itself soon sinks to a placid level, the tide flows, ships pass, commerce goes on, and shore and ocean appear just as they did before the disruption.

—*James.*

GOD.

I. *REASON FOR BELIEF IN HIS EXISTENCE.*

(2220.) The devout man does not only believe, but feels there is a Deity. He has actual sensations of Him; his experience concurs with his reason; he sees Him more and more in all his intercourses with Him, and even in this life almost loses his faith in conviction. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(2221.) But what has been often urged as a consideration of much more weight, is not only the opinion of the better sort, but the general consent of mankind to this great truth; which I think could not possibly have come to pass, but from one of the three following reasons: either that the idea of a God is innate and co-existent with the mind itself; or that this truth is so very obvious that it is discovered by the first exertion of reason in persons of the most ordinary capacities; or, lastly, that it has been delivered down to us through all ages by a tradition from the first man. The atheists are equally confounded to whichever of these three causes we assign it. —*Budgell*, 1685–1736.

II. *THERE IS ONE GOD.*

(2222.) There is but one Omnipotent power. If there be two Omnipotents, then we must always suppose a contest between these two: that which one would do, the other power being equal, would oppose, and so all things would be brought into confusion. If a ship should have two pilots of equal power, one would be ever crossing the other: when one would sail, the other would cast anchor: here were a confusion, and the ship must needs perish. The order and harmony in the world, the constant and uniform government of all things, is a clear argument that there is but one Omnipotent, one God that rules all. "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God."

—*Watson*, 1696.

III. *GOD IS A SPIRIT.*

(2223.) There is no other passage in Scripture besides this (John iv. 24) where it is expressly declared that God is a Spirit; yet throughout the whole of Scripture we are led to infer that He is so, and our duty to Him is everywhere founded on the belief and knowledge of this attribute of His nature. When we affirm God to be a Spirit, we not only distinguish Him from all bodily substance, but, in the same manner as the soul greatly excels the body in the superior powers of life, understanding, knowledge, activity, so we must conceive of God as of a Being excelling in an infinitely higher proportion, not only the souls of men, but also all other intellectual natures or spirits whatsoever.

—*Samuel Clarke*, 1675–1729.

IV. *THE GREAT FIRST CAUSE.*

(2224.) The scribe is more properly said to write than the pen, and he that maketh and keepeth the clock is more properly said to make it go and strike than the wheels and poises that hang upon it, and every workman to effect his work rather than the tools which he useth as his instruments. So the Lord, who is the chief agent and mover in all actions, may more fitly be said to bring to pass all things which are done in the earth than any subordinate causes, as meat to nourish us, clothes to keep us warm, the sun to lighten us, friends to provide for us, &c., seeing they are but His instruments.

—*Downame*, 1644.

V. *HIS GREATNESS AND GLORY.*

(2225.) His glory is as Himself, eternal, infinite, and so abides in itself, not capable of our addition to it or detraction from it. As the sun, which would shine in its own brightness and glory though all the world were blind, or did wilfully shut their eyes against it, so God will ever be most glorious, let men be ever so obstinate or rebellious. Yea, God will have glory by reprobates, though it be nothing to their ease; and though He be not glorified of them, yet He will glorify Himself in them.

—*N. Rogers*, 1594–1660.

(2226.) The creature is nothing in comparison with God; all the glory, perfection, and excellency of the whole world do not amount to the value of a unit in regard of God's attributes; join ever so many of them together, they cannot make one in number; they are nothing in His regard, and less than nothing. All created beings must utterly vanish out of sight when we think of God. As the sun does not annihilate the stars, and make them nothing, yet it annihilates their appearances to our sight; some are of the first magnitude, some of the second, some of the third, but in the daytime all are alike, all are darkened by the sun's glory: so it is here, there are degrees of perfection and excellency, if we compare one creature with another, but let once the glorious brightness of God shine upon the soul, and in that light all their differences are unobserved. Angels, men, worms, they are all nothing, less than nothing, to be set up against God. This magnificent title, "I am," darkens all, as if nothing else were. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2227.) A being is absolutely perfect when it is incapable of the least accession or diminution. Now such a being is God, and none but God. As

the sun gets nothing by the shining of the moon and the stars, neither loseth anything by their eclipses or withdrawals; so the self-sufficient God gains nothing by all the suits and services, prayers and praises of His creatures; neither loseth anything by their neglect of their duties. He is above the influence of all our performances.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2228.) It was a noble conception of the great artist of antiquity, who, to express the grandeur of the father of the gods, placed his statue, composed of ivory and gold, and crowned with olive, in the midst of the most sumptuous temple of Greece, but enthroned and sitting; and of such dimensions that the roof of that majestic edifice was but a little elevated above the summit of the image, and conveyed the striking intimation that his noblest structure was after all too limited to contain the uplifted form of the divinity. To the vulgar eye, the magnitude of this stupendous image appeared as a defect, and the proportions of the general fabric seemed to have been forgotten. But, on a closer inspection, this very circumstance contributed, more than all besides, to its impression,—engrossing, absorbing, and overwhelming the spectator; not more with the richness of its materials and the perfection of its symmetry than by the gigantic scale of its greatness,—casting a new and unexpected glory upon the dwelling which it far outshone. But what is the dwelling we can fabricate for the invisible and infinite God? Where is the house we build Him, or what is the place of His rest? How the very insignificance of every earthly sanctuary, contrasted with His infinitude, adds to the force of these emotions! How His immeasurable grandeur swells upon our thought, when we remember, that, though here His foot may tread, His power upholds the stars, and His glory outshines the firmament; while the amplitude of all creation lies—like a pebble from the shore—within the hollow of His hand! —*M'All.*

VI. *INCOMPREHENSIBLE, YET NOT UNKNOWN.*

(2229.) It is easy indeed, while the comparison is made only between men, for every man to imagine himself to be possessed of something which others ought not to contemn; but when we ascend to the contemplation of God, that confidence is immediately lost. And the case of our soul with respect to God is similar to that of our body with respect to the visible heaven; for the eye, as long as it is employed in beholding adjacent objects, receives proofs of its own perspicacity; but if it be directed towards the sun, dazzled and confounded with his overpowering brightness, it feels no less debility in beholding him, than strength in the view of inferior objects. —*Calvin*, 1509–1564.

(2230.) We know God but as men born blind know the fire: they know that there is such a thing as fire, for they feel it warm them, but what it is they know not. So, that there is a God we know, but what He is we know little, and indeed we can never search Him out to perfection; a finite creature can never fully comprehend that which is infinite. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2231.) God is to us, and to every creature, incomprehensible. If thou couldst fathom or measure Him, and know His greatness by a comprehensive knowledge, He were not God. A creature can comprehend nothing but a creature. You may know God, but not comprehend Him; as your foot treadeth on the earth, but doth not cover all the earth. The sea is not the sea, if you can hold it in a spoon. Thou canst not comprehend the sun which thou seest, and by which thou seest all things else, nor the sea, nor the earth, no, nor a worm, nor a pile of grass: thy understanding knoweth not all that God hath put into any the least of these; thou art a stranger to thyself, and to somewhat in every part of thyself, both body and soul. And thinkest thou that perfectly comprehendest nothing, to comprehend God? Stop then thy over-bold inquiries, and remember that thou art a shallow, finite worm, and God is infinite. First reach to comprehend the heaven and earth and whole creation, before thou think of comprehending Him, to whom the world is nothing, or vanity.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2232.) If I never saw that creature which contains not something unsearchable; nor the worm so small, which affordeth not matter for questions to puzzle the greatest philosopher I ever met with; no wonder, then, if mine eyes fail, when I would look at God, my tongue fail me in speaking of Him, and my heart in conceiving. As long as the Athenian superscription doth so too well suit with my sacrifices, "To the unknown God," and while I cannot contain the smallest rivulet, it is little I can contain of this immense ocean. We shall never be capable of clearly knowing, till we are capable of fully enjoying; nay, nor till we do actually enjoy Him. What strange conceivings hath a man, born blind, of the sun and its light; or a man born deaf, of the nature of sounds and music; so do we yet want that sense by which God must be clearly known. I stand and look upon a heap of ants, and see them all, with one view, very busy to little purpose. They know not me, my being, nature, or thoughts, though I am their fellow-creature; how little, then, must we know of the great Creator, though He with one view continually beholds us all. Yet a knowledge we have, though imperfect, and such as must be done away. A glimpse the saints behold, though but in a glass, which make us capable of some poor, general, dark apprehensions of what we shall behold in glory.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(2233.) It is indeed our unhappiness in this state of weakness and mortality, that the most advanced in knowledge and improved in piety have yet but very lame and imperfect conceptions of the great God. And the reason of it is manifest; because we are forced to understand that which is infinite, after a finite manner. For philosophy teaches, that "*intelligere est pati, et pati est recipere.*" And one thing receives another, not according to the full latitude of the object, but according to the scanty model of its own capacity. If we let down a vessel into the sea, we shall bring up, not what the sea can afford, but what the vessel can hold: and just so it is in our own understanding of God. —*South*, 1633–116.

(2234.) The glorified saints and holy angels, who behold as much of His glory as creatures can bear, do not know Him as He is. They are filled with His power and love. He comprehends them, but

they cannot Him. A vessel cast into the sea, can but receive according to its capacity. Thus are they filled with His fulness till they can hold no more; but His glory still remains infinite and boundless. The glorious seraphim, therefore, are represented as hiding their faces with their wings, unable to bear the splendour of His presence.
—*Newton*, 1725-1807.

(2235.) One day, in conversation with the Jungo-kritu, head pundit of the College of Fort William, on the subject of God, this man, who is truly learned in his own shastras, gave me from one of their books this parable:—"In a certain country there existed a village of blind men. These men had heard that there was an amazing animal called the elephant, but they knew not how to form an idea of his shape. One day an elephant happened to pass through the place: the villagers crowded to the spot where this animal was standing. One of them got hold of his trunk, another seized his ear, another his tail, another one of his legs, &c. After thus trying to gratify their curiosity they returned into the village, and sitting down together they began to give their ideas on what the elephant was like: the man who had seized his trunk said he thought the elephant was like the body of the plantain tree; the man who had felt his ear said he thought he was like the fan with which the Hindoos clean the rice; the man who had felt his tail said he thought he must be like a snake; and the man who had seized his leg, thought he must be like a pillar. An old blind man of some judgment was present, who was greatly perplexed how to reconcile these jarring notions, respecting the form of the elephant; but he at length said, 'You have all been to examine this animal, it is true, and what you report cannot be false: I suppose, therefore, that that which was like the plaintain tree must be his trunk; that which was like a fan must be his ear; that which was like a snake must be his tail, and that which was like a pillar must be his body.' In this way, the old man united all their notions, and made out something of the form of the elephant. Respecting God," added the pundit, "we are all blind; none of us has seen Him; those who wrote the shastras, like the old blind man, have collected all the reasonings and conjectures of mankind together, and have endeavoured to form some idea of the nature of the Divine Being."

The pundit's parable may be appropriately applied to the science of theology. Some Christians see one truth and some another, and each one is quite sure that he has beheld the whole. Where is the master-mind who shall gather up the truth out of each creed, and see the theology of the Bible in its completeness?—a sublimer sight than the believers in the *isms* have yet been able to imagine. —*Spurgeon.*

(2236.) In this world our knowledge is comparatively dim and unsatisfactory, but nevertheless is introductory to grander and more complete vision.

This is eminently true in regard to our view of God. We hear so much about God that we conclude that we understand Him. He is represented as having the tenderness of a father, the firmness of a judge, the pomp of a king, and the love of a mother. We hear about Him, talk about Him, write about Him. We lisp His name in infancy, and it trembles on the tongue of the dying octogenarian. We think that we know very much about Him. Take the attribute of *mercy*. Do we understand it? The Bible blossoms all over with that word MERCY. It speaks again and again of the *tender* mercies of God; of the sure mercies; of the great mercies; of the mercy that *endureth for ever;* of the *multitude* of His mercies. And yet I know that the views we have of this great Being are most indefinite, one-sided, and incomplete. When at death, the gates shall fly open, and we shall look directly upon Him, how new and surprising! We see upon canvas a picture of the morning. We study the cloud in the sky, the dew upon the grass, and the husbandman on the way to the field. Beautiful picture of the morning! But we rise at daybreak, and go up on a hill, to see for ourselves that which was represented to us. While we look, the mountains are transfigured. The burnished gates of heaven swing open and shut, to let pass a host of fiery splendours. The clusters of purple cloud hang pendant from arbours of alabaster and amethyst. The waters make a pathway of inlaid pearl for the light to walk upon; and there is morning on the sea. The crags uncover their scarred visage, and there is morning among the mountains. Now you go home, and how tame your picture of the morning seems in contrast. Greater than that shall be the contrast between this Scriptural view of God and that which we shall have when standing face to face. This is the picture of the morning: that will be the morning itself. —*Talmage.*

(2237.) Now, our God is a brilliant star, too far off for measurement; but bright, we know, and perfect, we know. The fact of His existence we know; but little else do we know concerning Him. "In the ages to come" we shall see Him as *He is.* Now we see Him as *we are.* —*Beecher.*

(2238.) Thou hast granted us some sense of the mystery of godliness, and some sense of the majesty of God; and our thoughts have been pilgrims through the mighty realm where Thou art; and though, by searching, we cannot find Thee out to perfection, we have discerned Thee. As they that look upon the mountains cannot see all that is in them, nor the whole range thereof, so have we not found Thee out; and yet we have explored Thy nature, and learned truly that which we know. We have discerned dimly where point after point Thou dost recede toward the infinite and the eternal; and we rejoice in that which we know, and in the overhanging glory of that which we discern faintly, and in the faith of that which is unknown, and which will yet to us transcend in beauty all that now we can frame or fashion by our own imagination. —*Beecher.*

(2239.) Our knowledge of God in the present state of things, with all that has been done to winnow the wheat from the chaff, is exceedingly incomplete and unsatisfying. Our knowledge of the divine nature is unlike the knowledge of the qualities of matter which may be discerned through the use of our senses. God cannot be learned by any process of observation; nor can His kingdom be studied by scientific methods. As is declared, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." A knowledge of the divine nature is not a

thing to be demonstrated by scientific tests. It depends upon growth in us. We cannot understand in God anything of which we have not something in ourselves that stands for a suggestion, an analogue, and of which we have not had a parallel experience. How far can we understand God? As far as we are developed in spiritual directions. How is it possible for us to come to any considerable understanding of God, who is, after all, to us but a Being somewhat greater than good beings whom we have known upon earth? How much can we convey of our nature and of our modes of government to the intelligent creatures that are below us?—for there are creatures below us who understand many things. How much could we make the horse, the dog, or the elephant understand, either of our dispositions, or of the motives from which we work, or of the structure and nature of our minds, or of the processes of society, or of the civil government which we are carrying on? You could not make them understand these things, because they have not the development, the faculty that makes the meaning plain to them. The beings below us cannot understand us because they are not sufficiently unfolded.

And is it not so as between us and a superior Intelligence? There is not that in us which can understand God. Parts of His ways, and these the lower parts, we understand; but the distance between us and the Eternal Father is greater than the distance between us and the more intelligent animals below us. —*Beecher.*

(2240.) When we shall see Him as He is, not the first rude daubs of the incipient artist will seem so rude when the master-artist has found his skill, as our earliest conceptions of God will seem when, "in the ages to come," we shall see Him as He is, no longer as through a glass darkly, no longer as the vision of our own imagination, no longer as the imperfect work of our reason, but in all the amplitude and fulness of the real Being, and when we are so developed that we are able to behold and still to live.

We see on every side how many analogies of this there are. We see how impossible it is for beings to conceive of things that are far along beyond them in the way of development. Who, for instance, that was created with mature power, but had never lived to gather experience, could to-day form the slightest forecast of next October? Who could tell the colour of the autumn from the first growths and germs of the spring? Imagine an Esquimaux striving to form some idea of the tropics from the missionary's description. What has he to form an idea but from the moss and stinted shrubs that scarcely grow higher than his feet, and the flowers that blossom in the midst of northern glaciers? Would he form a conception of the brilliant fruits of the tropics? He must grub the ground for berries, which are all the fruit that the frigid zone knows. And from the creeping vine of the wintergreen-berries, from the huckle-berries, and such like things, he is to form his ideal of those magnificent parasitic plants which fill the tropical forests. These little berries are his oranges, and bananas, and pine-apples. He attempts, shivering in the midsummer, under the iceberg, to form a conception of the everlasting pomp and glory of the equatorial region. And when he has formed a conception of it, he cheers himself, and sighs, and wishes he could see it. Oh! it is so beautiful in his imagination! But what does he know of it? What is an Esquimaux's ideal of equatorial glory? The reality transcends unspeakably any conception which he can form.

And that which is to be revealed to you, "in the ages to come," when you shall have left these mortal bodies, when you shall have experienced the sensations of the new life, when you shall have unfolded and come into the realm where things are no longer symbols but realities; when the physical shall have ceased, and the spiritual shall have been ushered in—that will surpass any ideal that your highest imagination has ever pictured. —*Beecher.*

VII. *REVELATIONS OF GOD.*

(2241.) "Hath seen the Father," as the soul, itself invisible, is seen by what it does through the body. —*Bengel.*

(2242.) O Lord, Thou showest thyself everywhere, and everywhere inattentive men neglect to perceive Thy presence. All Nature speaks of Thee, and resounds with Thy holy name; but she speaks to men that are deaf, and who owe their deafness to the noise and distraction that they raise about themselves. Thou art near, Thou art even within them; but they wander out of themselves, and are fugitives from their own breasts. —*Fénelon*, 1651–1715.

(2243.) That immense vagueness which some men call *God!* that terrible Power; that Fate; that unseen Being who looks down upon the world apparently with supreme indifference—(for, though ten thousand groans go up toward God, no sigh comes back through the air to us to tell us that there is sympathy there; though sorrows sweep over the world as equinoctial storms by day and by night, for all that we can see by mere sense or natural reason, God is as calm and cold as the upper ether)—is He a reality? Is there a God? If so, is He more than an engineer of this vast and complicated machine? What token have we? What can we gather from nature to teach us of God? I do not believe that nature, if you leave out the experience of the human family (and that part usually *is* left out when men study Divine nature to find Divinity), can teach you that God is good. I think that the argument stands fair hitherto, that either there is a divided empire, or there is a capricious Governor, sometimes good and sometimes bad. Outside of revelation, outside of the clear light which we derive from the Lord Jesus Christ, God is afar off. He is brought near in Christ Jesus. He came to teach us what God's dispositions are. He came to teach us that God is a Father, and that His purposes run through wide circles, and extend so far that we can no more judge of the limits of them than we could judge from the corn-kernel of what the whole harvest would be if we had never seen one. The beginnings are apparent, but the ultimate ends are obscure.
—*Beecher.*

VIII. *HOW HE IS TO BE KNOWN.*

Can be known only by the pure in heart.

(2244.) The Divine nature can only be made known to us through that part of our nature which is like His. You cannot imitate silence by making

a noise. You cannot make a man have sweet tastes by giving him sour or bitter. You cannot take an opaque stone, and with it illustrate the transparency of glass or a diamond. You cannot by darkness imitate light. You must have the quality itself that you wish to make known. If that which in God is so precious were a material thing, then it might be made known to us through material organisations; but as God is infinite in love, and beauty, and wisdom, and glory, and excellence, He is to be known to us in these elements by the actual possession of the qualities themselves, as windows through which the light of heaven shines. The windows in us are to be like the heavenly windows; and the knowledges that come to us are to be brought out from the very chords which are in our bosom, and which vibrate in us. —*Beecher.*

IX. *OUR FATHER.*

(2245.) Every one takes care of his own; the silly hen, how doth she bustle and bestir herself to gather her brood under her wing when the kite appears! No care like that which Nature teacheth. How much more will God, who is the Father of such dispositions in His creature, stir up His whole strength to defend His children? "He said, They are my people, so He became their Saviour," as if God had said, Shall I sit still with my hand in my bosom, while my own people are thus misused before my face? I cannot bear it. The mother as she sits in her house, hears one shriek, and knows the voice, cries out, Oh, 'tis my child! Away she throws all, and runs to him. Thus God takes the alarm of His children's cry, "I heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," saith the Lord; his cry pierced His ear, and His ear affected His bowels, and His bowels called up His power to the rescue of him.
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(2246.) The relation which the Most High sustains to His intelligent and accountable creatures is too comprehensive and too intimate to be perfectly imaged by any earthly tie; but in the relation which runs through this parable [*i.e.* of The Prodigal Son, St. Luke xv. 11-32], it finds its nearest equivalent. And what amongst ourselves is fatherhood? It is that relation which identifies greatness with littleness, which makes it quite natural that the arm which wields the battle-sword should gently rock the sleeping babe, which secures from contempt the master of sentences, the sage, the orator, though he babble idle rhymes in his infant's ear. It is that relation which lives in the loved one's joy or honour, and which is wounded in his grief or his disgrace; which feels no pride like a son's promotion, and which, gazing at the blood-stained garment, cries, "It is my son's coat, an evil beast has devoured him: I will go down to him in the grave sorrowing;" but which would rather that the evil beast had devoured him, than that he should live to blight his principles or forfeit a virtuous fame. It is that relation amongst men which toils and denies itself, and does not grudge the long journeys and the sleepless nights which enable the father to lay up for the children; and both in heaven and earth, it is that relation which delights in being trusted and which desires to be loved in return; which cannot be asked too many favours, or be entrusted with too many confidences, which seeks one gift only, "My Son, give me thine heart," and hears no language more pleasing than "My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth. Father, forgive my trespasses, and give me this day my daily bread."
—*Hamilton.*

(2247.) A king is sitting with his council deliberating on high affairs of state involving the destiny of nations, when suddenly he hears the sorrowful cry of his little child who has fallen down, or been frightened by a wasp; he rises and runs to his relief, assuages his sorrows and relieves his fears. Is there anything unkingly here? Is it not most natural? Does it not even elevate the monarch in your esteem? Why then do we think it dishonourable to the King of kings, our heavenly Father, to consider the small matters of His children? It is infinitely condescending, but is it not also superlatively natural that being a Father He should act as such?
—*Spurgeon.*

(2248.) The idea that God, who governs the heavens and the whole universe, should not only stoop to think of each man, but should be interested in every phase of the experience of each man, so that we may literally say that the Divine sympathy attends every step of every individual human life—this idea, when you look at it in the light of gubernatorial love, or the love of an officer of government, does seem extravagant. It seems impossible. Nor does it become likely, and address itself to our feelings as a thing real and true, till we look at the affection that we behold in the social relations of life—for instance, the paternal and the maternal—and see what the effect of loving is. Then, how trifles cease to be trifles! how little things, and disagreeable things, become neither little nor disagreeable! They are changed. If you were to take the love that a woman shows outwardly for her friends, and the things that she admires and relishes in life, you would not judge, by her ordinary carriage and the tastes which she usually displays, that little and almost silly things could ever please her. But see her at home with her little child of one year old or less. Take notice how that stately, self-poised, cultured, fastidious woman, who, in general society, would disdain the trifles of life, and still more its prattling trifles, abandons herself to the little ways of the child. See how its little quirks and pranks, that to everybody else would be ridiculous, please her and engross her. And since it is very much so with fathers too, every one perceives plainly that it is in the power of love to entirely transform things, so that they shall seem different and be different. And that which is true of love is true of every other faculty or feeling.

Through this analogy I can understand how God may have an interest even in the lowest and the least. He charges His angels with folly; but He loves them. And if men are a great deal more foolish than angels, still it is in the power of Divine love to take an interest in them too; not judicially, not officially, not on account of God's majesty, but on account of God's love. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."
—*Beecher.*

(2249.) There are some who reject Christianity because it seems to them incredible that God would have taken so much trouble, as the New Testament represents Him to have done, for the salvation of

creatures so infinitely beneath Him as we are. But they forget that the New Testament teaches also that God is our *Father*. If *that* be granted, if it be conceded that God does really sustain to us the parental relation, then I declare that it is *not* surprising that God should have made such sacrifices to save us, unless the feeling of compassion be fainter and feebler in God than it is in us. Even a man will not permit a child to perish without some effort to save it—*any* child; it need not be his own. Now, one fact is worth a dozen arguments; and I will therefore ask you to listen to a humble man as he relates an incident in his otherwise uneventful life. For a little while imagine yourselves to be seated around the table of an American boarding-house, where the inmates are spending an hour or two one evening in relating the more remarkable events that have occurred to them; imagine that you are listening to one of the guests there, instead of to me.

"My name is Anthony Hunt. I am a drover, and I live miles and miles away, upon the Western prairie. There wasn't a house within sight when we moved there, my wife and I; and now we have not many neighbours, though those we have are good ones.

"One day, about ten years ago, I went away from home to sell some fifty head of cattle—fine creatures as ever I saw. I was to buy some groceries and dry goods before I came back, and, above all, a doll for our youngest, Dolly; she never had a shop doll of her own, only the rag babies her mother had made her. Dolly could talk of nothing else, and went down to the very gate to call after me to 'buy a big one.' Nobody but a parent can understand how my mind was on that toy, and how, when the cattle were sold, the first thing I hurried off to buy was Dolly's doll. I found a large one, with eyes that would open and shut when you pulled a wire, and had it wrapped up in paper, and tucked it under my arm, while I had the parcels of calico and delaine, and tea and sugar put up. It might have been more prudent to stay until the morning, but I felt anxious to get back, and eager to hear Dolly's prattle about the doll she was so anxiously expecting.

"I mounted on a steady-going old horse of mine, and pretty well loaded. Night set in before I was a mile from town, and settled down dark as pitch while I was in the middle of the wildest bit of road I know of. I could have felt my way through, I remembered it so well, and it was almost that when the storm that had been brewing broke, and pelted the rain in torrents, five miles, or may be six, from home, too. I rode on as fast as I could; but suddenly I heard a little cry, like a child's voice. I stopped short and listened. I heard it again. I called, and it answered me. I couldn't see a thing. All was dark as pitch. I got down, and felt about in the grass; called again, and again I was answered. Then I began to wonder. I'm not timid; but I was known to be a drover, and to have money about me. I thought it might be a trap to catch me, and there to rob and murder me.

"I am not superstitious—not very—but how could a real child be out on the prairie in such a night, at such an hour? It might be more than human. The bit of a coward that hides itself in most men showed itself to me then, and I was half inclined to run away; but once more I heard that piteous cry, and said I, 'If any man's child is hereabouts, Anthony Hunt is not the man to let it lie here to die.'

"I searched again. At last I bethought me of a hollow under the hill, and groped that way. Sure enough, I found a little dripping thing, that moaned and sobbed as I took it in my arms. I called my horse, and the beast came to me, and I mounted, and tucked the little soaked thing under my coat as well as I could, promising to take it home to mammy. It seemed tired to death, and pretty soon cried itself to sleep against my bosom.

"It had slept there over an hour, when I saw my own windows. There were lights in them, and I supposed my wife had lit them for my sake; but when I got into the door yard, I saw something was the matter, and stood still with dead fear of heart five minutes before I could lift the latch. At last I did it, and saw the room full of neighbours, and my wife amid them weeping. When she saw me she hid her face.

"'Oh, don't tell him,' she said. 'It will kill him.'

"'What is it, neighbours?' I cried.

"And one said, 'Nothing now, I hope. What's that in your arms?'

"'A poor lost child,' said I. 'I found it on the road. Take it, will you? I've turned faint.' And I lifted the sleeping thing, and saw the face of my own child, my little Dolly.

"It was my darling, and no other, that I had picked up upon the drenched road.

"My little child had wandered out to meet 'Daddy' and doll while her mother was at work, and for her they were lamenting as for one dead. I thanked God on my knees before them all. It is not much of a story, neighbours; but I think of it often in the nights, and wonder how I could bear to live now, if I had not stopped when I heard the cry for help upon the road—the little baby-cry, hardly louder than a squirrel's chirp."

Is God less pitiful than man? Did you notice the last sentence in this man's story? "It is not much of a story, neighbours; but *I think of it often in the nights, and wonder how I could bear to live now, if I had not stopped when I heard that cry for help upon the road*—the little baby-cry, hardly louder than a squirrel's chirp." To me that sentence alone renders credible the story of redemption. Had God not listened to the cry for help, the piteous wail of misery, that ascended to Him from His lost children, and sent His Son to seek and save them, it seems to me that afterwards remorse must have risen within Him so strong as to cause Him to envy those of His children who can die; for, be it remembered, *He* knew, not simply that certain children were perishing, but that they were *His* children. —*R. A. Bertram.*

X. *HIS ATTRIBUTES.*

(2250.) All God's attributes are identical, and are the same with His essence. Though He hath several attributes whereby He is made known to us, yet He hath but one essence. A cedar-tree may have several branches, yet it is but one cedar. So there are several attributes of God whereby we conceive of Him but one entire essence.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(2251.) As the boundless fields of stellar systems, in a particular region of the heavens, appear one immense and cloudless scene of light; but when contemplated with the aid of the telescope, each constellation is distinctly seen emitting its radiations

of light, and contributing to form this blaze of splendour; so it is in regard to the Divine nature: the whole is resplendent with inconceivable grandeur, and yet each perfection possesses a distinct glory, and contributes its rays to reveal the character of Him who "is Light, and in whom is no darkness at all." Or like the prismatic colours, each distinct, and in the perfection of beauty; and yet all blending in one beam of light. —*Ewing.*

(2252.) There is all possible perfection in God. In Him absolutely is fulness. All life is in God, life in all its varieties. Jehovah is the living God. All wisdom is in God: He is "the only wise God." All purity is in God: "God is light." All righteousness is in God: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." All love is in God: "God is love." These several attributes are not only individually complete, but perfect in their harmony. They combine as the prismatic colours in light, and unite as the several gases which constitute the atmosphere, and they blend as the hues of the rainbow. —*S. Martin.*

XI. *ETERNAL.*

(2253.) *God is behind all time.* "In the beginning:" when was that? By what innumerable stages, through what immense eras, the imagination must travel in order to reach it! Not the least of the many benefits which modern science has conferred upon us, is the enlargement of our conceptions concerning time. How vast a period is a thousand years! How far off it seems since Alfred the Great ascended the English throne, yet it is not quite a thousand years ago. Last week I saw in the Exeter Museum a mummy that is supposed to have been embalmed in the days of Hezekiah. What marvellous revolutions have taken place since that mummy was a living man! How old we should have thought him had he lived till now! Yet he would have been quite a juvenile beside Adam, had *he* not drawn upon himself the curse of death. How far off seems the time when our first parents dwelt in paradise! And yet what an insignificant period is *that* compared with the ages which have elapsed since the granite which forms the first courses of our new chapel was a molten fluid! What a mystery is time, stretching ever backward, past the hour when at the laying of the earth's foundations "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy!" past the hour when those "morning stars" and "sons of God" were called into being! But when in thought we have reached this dateless period, when we have gone beyond it, and find ourselves in a vast void where no star shines and no seraph sings, even then we find ourselves in the presence of God. We can think of all things and persons besides Him coming into existence, but the thought of the birth of God is one which the mind refuses to entertain. He is the great I AM, to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He is "the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." Let us bow in reverence before Him. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."
—*R. A. Bertram.*

XII. *UNCHANGEABLE.*

(2254.) "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." We may depend upon Him, for His arm is never dried up, nor does His strength fail. *There is no wrinkle upon the brow of Eternity.* God is where He was at first; He continues for ever a God of infinite power, able to save those that trust in Him.
—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2255.) What encouragement could there be to lift up our eyes to God if He were of one mind this day and of another mind to-morrow? Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince if he were so mutable as to grant a petition one day and deny it another, and change his own act? But if a prince promise this or that thing upon such or such a condition, and you know his promise to be as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, would any man reason thus? because it is unchangeable we will not seek to him, we will not perform the condition upon which the fruit of the proclamation is to be enjoyed. Who would not count such an inference ridiculous? What blessings hath not God promised upon the condition of seeking Him?
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2256.) Famine, pestilence, revolution, war, are judgments of the Ruler of the World. What sort of a Ruler, we ask, is He? The answer to that question will determine the true sense of the term, a judgment of God. The heathen saw Him as a passionate, capricious, changeable Being, who could be angered and appeased by men. The Jewish prophets saw Him as a God whose ways were equal, who was unchangeable, whose decrees were perpetual, who was not to be bought off by sacrifices but pleased by righteous dealing, and who would remove the punishment when the causes which brought it on were taken away; in their own words, when men repented God would repent. That does not mean that He changed His laws to relieve them of their suffering, but that they changed their relationship to His laws, so that, to them thus changed, God seemed to change. A boat rows against the stream; the current punishes it. So is a nation violating a law of God; it is subject to a judgment. The boat turns and goes with the stream; the current assists it. So is a nation which has repented and put itself into harmony with God's law; it is subject to a blessing. But the current is the same; it has not changed, only the boat has changed its relationship to the current. Neither does God change—we change; and the same law which executed itself in punishment now expresses itself in reward. —*Brooke.*

XIII. *HIS OMNIPRESENCE.*

(2257.) Would men speak so vainly if they considered God overheard them? Latimer took heed to every word in his examination when he heard the pen go behind the hangings: so, what care would persons have of their words if they remembered God heard and the pen is going in heaven?
—*Watson*, 1696.

(2258.) As birds, wheresoever they fly, always meet with the air; so we, wheresoever we go, or wherever we are, always find God present.
—*Sales.*

(2259.) Suppose that, in travelling through a wilderness, a spacious garden should burst upon your view, in the midst of which is a splendid palace. Upon entering it, you perceive in every apartment proofs of the agency of some living person, though you see none. Complicated machinery is moving and various occupations are carried on, but still the agent who produces these effects is invisible. Would you be the less convinced that they were produced by some intelligent agent? Now, you have the same proof of the existence of God in His works that you would have in the case I have supposed of the existence and presence of some invisible agent; and it is just as unreasonable to doubt of His existence, as it would be to doubt whether the palace had been built by any person, or was only the work of chance. Suppose you were informed by a writing on the wall that the palace was inhabited or haunted by spirits who were constantly watching your conduct, and who had power to punish you if it displeased them; and that you were also informed at the same time of the course of conduct which it would be necessary to pursue in order to obtain their approbation. How careful would you be to observe the rules, and how fearful of displeasing those powerful spirits! And if you were further informed that these were the spirits of your deceased parents, and that they were able to hear if you addressed them, how delightful it would be to go and tell them of your wants and sorrows, and feel sure that they listened to you with sympathy and compassion! I tell you, this world is haunted, if I may so express it,—haunted by the eternal Spirit. He has given you rules by which to regulate your conduct, and is able to punish every deviation from them. And can you recollect that such a Being is constantly noticing your conduct, and still persist in disobeying His commands? God is also your heavenly Father; and why can you not go to Him as such, with the same confidence which you would exercise towards an earthly parent? —*Salter.*

(2260.) It is impossible to conceive of any thought more appalling than this would be, did this unseen and ever-present Being regard us with unfriendly feelings. A prisoner in France during the great Revolution tells us of the torture occasioned by the simple fact, that through a hole in the door of his cell he saw the eye of the sentinel constantly watching him: wherever he moved, that eye followed him; whatever he did, that eye observed him; it was fixed on him when he went to sleep, when he awoke it was still there. By no means could he escape its glance even for a moment. It glared on him incessantly until the sight of it became almost intolerable. And it is difficult to conceive of all the agony which would accrue to us from the consciousness that an enemy, unseen by us, attended all our steps; that his eye was upon us by night and by day; that in solitude or in the crowd—in our places of business—at home or in the street, he never left us. His invisibility would render us unable to defend ourselves from his assaults, were we otherwise capable of doing so; and leaving us ignorant of his intentions and movements, would keep us in a state of torturing suspense, ever fearing, and not knowing how soon, he might gratify his enmity by involving us in ruin. And did we know, moreover, that, owing to his great power, we were completely at his mercy, and that his will would suffice to inflict upon us the most excruciating tortures —oh! then the thought would be so fraught with horror as to occasion a very hell on earth—a hell from which even the bottomless abyss, or the blackness of darkness, would prove a welcome refuge; nor would it be surprising if some, by a suicidal act, attempted to obtain relief from the intolerable thought.

And what cause for gratitude have we that a thought which might be so fraught with horror, may prove to all of us the source of unfailing consolation! The character of God is such that the man is sadly wrong who derives no comfort from the consciousness of His presence. —*Landels.*

(2261.) What can be so awful as to know that there is never any moment at which what we do is not entirely naked and exposed to the sight of God, just as surely as though we were in the noon-day light, before an assembled universe? Those who, upon occasions of ceremony, are in the presence of an earthly monarch, have an incessant feeling of constraint, an oppressive sense that certain forms of respectful etiquette must every moment be kept up. How infinitely would the feeling of constraint, the sense of subjection to another's will, be increased, if we could realise in a similar degree the tremendous presence of the King of Kings, who is, in truth, never absent from us for a single instant, who not only sees everything which we do, but even reads the most secret thoughts and desires of our hearts! The marvel is, that we can live on in the enjoyment of the pleasures of life, and in the pursuit of our lusts and appetites, just as though no God existed. This, melancholy as are some of its results, I take to be one of the most remarkable of the many proofs which are to be found of the wisdom and mercy of our Creator. We are able to appreciate the continual presence of God as a pure act of abstract reason, just as we are able to know that space must be infinite, and that there must be a never-ending eternity; but we cannot realise any of these truths as hard, tangible facts, in the same way that we realise, by their contact with our senses, the existence of the material objects of the world around us—the trees and rivers we admire, the food we eat, the friends we love. That we cannot in this substantial, matter-of-fact way, feel the continual presence of God, is, I say, a merciful and loving provision of our Maker. For it is clear that if we could do so, our whole moral nature would be, as it were, turned upside down. To begin with, we should cease to be free moral agents. As it is impossible that a man, trembling on the edge of a precipice or threatened with instant death by shipwreck, could indulge in any besetting sin, so it would be equally impossible that he could do so when oppressed with the conscious presence of that awful Being who can at a breath consign him to any fate. But all pleasure would cease too. The foundation of all our enjoyment consists in the absence of restraint, and the consciousness of power and freedom to do and think according to the desire of the passing moment. A man may have his pride gratified by being admitted to a ceremonial interview with his sovereign upon some state occasion; but it is with a sense of relief that he escapes from the kingly presence, and gets back to the free atmosphere of everyday existence. There could be no enjoyment of life were we under the restraint which would be necessarily incidental to our being imbued with a continual consciousness of the presence of

the Almighty Maker of all things. God is therefore like an august and wise monarch, who does not often burden His subjects by calling them into His presence, or, if He does so, dispenses with His sceptre and his robes, and meets them genially with condescending friendship. By the wise and holy man the presence of his Almighty King is always felt and known, even when it is not actually perceived. He ever remembers that the Monarch is in His palace to rule and govern and direct, even when there is no outward pageant, no noisy manifestation of external power. Thus the presence of God becomes a settled and abiding thing, but rather as a sweet and soothing influence than a hard, tangible fact. On the other hand, the ungodly man can for a time, so to speak, cast out God's presence. He strives to forget it altogether, and for the most part he is successful. He goes on in his own sinful, selfish way, living outside God's presence, until the day arrives when that presence can no longer be evaded, and it comes with all the terrors of eternal judgment. God has left abundant witness to His existence in the infinite wisdom and goodness which we see manifested everywhere throughout the world. But in this life His presence coerces no man. We can live with or without God, as we choose.

—*Hooper.*

(2262.) *God is behind all space.* What a solemn mystery there is in this idea of space! Modern science has added to the benefits which it has conferred upon us, this also, that it has enlarged our conceptions of space. How much more worthily we are enabled to think of the universe and empire of God than those could have done, who regarded the firmament as a solid shell of the earth, stargemmed, fixed a few miles above it, and revolving around it for the purpose of alternating day and night! One of the most conspicuous respects in which astronomy has proved herself the handmaid of devotion, has been by revealing to us in part the scale on which the universe is built. What heights and depths of space the telescopes of Rosse and Herschel have enabled us to penetrate! What awe seizes upon the soul, as viewed through their powerful lenses the faint nebulæ resolve themselves into clusters of shining worlds, and through the spaces between these worlds, across immeasurable and inconceivable distances, other nebulæ burst upon the astonished vision! as all these countless suns and systems are detected to be revolving around the brightest of the Pleiades! Is that to us faint star the centre of the universe? Is it there that God sits enthroned? Is that the one stable and unmoving orb? Or is that moving too, carrying the innumerable suns and worlds that are linked on to it around some vaster centre? Where is the centre of the universe? Where is its circumference? How far must we travel before we reach a margin beyond which space does not extend? Is there such a margin? But though we had reached the last world that revolves around the great unknown centre, we should not have come upon a tenantless void: we should still be in the presence of God, in the hollow of whose hand all worlds and suns and systems lie. "Whither, O Lord, shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." —*R. A. Bertram.*

XIV. *HIS OMNISCIENCE.*

(2263.) God's prescience, from all eternity, being but the seeing everything that ever exists as it is, contingents as contingents, necessary as necessary, can neither work any change in the object by thus seeing it, nor itself be deceived in what it sees.

—*Hammond,* 1605–1666.

(2264.) God looks to the bottom and spring of actions; not only the matter but the principle. A man that stands by a river in a low place, can only see that part of the river that passes by; but he that is aloof in the air, in a higher place, may see the whole course, where it rises and how it runs. So God at one view sees the beginning, rise, and ending of actions; whatever we think, speak, or do, He sees it altogether. He knows our thoughts before we can think them,—"Thou knowest my down-sitting and my up-rising; Thou understandest my thoughts afar off." Before we can conclude anything, a gardener knows what roots are in the ground long before they appear, and what fruits they will produce. —*Manton,* 1620–1667.

(2265.) Fore-knowledge is not the cause of the things that are foreknown; but because the thing is future and shall be, that is the reason why it is foreknown; for it doth not, because it was known, come to pass, but because it was to come to pass, therefore it was foreknown; and bare knowledge is no more the cause of any event, which because it is known must infallibly be, than my seeing a man run in the cause of his running, which, because I do see, is infallibly so. —*Tillotson,* 1630–1694.

(2266.) God's knowledge is antecedent to the object, quite different from ours, which is borrowed from it, and so subsequent to it. As the knowledge that a builder has of a house depends not upon the actual being of it; but he knows it, partly by reflecting on his skill, in which he sees a perfect idea of it before ever it is made; and partly on his power, by which he is able to make it: but now others' knowledge depends upon the actual being of the house, as flowing from those representations they have of it after it is built. And such is our knowledge in respect of God's.

—*South,* 1633–1716.

(2267.) God's omniscience should indeed make us ashamed to commit sin: but it should embolden us to confess it. We can tell our secrets to a friend that does not know them; how much more should we do it to Him that knows them already! God's knowledge outruns our confessions, and anticipates what we have to say. As our Saviour speaks concerning prayer, "Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask;" so I may say of confession, your heavenly Father knows what secret sins you have committed before you confess. But still He commands this duty of us; and that not to know our sins, but to see our ingenuity. Adam, when he hid himself, to the impiety of his sin added the absurdity of a concealment. Our declaring of our sins to God, who knows them without being beholden to our relation; it is like opening a window to receive the light, which would shine in through it howsoever. Every man has a casement in his

bosom, through which God looks in upon him every day. When a master sees his servant commit a fault in secret, and thereupon urges him to a confession, he does it not so much to know the fault as to try the man. Now there is no duty by which we give God the glory of His omniscience so much as by a free confession of our secret iniquities. Joshua says to Achan, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him." —*South*, 1633–1716.

XV. *HIS WISDOM.*

(2268.) As a beam of light passing through a chink in a wall, of what figure soever, always forms a circle on the place where it is reflected, and by that describes the image of its original, the sun, thus God in every one of His works represents Himself. But the union of all the parts by such strong and sweet bands, is a more pregnant proof of His omnipotent mind. Is it a testimony of great military skill in a general to range an army, composed of divers nations that have great antipathies between them, in that order as renders it victorious in battle? And is it not a testimony of infinite providence to dispose all the hosts of heaven and earth so as they join successfully for the preservation of nature? . . . Sophocles was accused by his ungrateful sons, that his understanding being declined with his age, he was unfit to manage the affairs of his family; he made no other defence before the judges, but recited part of a tragedy newly composed by him, and left it to their decision, whether there was a failure in his intellectual faculties: upon which he was not only absolved but crowned with praises. —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

XVI. *HIS POWER.*

(2269.) The proud king of Babylon commanded the numerous nations under his empire to prostrate themselves, like brutes, in the lowest admiration of the image he set up; and when the three Hebrew young men refused to give divine honour to it, he threatened, "If ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" This is the language of a man (poor dust!) that can heat a furnace with fire, and has a squadron of soldiers ready upon the least intimation of his pleasure to throw into it any that disobeyed, as if no power either in heaven or earth could rescue them from him. It was impious folly in him that thus spake: but God can give order to death to seize on the stoutest rebel, and cast him into an eternal furnace, and say in truth, Who shall deliver out of my hands? His power reaches beyond the grave. Tiberius intending to put to death by slow and exquisite torments one who killed himself, cried out in a rage, "Carnulius has made an escape from me!" But no sinner can by dying escape God's justice; for death itself takes the condemned, and delivers them to endless torments.
—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(2270.) Power is that glorious attribute of God Almighty which furnishes the rest of His perfections. 'Tis His omnipotence that makes His wisdom and goodness effectual, and succeed to the length of His will. Thus, His decrees are immutable, and His counsels stand; this secures His prerogative, and guards the sovereignty of His being; 'twas His power which made His ideas fruitful, and struck the world out of His thought. 'Twas this which answered the model of the creation, gave birth to time and nature, and brought them forth at His first call: thus, He spake the word, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created. 'Tis the divine power which is the basis of all things; which continues the vigour of the second causes, and keeps the sun and moon in repair. This holds everything constant to appointment, and true to the first plan: thus the revolutions of the seasons, the support of animals, the perpetuity of species, is carried on and maintained. Without this, things would soon riot, and ramble out of distinction; the succours of life would be cut off, and nature drop into decay. Omniscience and goodness without a correspondent power would be strangely short of satisfaction: to know everything without being able to supply defects and remedy disorders, must prove an unpleasant speculation; to see so many noble schemes languish in the mind and prove abortive, to see the most consummate wisdom, the most generous temper, fettered and disarmed, must be a grievance: but when omnipotence comes into the notion, the grandeur is perfect and the pleasure entire. —*Jeremy Collier*, 1650–1726.

(2271.) Now, though in a just idea of the Deity perhaps none of His attributes are predominant, yet, to our imagination, His power is by far the most striking. Some reflection, some comparing, is necessary to satisfy us of His wisdom, His justice, and His goodness. To be struck with His power, it is only necessary that we should open our eyes. But whilst we contemplate so vast an object, under the arm, as it were, of almighty power, and invested upon every side with omnipresence, we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before Him. And although a consideration of His other attributes may relieve, in some measure, our apprehensions, yet no conviction of the justice with which it is exercised, nor the mercy with which it is tempered, can wholly remove the terror that naturally arises from a force which nothing can withstand. If we rejoice, we rejoice with trembling; and even whilst we are receiving benefits, we cannot but shudder at a power which can confer benefits of such mighty importance.
—*Burke*, 1728–1797.

(2272.) What an immense workman is God in miniature as well as in the great! With the one hand, perhaps, He is making a ring of one hundred thousand miles in diameter, to revolve round a planet like Saturn, and with the other is forming a tooth in the ray of the feather of a humming-bird, or a point in the claw of the foot of a microscopic insect. When He works in miniature, everything is gilded, polished, and perfect; but whatever is made by human art, as a needle, &c., when viewed by a microscope, appears rough, and coarse, and bungling. —*E. Law*, 1703–1845.

(2273.) The upholding of the world is a continual causing of it; and differeth from creation, as the continued shining of a candle doth from the first lighting of it. If therefore the creation do wonderfully declare the power and wisdom and goodness of God, so also doth the conservation. And note that God's ordinary works are as great demonstrations of Him in all His perfections as His extraordinary. Is it not as great a declaration of the

power of God, that He causes the sun to shine, and to keep its wondrous course from age to age, as if He did such a thing but for a day or hour? and as if He caused it to stand still a day? And is it not as great a demonstration of His knowledge also, and of His goodness? Surely we should take it for as great an act of love, to have plenty, and health, and joy continued to us as long as we desired it, as for an hour. Let not then that duration and ordinariness of God's manifestations to us, which is their aggravation, be looked upon as if it were their extenuation; but let us admire God in the sun and stars, in sea and land, as if this were the first time that ever we have seen them.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2274.) Another ground on which men come to despise God's word, and to disregard or reject Christianity, is confounding with and in the exercise of this reason, God's physical and moral omnipotence. It appears at first, perhaps, that there is no difference; but there is really a great one. They are notwithstanding often confounded. If God be omnipotent, why did not He prevent man falling? If God be omnipotent and wish everybody to be saved, why does not He save everybody at once? If God have all power, why does He allow any to perish? The right answer to all this is, God's omnipotence governs the solar system, but He does not keep planets in their orbits by the Ten Commandments. The two things have no connection with each other. So God's moral omnipotence governs the intellect of man, but He does not govern it by the law of gravitation. The law of gravitation is that by which He governs the orbs and the planets; moral law, moral government, moral truth, is that by which He governs His responsible and intelligent children. If you confound the two, you land in mischief and confusion; if you distinguish, you will see that if man is to be what he is—an intelligent, responsible being—he is not to be conducted from earth to heaven as a locomotive engine is driven from London to Edinburgh, placed upon its groove, and propelled mechanically along; he is to be moved by motives, by hopes, by fears, by reasoning, by fact; and if he resist all, it is not want of light, but something that has gone wrong within him, and that must be put right before he can be governed or righted himself. —*Cumming.*

XVII. *HIS HOLINESS.*

(2275.) God had revealed His holiness to Israel; and He wished them to consider it the "beauty" of His nature. If we take a portrait of a man, we try to represent his face, not his hand, nor his back, nor his foot; we try to delineate his beauty, to refresh our minds with that which is most memorable and distinguishing in his exterior semblance; so, while the hand and finger of God denote His power and skill, and His throne is used for majesty and dominion, He considers His holiness as the true lustre of His character, as that by which He will be best known. We read of "the beauty of His holiness," that He is "glorious in holiness;" and that this beauty of the Lord is to be found in His holy temple. —*Reynolds.*

XVIII. *HIS RELATION TO SIN.*

1. He is not the author of sin.

(2276.) There is a vast difference between the sun being the cause of the lightsomeness and warmth of the atmosphere, and the brightness of gold and diamonds, by its presence and positive influence; and its being the occasion of darkness and frost, in the night, by its motion, whereby it descends below the horizon. The motion of the sun is the occasion of the latter kind of events; but it is not the proper cause, efficient, or producer of them, though they are necessarily consequent on that motion, under such circumstances: no more is any action of the Divine Being the cause of the evil's wills. If the sun were the proper *cause* of cold and darkness, it would be the *fountain* of these things, as it is the fountain of light and heat: and then something might be argued from the nature of cold and darkness, to a likeness of nature in the sun; and it might be justly inferred, that the sun itself is dark and cold, and that his beams are black and frosty. But from its being the cause no otherwise than by its departure, no such thing can be inferred, but the contrary; it may justly be argued, that the sun is a bright and hot body, if cold and darkness are found to be the consequence of its withdrawment; and the more constantly and necessarily these effects are connected with and confined to its absence, the more strongly does it argue the sun to be the fountain of light and heat. So, inasmuch as sin is not the fruit of any positive agency or influence of the Most High, but, on the contrary, arises from the withholding of His action and energy, and, under certain circumstances, necessarily follows on the want of His influence; this is no argument that He is sinful, or His operation evil; but, on the contrary, that He and His agency are altogether good and holy, and that He is the fountain of all holiness. It would be strange arguing, indeed, because men never commit sin, but only when God leaves them to *themselves*, and necessarily sin when He does so, that therefore their sin is not *from themselves*, but from God; and so, that God must be a sinful being: as strange as it would be to argue, because it is always dark when the sun is gone, and never dark when the sun is present, and therefore all darkness is from the sun, and that his disk and beams must needs be black.

—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1637–1716.

(2277.) God is no more the Author of sin than the sun is the cause of ice; but it is in the nature of water to congeal into ice when the sun's influence is suspended to a certain degree. So there is sin enough in the hearts of men to make the earth the very image of hell, and to prove that men are no better than incarnate devils, were He to suspend His influence and restraint. Sometimes, and in some instances, He is pleased to suspend it considerably; and, so far as He does, human nature quickly appears in its true colours.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

2. He tempts no man to sin.

(2278.) A man has a servant who is a thief, and yet the servant would be esteemed for an honest man; so, to try him, his master leaveth his purse full of money before him; if his servant steal it, is he not a thief, and does he not declare himself to be such a one? Yes, undoubtedly. And now, who made him a thief, the master or the money which was left where he might come by it? Surely neither of them, for the money is the good creature of God; and when the master put it before his servant, he did not compel him to take it and steal it. If this

servant had been an honest man, he would not have touched it, or if he had taken it, he would have brought it back to his master and not have kept it; but seeing that the servant was already a thief, and had his heart given to theft, when he had the occasion to put into execution the wicked affection of his heart, he did it. And whereas he did it no sooner, that was because that he had not the occasion and means; for if occasion had been sooner offered to him, and if he had found whereto to reach out his hand, he would not have kept it in; and when he began to put forth his hand, he not only then began to be a thief, but he began to declare himself what he was. As we have the example in Judas, who was a thief a long time, but he never showed it until he had an opportunity: even so, although God hath given the occasion to man to prove and try him, and to cause him to make known that which is in his heart, it followeth not therefore that God hath done the sin or is the Author of it, or that we must impute the fault to Him and not to the man who hath committed it.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

3. In what sense He hardens the heart.

(2279.) The obstinacy of Pharaoh was properly his own. It is true, we are assured that God hardened his heart; but we are not thereby warranted to suppose that God is the author of the sin, which He hates and forbids. It is written again, that "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man," and the scripture is to be interpreted consistently with itself. It would be absurd to ascribe darkness or ice to the agency of the sun, though both inevitably follow if the light and heat of the sun be withdrawn to a certain degree. A degree of heat is necessary to keep water in that state of fluidity which we commonly suppose essential to its nature; but it is rather essential to the nature of water to harden into ice, if it be deprived of the heat which is necessary to preserve it in a fluid state; and the hardest metals will melt and flow like water, if heat be proportionably increased. Thus it is with the heart of fallen man. In whatever degree it is soft and impressive, capable of feeling and tenderness, we must attribute it to the secret influence of the Father and Fountain of light; and if He is pleased to withdraw His influence, nothing more is needful to its complete induration. —*Newton*, 1725-1807.

4. His permission of sin.

(2280.) The wisdom of God is seen in this, that the sins of men shall carry on God's work; yet that He should have no hand in their sin. The Lord permits sin, but doth not approve it. He hath a hand in the action in which sin is, but not in the sin of the action. As in the crucifying of Christ, so far as it was a natural action, God did concur; if He had not given the Jews life and breath, they could not have done it: but as it was a sinful action, so God abhorred it. A musician plays upon a viol out of tune: the musician is the cause of the sound, but the jarring and discord is from the viol itself. So men's natural motion is from God, but their sinful motion is from themselves. A man that rides on a lame horse, his riding is the cause why the horse goes, but the lameness is from the horse itself. Herein is God's wisdom, the sins of men shall carry on His work, yet He hath no hand in them.

—*Watson*, 1696.

5. His hatred of sin.

(2281.) It is not every unclean thing that offends the sight: while the slightest stain upon some things will excite in us deep dislike; the feeling depends entirely upon the nature of the thing, and the purpose to which it is applied. We pass by an unclean stone unnoticed; it is unconscious of its state, and meant to be trampled under foot. But rising a step higher in the scale of creation, to an unclean plant, we become conscious of a slight emotion of dislike; because we see that which might have pleased the eye, and have beautified a spot in the creation, disfigured and useless. An unclean animal creates our dislike still more, for, instead of proving useful in any way, it is merely a moving pollution. But an unclean human being excites our loathing more than all; it presents our nature in a light so disgusting that it lessons our pity for him if he be miserable, and excites in us ideas of disease, contamination, and pain. But an unclean spirit—it is loathsome above all things, it is the soul and essence of pollution, it is the most unclean object in the universe, it is the spectacle which excites the deep dislike of God Himself. His dislike of it is the more intense, because originally it was pure, and capable of making perpetual advances towards divine perfection; whereas now it presents itself to His eye, robbed of all its purity, and defiled in all its powers, a fountain of pollution. —*Salter.*

(2282.) God Himself, we have always understood, hates sin with a most authentic, celestial, and eternal hatred. A hatred, a hostility, inexorable, unappeasable, which blasts the scoundrel, and all scoundrels ultimately, into black annihilation and disappearance from the sum of things. The path of it is the path of a flaming sword: he that has eyes may see it, walking inexorable, divinely beautiful and divinely terrible, through the chaotic gulf of human history, and everywhere burning, as with unquenchable fire, the false and the deadworthy from the true and lifeworthy; making all human history, and the biography of every man, a God's Cosmos in place of a Devil's Chaos. So it is in the end; even so, to every man who is a man, and not a mutinous beast, and has eyes to see.

—*Thomas Carlyle.*

6. He willeth not the death of the sinner.

(2283.) A mariner in a storm would very fain save his goods, but, to save the ship, he heaves them overboard. A tender-hearted mother corrects her child, whereas the stripes are deeper in her heart than in its flesh. As it was said by a judge about to give sentence of death upon an offender, "I do that good which I would not:" thus God, more loving than the careful mariner, more tender than the indulgent mother, and more merciful than the pitiful judge, is willingly unwilling that any sinner should die. He punisheth no man as he is a man, but as he is a sinful man. He loves him, yet turns him over to justice. It is God's work to punish, but it is withal His "strange work," His strange and foreign act, not "His good will and pleasure," His nature and property being to have mercy on all men. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(2284.) Imagine a poor mother obliged to let fall the blade of the guillotine upon the neck of her child; such is the good God when He condemns a sinner. —*Vianney.*

7. His compassion for sinners.

(2285.) A man is asked, "Are you a father?" "Yes," he replies. "Have you a son?" "Yes." "Do you love him?" "Better than my life." "Does he ever do wrong?" "Yes." "When he does wrong, how do you feel?" "I feel indignant, because I love him so; for wrong in one that I love is like a sore in my heart." Now, from such an experience as this, do you not begin to have an interpretation of what God's feeling is towards sin? Do you not have it in your own experience? Can you understand how God hates, not the sinner, but the sin that is a spot upon His beloved child, from the hatred that you feel toward the vices and wickedness that disfigure your child, because you so love that child?

"Well," you say, "if God is so holy, and just, and true, does He not destroy sinners?" When your child has been gambling, and you first find it out, do you draw a line, and say to him, "If ever you transcend that line again, I will exclude you from my house?" Some persons take this course, and every one blames them. They are not true parents. The fatherhood and motherhood is not deep in such hearts as theirs. What does a parent do for a child that goes wrong? Is there anything that you have in your house that you would not give to redeem a wandering son? Is there any property that you would not willingly part with to get him out of trouble, and to hide his disgrace? If to live on a crust, if to drink only water from the spring, and eat only roots from the ground, would reform the child of your heart, would you not give all your means, and think that you had bought him back cheaply? Nay, more than that, if for his sake it was necessary that you should bear with him; that you would lie awake nights till your whole heart was like a furnace of fire; that you should be mortified in your pride, disappointed in your expectation, or wounded in your affections, would you not willingly submit to the necessity? If, in carrying his burden or bearing his sorrow, there was a glimmer of hope that in ten or fifteen years you could save your child, would you not cheerfully suffer on in his behalf?

Now, when it is said that God carries our sorrows and bears our sins, is there no light thrown upon the statement by the experience of the parent in bringing up his child? And when it is said that God hates sin, is there no light thrown upon the statement by the feelings of the parent toward the sin in the child? And is it because the parent does not care for the sin that he bears with it? Is there any one that realises how hateful sin is so much as the parent who is bearing it for the sake of the child?

And when your child comes back to you and says, "Father, I am reformed, but I may not be able to walk entirely right; I understand what you have done for me; I feel it; and I am taking another course of life, but I may stumble on the way;" oh, with what inexpressible tenderness do you receive him! Why, the child does not know how to be glad. It takes a father or a mother to be glad.

When I stood in Antwerp, and heard the chime of some fifty or sixty bells, I could not bear to go anywhither, lest I should get out of the sound of those exquisite peals that rolled every hour, and half-hour, and quarter-hour, filling the air with a weird and yet wonderful sweetness; and I thought to myself, "There, just such are all the feelings of a father's heart, when it is lifted up with hope, and all things ring at every hour, and half-hour, and quarter-hour, and minute, of the return of some wandering child." And does the experience of that father whose child has begun to come back from a career of wrong-doing give you no conception of God's feelings when the sinner begins to return to a life of virtue? How sweet it is! how deep it is! how real it is! Do not stop at any legal question. Do not wait till you can reconcile law and grace. Take the idea of your earthly father and apply that to God, and it will give you the best view of the gladness of God at the sinner's reformation which it is possible for the human mind to conceive of.

And when the child who has wandered from the true path returns, and though he strives earnestly to live aright, after the first or second day falters, so that the father sees that there is a relapse, or falls, so that he bears the marks of condemnation, does the father say, "If that is your reformation, I am weary of you; you made me many fair promises, but you have broken them, and I will have nothing more to do with you?" On the contrary, he says, "My son, I feared that if you mingled with your old associates you would fall. Now help yourself by me. I will go with you and sustain you. I will forget this fall. It came near taking away all that you had gained; but do not be discouraged. You must lean more on me. You must not trust yourself till you are strong enough to stand alone." The father thinks almost more of the child than the child does of himself. From this familiar experience of parental life, do you not get a conception of the Divine patience with men in their helplessness, and of the training and educating force of the love of God in Christ Jesus?

—*Beecher.*

(2286.) Any ethical system which teaches that God is so pure that there is a vast void between Him and the needy, sinful soul, and which has a tendency to make men fear to go to Him on account of His great purity, is a false system. God's purity is one of His most glorious attributes, but it is used to slander and misinterpret His nature. A right view of God is one which presents Him as a Being who, just in the proportion that we are impure, draws us to Him that we may be purified.

When a man is hungry, he looks for him who has the loaf. When a man is sick, he looks for him who has the medicine. When a man is perishing in the stream, and has struggled to the shore, and cannot get out, he cries to him who has strength. The soul that is sinful goes to Him who has purity to be cleansed. And a view that presents any other God but One who says, "Behold, in Me is your salvation," is a false view.

Any view which presents God as a Being whose justice shall make sinners, who wish to return to Him, unable to do so, is a false view. Public sentiment and public law are like ramparts around a city. As long as a man is inside of the ramparts, they defend him, but the moment he is outside of them, they treat him as an enemy, and he cannot get back, but is exposed to the sweep of artillery. As long as a man stands inside of the ramparts of public sentiment and law, he gets along well enough, but the moment he chances to get outside of them, all men declare him to be an outcast. You might

as well attempt to climb up the steep sides of Mount Sinai, as up the human heart when it has set itself to punish those who have done wrong. Public sentiment and law may save a man before he has done wrong, but they damn him after he has done wrong. But not so with God. The way to Him is down hill. Up hill is down hill if it be toward God! If we are in danger, in Him is safety. If we have done wrong, in Him is the remedy. He is the sun that shows us, when we are in darkness, where to go; He is the bright and morning star that makes our dawn and twilight come to us; He is our way; He is our staff; He is our shepherd; He is our sceptred king, to defend us from our adversaries; He is All, in all, to all!

—*Beecher.*

XIX. *HIS WILL MUST BE THE RULE OF OUR LIFE.*

(2287.) If a man lay a crooked stick upon an even level ground, the stick and ground ill suit together, but the fault is in the stick; and in such a case, a man must not strive to bring the even ground to the crooked stick, but bow the crooked stick even with the ground. So is it between God's will and ours, there is a discrepancy and jarring betwixt them; but where is the fault? or rather, where is it not? not in the will of God, but in our crooked and corrupt affections; in which case we must not like Balaam seek to bring God's will to ours, but be contented to rectify and order the crookedness of our wills, by the rectitude and sanctity of the will of God, which must be the ruler and moderator of our wills; for which cause we are to cry out with David, "Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy will;" and with the whole Church of God, in that pattern of wholesome words, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven;" never forgetting that too of Christ Jesus Himself in the midst of His agony and bloody sweat, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42).

—*Augustine*, 354-430.

XX. *HIS ANGER.*

1. Is a divine perfection.

(2288.) Lord Shaftesbury attempts to satirise the Scripture representations of the Divine character. "One would think," he says, "it were easy to understand that provocation and offence, anger, revenge, jealousy in point of honour or power, love of fame, glory, and the like, belong only to limited beings, and are necessarily excluded from a Being which is perfect and universal." That many things are attributed to the Divine Being in a figurative style, speaking merely after the manner of men, and that they are so understood by Christians, Lord Shaftesbury must have well known. We do not think it lawful, however, so to explain away these expressions as to consider the Great Supreme as incapable of being offended with sin and sinners, as destitute of pleasure or displeasure, or as unconcerned about His own glory, the exercise of which involves the general good of the universe. A being of this description would be neither loved nor feared, but would become the object of universal contempt.

It is no part of the imperfection of our nature that we are susceptible of provocation and offence, of anger, of jealousy, and of a just regard to our own honour. Lord Shaftesbury himself would have ridiculed the man, and still more the magistrate, that should have been incapable of these properties on certain occasions. They are planted in our nature by the Divine Being, and are adapted to answer valuable purposes. If they be perverted and abused to sordid ends, which is too frequently the case, this does not alter their nature, nor lessen their utility. What would Lord Shaftesbury have thought of a magistrate who should have witnessed a train of assassinations and murders without being in the least offended at them, or angry with the perpetrators, or inclined to take vengeance on them for the public good? What would he think of a British House of Commons which should exercise no jealousy over the encroachments of a minister; or of a king of Great Britain who should suffer with perfect indifference his just authority to be contemned.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754-1815.

(2289.) One day Sadi was reading the Holy Scriptures, but suddenly he closed the book, and looked stern and serious.

Allmed perceived it, and asked the youth: "What ails thee, Sadi? why does thy countenance change?"

Sadi answered, "The Scripture speaks here of the wrath of God, and in other places He is called Love. This seems hard and contradictory."

Then his master said calmly, "Shall not the Scriptures speak humanly to human beings? Thou takest no offence when mortal members are attributed to the Most High."

"No," said the youth, "that is innocent figurative language; but anger"——

Then Allmed interrupted him, saying, "I will relate to thee a tale. There lived two rich merchants in Alexandria who had two sons of equal age. They sent them to Ephesus on affairs of their trade. Both youths had been well taught in the faith of their fathers.

"When they had lived for some time at Ephesus, they were dazzled by the splendour and the pleasures of the town, and were seduced to deny the faith of their fathers, and to bow down in idolatrous worship in the temple of Diana.

"A friend in Ephesus communicated this to Kleon, one of the fathers in Alexandria. When Kleon had read the letter, he was grieved in his heart, and very wroth with the young man. Then he went to the other and told him of their apostasy and his grief.

"But the other laughed, and said, 'If my son carry on his trade the better for it, I shall easily console myself.'

"Then Kleon turned away from him, and his anger increased."

Now Allmed said to the youth, "Which of these two fathers seemeth to thee the wiser and better?"

Sadi answered and said, "He who was angry."

"And who," asked his tutor, "was the most loving father?"

The youth answered again, "He who was angry."

"But was not Kleon angry with his child?" asked Allmed.

And Sadi answered, "Not with his child, but with his apostasy and transgression."

"What seemeth to thee to be the origin of such anger at transgression?" asked the master.

And the youth answered, "The holy love of truth."

"Behold, my son," said the old man, "if thou only art able to explain the divine by the divine, thou wilt no longer take offence at the human word."

When Sadi had sat for some time in thought, he looked at his tutor; and Allmed said to him, "Thou seemest not yet satisfied,—a question is on thy lips."

Then the youth answered and said, "Yes, my father, it seemeth to me very daring to speak in such a way of the Highest and Purest."

"Indeed," said the old man, "it is a human expression, and I commend the fear of thy heart. But, behold, my Sadi, when the faithless son, after acknowledging his fall, may have thought in an hour of repentance of the time of his innocence and his pious father, how thinkest thou would then the heart of his father have appeared to him, even if he were not wroth?"

"Ah," said the youth, "I understand thee, my father. His father must have appeared angry to him—and the Holy Scriptures speak to a fallen race." —*F. A. Krummacher.*

(2290.) At this first step we might reason on the testimony if we pleased, instead of accepting it, and raise the objection that to imagine passion in God, especially so turbid a passion as anger, conflicts with our notions of His character, and degrades Him in our apprehensions. Beware! remember that in forming an estimate of the character and proceedings of God, we are but little children forming an estimate of the character and proceedings of a man of matured experience. Were it not more reasonable, as well as more reverent, to accept what He says, and to leave Him afterwards to clear up any mystery which may envelop His nature? I can indeed conceive in Him nothing turbid, impetuous, or impulsive, such as sullies the clearness of the human will. But this I can conceive, that there is in Him some high perfection (more incomprehensible to my finite capacity than the speculations of an astronomer to a peasant child), of which anger is the most adequate exponent to my mind, and which I must be content to think of and speak of as anger, or else to remain in total ignorance of it. And this also I can—not only conceive, but most readily assent to, that in an absolutely perfect nature there should be an utter abhorrence of, and antipathy to, moral evil, most justly represented to simple minds by the terms "anger," "curse." We have never seen a perfect character; no perfect character, save one, ever moved upon the earth: but the righteous man, who is striving after and approximating to perfection, has often crossed our path; and surely we have marked in him, that the more righteous he is, the more doth he abhor (in the language of Holy Scripture) everything that is evil. What is the effect upon one who breathes habitually the atmosphere of communion with God, of catching in the current tidings of the day the intelligence of some awful outburst of depravity? When such an one passes on an errand of mercy through the crowded alleys of a great city, and the shouts of malignant execration and profaneness ring in his ear, or scenes of impurity are paraded before his eye, with what feeling does he encounter these symptoms of human degradation? Are they not like a foul odour to his nostrils, or a jarring note to his ear, or an abortion to his sight? Does he not turn away with loathing, and recoil from such scenes and such sounds with an antipathy strong in proportion to his goodness? And is it, then, so hard to conceive that in perfect goodness there may be a recoil from moral evil, something similar in kind to this, though infinitely stronger in degree? And is not such a recoil righteous, and a token of righteousness? —*Goulburn.*

2. Its terribleness.

(2291.) The greatness of divine wrath appears in this, that though we may attempt it in our thoughts, yet we cannot bring it within the comprehensions of our knowledge.

And the reason is, because things, which are the proper objects of feeling, are never perfectly known, but by being felt. We may speak indeed high words of wrath and vengeance, but pain is not felt in a discourse. We may as well taste a sound, and see a voice, as gather an intellectual idea of misery; which is conveyed, not by apprehension, but by smart; not by notion, but by experience.

Survey the expressions of Scripture, and see it there clothed and set forth in "fire and brimstone," in "the worm that never dies," in "utter darkness," in "weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." But what are all these but shadows! mere similitudes, and not things! condescensions, rather than instructions to our understanding! poor figurative essays, where, contrary to the nature of rhetoric, the figure is still beneath the truth.

Fire no more represents God's wrath, than the picture of fire itself represents its heat; and for the proof of this, let the notional believer be an unanswerable argument, who reads, sees, and hears all these expressions, and yet is not at all moved by them; which sufficiently shows that there is no hell in the description of hell.

But now, there is no man who has actually passed under a full trial of God's wrath; none alive who ever encountered the utmost of God's anger; and if any man should hereafter try it, he would perish in the trial, so that he could not report his experience. This is a furnace that consumes while it tries; as no man can experimentally inform us what death is, because he is destroyed in the experiment.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

3. Its manifestations.

(2292.) It inflicts immediate blows and rebukes upon the conscience. There are several passages in which God converses with the soul immediately by Himself; and these are always the most quick and efficacious, whether in respect of comfort or of terror.

That which comes immediately from God, has most of God in it. As the sun, when he darts his beams in a direct perpendicular line, does it most forcibly, because most immediately.

Now there are often terrors upon the mind, which flow thus immediately from God, and therefore are not weakened or refracted by passing through the instrumental conveyance of a second cause; for that which passes through a thing, is ever contracted according to the narrowness of its passage God's wrath, inflicted by the creature, is like poison administered in water, where it finds an allay in the very conveyance.

But the terrors here spoken of, not being inflicted by the intermediate help of anything, but being darted forthwith from God Himself, are by this incomparably more strong and piercing.

When God wounds a man by the loss of an estate.

of his health, of a relation, the smart is but commensurate to the thing which is lost, poor and finite. But when He Himself employs His whole omnipotence, and is Himself both the archer and the arrow, there is as much difference between this and the former, as when a house lets fall a cobweb, and when it falls itself upon a man.

God strikes in that manner that He swears; never so effectually as when only "by Himself." A man striking with a twig does not reach so dreadful a blow, as when he does it with his fist; and so makes himself not only the striker but the weapon also.

These immediate blows of God upon the soul, seem to be those things that in the Psalms (xxxviii. 2) are called "God's arrows:" they are strange, sudden, invincible amazements upon the spirit, leaving such a damp upon it, as defies the faint and weak cordials of all creature-enjoyments. The wounds which God Himself makes, none but God Himself can cure. —*South*, 1637–1716.

(2293.) God's anger exerts itself by embittering of afflictions. Every affliction is of itself a grievance, and a breach made upon our happiness; but there is sometimes a secret energy, that so edges and quickens its afflictive operation, that a blow levelled at the body shall enter into the very soul. As a bare arrow tears and rends the flesh before it; but if dipped in poison, as by its edge it pierces, so by its adherent venom it festers.

We do not know what strength the weakest creature has to do mischief, when the Divine wrath shall join with it; and how easily a small calamity will sink the soul, when this shall hang weights upon it.

What is the reason that David is sometimes so courageous, that, "though he walks through the shadow of death, yet he will fear no evil"? And at another time, "God no sooner hides His face, but he is troubled," as Psalm xxx. 7. What is the cause that a man sometimes breaks through a greater calamity, and at another time the same person fails and desponds under a loss of the same nature? I say, whence can this be, but that God infuses some more grains of His wrath into one than into the other?

Men may undergo many plagues from God, and yet by the enchantment of pleasures, the magic of worldly diversions, they may, like Pharaoh, harden their hearts, and escape the present sting of them. But when God shall arm a plague with sensible, lively mixtures of His wrath, believe it, this will not be enchanted away; but the sinner, like those magicians (whether he will or no), must be forced to confess, "that it is the finger of God," and consequently must bend and lie down under it.

God may cast a man into prison, nail him to the bed of sickness, yet still He may continue master of his comforts; because the sun may shine while the shower falls. The soul may see the light of God's countenance, while it feels the weight of His hand.

But for God to do all these things in anger, and to mark the prints of His displeasure and His indignation upon every blow; this alters the whole dispensation, and turns it from a general passage of Providence into a particular design of revenge.

It is like a deep water, scalding hot, which as it drowns, so at the same time it redoubles its fatal influence, also burns to death. An unwholesome air will of itself make a man sick and indisposed; but when it is infected, and its native malignity heightened with a superadded contagion, then presently it kills.

And such a difference is there between afflictions in themselves, and afflictions as they are fired, poisoned, and enlivened with God's wrath.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(2294.) It shows and exerts itself by cursing of enjoyments. We may, like Solomon, have all that wit can invent, or heart desire, and yet at last, with the same Solomon, sum up all our accounts in "vanity and vexation of spirit."

There is a "pestilence that walks in darkness," a secret, invisible blow, that smites the first-born of all our comforts, and straight we find them dead, and cold, and sapless; not answering the quickness of desire, or the grasp of expectation. God can send a worm to bite the gourd, while it flourishes over our heads; and while He "gives riches," deny a "heart to enjoy them."

For whence is it else, that there are some who flourish with honours, flow with riches, swim with the greatest affluence of plenty, and all other the materials of delight; and yet they are as discontented, as dissatisfied as the poorest of men?

Care rises up and lies down with them, sits upon their pillow, waits at their elbow, runs by their coaches; and the grim spirits of fear and jealousy haunt their stately houses and habitations.

I say, whence is this, but from a secret displeasure of God, which takes out the vitals, the heart, and the spirit of the enjoyment, and leaves them only the *caput mortuum* of the possession.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

XXI. *HIS LONGSUFFERING.*

1. Its cause.

(2295.) There is nothing more wonderful than God's forbearance with sinners. Their foul deeds are all done in His sight; their vile utterances are all spoken in His hearing; their sins are utterly offensive to Him; they fill Him with disgust, and loathing, and anger; and yet, though He has all power, and could crush them in a moment, He spares them! Nay, He does them good; He causes new mercies to descend upon them every day; and when at last He does proceed to punish them for their transgressions, He does so with reluctance and regret; it is with tears that He pronounces the sentence of their doom.

What is the cause of this wonderful forbearance and of this strange compassion? The cause is two-fold.

(1.) There is first God's reluctance to inflict pain. He is described to us as the "blessed," or more correctly, as the "happy God." It is His delight to diffuse happiness around Him. In His presence there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore. The sun does not so overflow with light as He does with benevolence. His loving-kindness reaches farther than the sun's rays. His tender mercies are over all His works. The gladness that thrills in the song of the lark, and that exults in the song of the seraph, is alike inspired by Him; and so quick are His sensibilities, and so wide the range of His sympathy, that He rejoices in the joy of His creatures, from the highest to the lowest. Imagine then, if you can, with what

reluctance He lifts that hand, which continually He opens to fill them with good, to smite them and cause them pain. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

(2.) Then, next, there is their relationship to Him. Sinners though they are, they are His children. Search out the wickedest and vilest man in all this country, a wretch who is disgusting in his degradation, and what will you have found? You will have found one of God's children, whom He loves with infinite tenderness, for whom He has profound compassion, and whom He is loth to exclude from His mercies. He is a prodigal, he has tried His patience grievously, and often provoked Him to anger, but yet he is His child. There is no greater grief, no more terrible calamity, no more unendurable shame, than a wicked, profligate child. But that son must have sinned against his father's love long and desperately, whom, if he have sinned also against the laws of his country, if he has been guilty of theft or forgery, his father will take with his own hands and deliver up to justice. What father is there of you, who if his prodigal son came fleeing to his door for refuge from the pursuit of the officers of the law, would not rather shelter than surrender him? But if there is such almost inexhaustible love and compassion in the heart of a human father for his child, what feeling for His children must there be in the heart of God, whose tenderness and pity the most self-sacrificing human affection reflects and represents more faintly than does the most distant planet the radiant glory of the sun!

This is the explanation of His wonderful forbearance with sinful men and guilty nations. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not."

—*R. A. Bertram.*

2. Its terrors.

(2296.) As water is deepest where it is the stillest, so where God is most silent in threatening and patient in sparing, there He is most inflamed with anger and purpose of revenge; and, therefore, the fewer the judgments be that are poured forth upon the wicked in this life, the more are reserved in store for them in the life to come.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2297.) May sinners conclude that there is perfect peace between God and them, because the terrible effects of His fury do not actually roar against them? Are they therefore finally discharged, because they are not presently called to an account? No, certainly, for every sin stands registered in the black book of heaven, and that with all its circumstances and particularities; and consequently has the same sting, and guilt, and destructive quality, as if it were actually tearing and lashing the sinner with the greatest horror and anguish of mind imaginable. And no man knows how soon God may let loose the tormenting power of sin upon his conscience; how soon He may set fire to all that fuel that lies dormant and treasured up in his sinful breast. This he may be sure of, that, whensoever God does so, it will shake all the powers of his soul, scatter his easy thoughts, and lay all the briskness and jollity of his secure mind in the dust. A murdering piece may lie still, though it be charged, and men may walk by it and over it safe, and without any fear, though all this while it has death in the belly of it; but when the least spark comes to fire and call forth its killing powers, every one will fly from its fatal mouth, and confess that it carries death with it. Just so it is with the divine wrath; nobody knows the force of it, till it be kindled.

But now God has, by a perpetual decree, awarded the sad sentence of "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." So that, if He gives not the sinner his portion of sorrow here, it is to be feared He has it in full reserve for him hereafter. Upon which account, the present quiet of his condition is so far from ministering any just cause of satisfaction to him, that he has reason to beg upon his knees, that God would alter the method of His proceeding, and rather compound and strike him with some present horror for sin, than sink him under the unsupportable weight of an eternal damnation. When a man must either have his flesh cut and burnt, or die with a gangrene, would he not passionately desire the surgeon to cut, and burn, and lance him, and account him his friend for all these healing severities? This is the sinner's case; and therefore when, upon his commission of any great sin, God seems to be silent, and to connive, let him not be confident, but fear. For one may sometimes keep silence, and smile too, even out of very anger and indignation. If the present bill of his accounts be but small, it is a shrewd argument that there is a large reckoning behind. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(2298.) Since we know God to be grievously displeased with sin, there is something awful in His keeping silence, while it is committed under His eye. If a child comes home conscious of having offended a parent, and the parent says nothing all that night, but merely looks very grave, the child is more frightened than he would be by a sharp rebuke, or severe punishment; for if such rebuke or punishment were inflicted, he would, at least, know the worst; but when the parent is silent, he knows not what may be hanging over him. So, when we remember how many things plainly offensive to God are going on all around us, it is a terrible thought that He is still silent. We fear that He is but getting ready to take vengeance on those who defy Him. And so that passage, which we have quoted from the Psalms, carries on the train of thought in what follows: "God is a righteous judge, strong and patient; and God is provoked every day. If a man will not turn, He will whet His sword: He hath bent His bow, and made it ready."

In countries where earthquakes happen, a dead silence always goes before the earthquake. Nature seems hushed into an awful stillness, as if she were holding her breath at the thought of the coming disaster. The air hangs heavily; not a breath fans the leaves; the birds make no music; there is no hum of insects; there is no ripple of streams; and this while whole houses, and even cities sometimes, are hanging on the brink of ruin. So it is with God's silence,—it will be followed, when it seems deepest, by the earthquake of His judgments. And so the holy Apostle writes to the Thessalonians: "When they shall say, Peace and safety" (from the fact of God's being so still, and so dumb), "then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." —*Goulburn.*

(2299.) On account of His essential righteousness, God must punish iniquity; but because He is infinite in mercy, He would save the transgressors

and in His long-suffering He waits, as in the time of Noah, in order that those who have provoked Him to anger may have full opportunity to turn to Him and live. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come:"—"Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

We may see a rough image of this suspension of the Divine vengeance against sin, and of the real terrors of that suspension, which only a timely repentance can avert, in the mountain torrent swollen by the melting of the winter's snow. At first a sudden fuller flow announces to the inhabitants of the valley that the thaw has commenced. But the increasing of the waters suddenly ceases, not to the contentment, but to the alarm, of the inhabitants of the valley below. It inspires their fear and arouses their energies. Instantly they sally out with axe and hook and cord. Mark how eagerly they climb the rugged slippery hill. They know that the present quietude of the torrent tells of future disaster. It is a plain indication to them that some tree has floated down the current, and by the whirling of the waters in the narrow channel has been forced athwart the stream; that there is being rapidly constructed a natural dam, behind which the flood will gather, and seethe, and swell, and rage, with ever-increasing fury, until it carries all before it, and bursts with devastating volume and force on the farms and fields below; and the purpose of those men who are hastening upwards is to let out the flood before it has assumed these dangerous proportions. In like manner the guilty and impenitent have as little reason to be at ease "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily." On the contrary, that very fact should arouse them to an instantaneous repentance; for while in mercy the long-suffering of God as a mighty dam obstructs the forthflowing of His righteous vengeance, when in judgment it is at length removed, the terrors of the wrath of their outraged God will be in exact proportion to the space in which it was treasured up.

Or still more forcibly you may see emblemed the gathering of God's vengeance on account of sin in the gathering of the vapour on a summer day. Go, stand upon the cliff, and with keenest eye survey the ocean's expanse, and you cannot detect the vapour ascending. But yet you know it is rising, rising ever, rising without intermission, rising always in greater volume; and you know that between you and the sun is floating an atmosphere of vapour, now perceptibly dulling the light, but which it needs only a change of wind to condense into cloud. You know that in yon soft, calm, lustrous, stainless dome of blue are already stored all the elements of tempests, and thunderings, and flaming fires. The exhortation of our text is addressed to those between whom and the source of all true light and prosperity a vapour of unrequited wrong floats; and the penalty denounced is, that if they do not heed this warning, this vapour will be condensed into cloud, and those who despised the merciful continuance of the light be brought into darkness and disaster.

—*R. A. Bertram.*

3. The danger of abusing it.

(2300.) As wet wood, although it be long in burning, yet will burn faster at the last: so the anger of God, although it be long in coming, yet it will come the fiercer at the last.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2301). Dost thou not see in the Scriptures many examples of God's severity upon the abuse of His patience? What became of Sodom and Gomorrah when God waited in the days of Lot? Are they not suffering the vengeance of eternal fire? (Jude 7). What became of the Jews, upon whom Christ waited, calling upon them and crying to them to return and reform? Is not wrath come upon them to the utmost? Are not these like the mast of a ship sunk in the sands, standing up to warn thee to avoid their course, lest thou sink eternally?

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

XXII. *HIS GOODNESS.*

1. It is spontaneous.

(2302.) As the fountain finds its expression in overflowing, as a river in rushing to the infinite main, as trees in bursting into life and blossom in the spring-tide, so God feels it His joy to give liberally, and to give above all we ask, or think, or desire, for Christ's sake. —*Cumming.*

(2303.) The Divine nature is so constructed that it loves to do good; that it loves to recuperate men; that it loves to restore that which sin has blurred or blasted. God loves to bless men out of the supremacy of a love which carries in it infinite benefaction wherever there is mental blight, throughout the heaven and the realms of the universe. The nature of God is fruitful in generosity. He is so good that He loves to do good, and loves to make men good, and loves to make them happy by making them good. He loves to be patient with them, and to wait for them, and to pour benevolence upon them, because that is His nature.

Why does a musician sing? To please himself. It is the very nature of his organisation to sing. His mind loves music. Why does a painter love to paint? Because painting is congenial to his very organic nature. Why does the orator feel the joy of speech? Because his whole nature is attuned and attempered to that operation. Why is it, when you go into many and many a house, that you see all the children gathered in one room? Are they gathered around about the young? No. Are they gathered together with those that are full of frolic? No. They are gathered around the aged. It is the grandmother who sits in her chair, with her nice frilled cap, white as snow, on her head, and her spectacles lifted upon her brow. The little children play about her chair. They can hardly be coaxed away from her. Why are they all drawn to her? Because she makes them happy. Why does she make them happy? Because her thoughts are all serene. She does not do it on purpose. It is her pleasure to do it. She just pours out of herself the music of harmony, and it fills the child with joy. It is her nature to do it.

Why does Sir Curmudgeon, who lives in his castle, when his door has been opened by the hand of want coming in from the storm, say, "Get out—get out—you vagabond! I do not want to hear. Never come here again"? He does it because it is his nature to do it. He does it because he feels

like it. When another man sees want, why do his eyes flow down with tears? Why does he instantly feel, "I adopt this want; I will bear this burden?" Why do men watch all day and all night at the door of want, and give, and give, and continue to give? Why are they happy in giving? Is it because of any agreement or bargain that they have entered into? No, they are acting out their nature. That is the way their soul runs.

Why does God love? Because it is His nature to love. Why is He patient? Because it is His nature. Why is He forgiving? Because that is His nature. Why does He promise everything to you without condition? Because He is just so generous. Why does He love you, though you are unworthy of love? Because that is just the way that the mind of God acts. And that this might be made manifest, He made the most magnificent display of it in this world in the Son of God, who came to live, to love, to suffer, and to die for men. But that was only a faint representation. I do not hesitate to say of the royalty of that which is so vast and glorious in the spheres above, that it cannot be made known in time and in our horizon here. —*Beecher.*

2. His tender mercies are over all His works.

(2304.) Observe three things in God's giving:

(1.) He is not weary of giving; the springs of mercy are ever running. God did not only dispense blessings in former ages, but He still gives gifts to us; as the sun not only enriches the world with its morning light, but keeps light for the meridian. The honeycomb of God's bounty is still dropping.

(2.) God delights in giving. "He delighteth in mercy." As the mother delights to give the child the breast, God loves we should have the breast of mercy in our mouth.

(3.) God gives to His very enemies. Who will send in provisions to his enemy? Men use to spread nets for their enemies, God spreads a table. The dew drops on the thistle as well as the rose; the dew of God's bounty drops upon the worst.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(2305.) As the sun gives life and joy to all the world, and if there were millions of more kinds of beings and of individuals in it, His light and heat are sufficient for them all; so the divine goodness can supply us with all good things, and ten thousand worlds more. —*Bates*, 1625-1699.

(2306.) Paternity and democracy, I think, are the same things. The father looks upon his children, and they are all his children. One may be a little older than another, one may be a little stronger than another, one may be a little handsomer than another; but paternity implies that every one according to its nature and capacity receives attention. If one child has more intellect than another, the parent gives more intellectual stimulus to that child; if another has more tendency in the direction of inventive power, the parent gives more cultivation to that tendency; if another is artistically organised, the parent educates it accordingly. Each one is treated with reference to its own want. And yet, comprehensively, the father looks upon all his children alike as his own dear children. I do not call this the democracy of love: it is necessity.

Now, look at the sun—the only thing of such power that makes no discriminations and distinctions. I have growing in my garden the portulaccæ in beds, for the sake of its glowing colour. You know that it is first cousin to purslane—a weed that everybody who undertakes to keep a garden hates. I have hoed it, and pulled it up, and denounced it, and spurned it, and given it to the fire and to the pigs with maledictions. But I cannot find out that the sun exercises any discrimination between the purslane growing in my garden and the portulacca. I call one flower and the other weed; but God's sun calls them both flowers. There is the Jamestown weed, beautiful in blossom and odious in odour. But I cannot see that God's sun makes any distinction between this and the choicest plants. I cannot see that the sun is botanical at all. I cannot teach it anything. If I say to the sun, "This is not the old-fashioned single zinnia, with a great coarse globe: this is my double zinnia," the sun says, "Single zinnia, and double zinnia, take as much as you want." On my place I have fox-grapes, that, running over the wall, and falling down in every direction, are among the most beautiful things that grow; and I have a little vineyard of Delaware grapes with which I have taken great pains—pinching, pruning, and cultivating them. I want the sun to take notice of my cultivated grapes, but I cannot get him to pay any more attention to them than he does to those fox-grapes. Some things bring more money in the market than others; but I cannot see but that the sun treats them all just alike. My mullen-stalks are as well taken care of as my wheat. The sun that pours its rays through the trees, and bathes and nourishes the mighty oak, takes just as much pains with witch-grass, or with the detestable Canada thistles—which, old sinners as they are, stand up among the grass as thick as you sinners stand up among the righteous—as with these. And I take notice that, all through the world, the sun does not bestow its regards exclusively upon houses that are built three stories or five stories high. The Esquimaux hut is shined on as much as the king's palace. The sun makes no distinction between a dwelling ornamented with carved work and covered with costly material and a dwelling made of rough slabs and covered with straw. It does not look upon highness any more than upon lowness; upon breadth any more than upon narrowness; upon culture any more than upon the unrefined conditions of nature. It goes diffusing itself through the air; and everything, whether it be eagle or vulture, whether it be gorgeous butterfly or buzzing beetle, whether it be that which is escaping from peril to life or that which is seeking life, is shined upon. The sun bears itself without partiality in infinite abundance and continuity. It is a life-giving stimulus to all things. And it is the emblem of God, of whom it is said, "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." —*Beecher.*

3. The multitude of His mercies.

(2307.) In the dew drops that top every spike of grass, sow the sward with orient pearl, and hang like pendent diamonds, sparkling in the sun from all the leaves of the forest, you see the multitude of His mercies. He crowns the year with His bounty. We have seen other streams dried up by the heat of summer, and frozen by the cold of winter—that of His mercies never. It has flowed on; day by day, night by night, ever flowing; and largely fed of heavenly showers, sometimes overflowing all its

banks. To this, and that other one has the past brought afflictions? Still, may I not ask, how few our miseries to the number of our mercies; how far have our blessings exceeded our afflictions; our nights of sleep, those of wakefulness; our hours of health, those of sickness; our many gains, the few losses we have suffered? For every blow, how many blessings! and even when He smote with one hand, did not a gracious God hold up with the other? Who has not to sing of mercy as well as judgment; ay, much more of mercies than of judgments? Let us not write the memory of these on water, and of those on the rock. —*Guthrie.*

(2308.) Did you ever stand in a bright summer day by the black swirling pool at the foot of a waterfall, and look up to the top of the cascade, where, scattering its liquid beads like sparkling diamonds, it sprang boldly out from the rock into the air? How ceaseless the flow! and with its snowy foam ever flashing in the light of day, and its deep solemn voice, in that lone glen, ever praising God through the hours of night—what an image does it offer of the stream of mercies that are continually falling on us from the bountiful hand of God!

The Scriptures employ other, and indeed many images of God's affluent bounty. God Himself says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel"—but there are cloudy skies and breezy nights when no dew falls, emblem of divine bounty, to hang gems on every bush, and snow the fields with "orient pearls." Again it is said: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, and showers that water the earth," but there are days and weeks without a drop of rain. Again it is said, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground"—but it is only on rare occasions that the river, swollen by many a tributary, comes down red and roaring, and overflowing all its banks, turns every wooded knoll into an island, and green valleys into inland seas. But, is there ever a month, a week, a day, an hour, a moment, a single moment, when from Thy blessed and bountiful hand, O God! mercies are not falling in showers—thick as the rain-drops that shimmer in sunlight on the water, or as the snow-flakes that fill the wintry air!

—*Guthrie.*

(2309.) So many are God's kindnesses to us, that, as drops of water, they run together; and it is not until we are borne up by the multitude of them, as by streams in deep channels, that we recognise them as coming from Him. We have walked amid His mercies as in a forest where we are tangled among ten thousand growths, and touched on every hand by leaves and buds which we notice not. We cannot recall all the things He has done for us. They are so many that they must needs crowd upon each other, until they go down behind the horizon of memory like full hemispheres of stars that move in multitudes and sink, not separate and distinguishable, but multitudinous, each casting light into the other, and so clouding each other by common brightness. —*Beecher.*

4. His care for the poor.

(2310.) God presents Himself to us as having a peculiar and tender care of the poor. It is not the robust but delicate child of the family, around whom a father's and mother's affections cluster thickest, are most closely twined. The boy or girl whom feebleness of body or mind makes least fit to bear the world's rough usage, and most dependent on others' kindness, is like those tendrils that, winding themselves round the tree they spangle with flowers, bind it most closely in their embraces, and bury their pliant arms deepest in its bark. And what a blessed and beautiful arrangement of Providence it is, that they who cost most care, and lie with greatest weight on parents' arms and hearts, are commonly most loved!

Helplessness, appealing to our pity, begets affection. Thus was the heart of the rough sailor touched, when, tossing with other castaways in an open boat on the open sea, he parted with a morsel of food, which, hidden with more care than misers hide their gold, he had reserved for his own last extremity. Around him lay men and women; some dead with glassy eyes; some dying, and these reduced to ghastly skeletons; but none of these moved him to peril his own life for theirs. The object of his noble and not unrewarded generosity—for, as if Heaven had sent it on purpose to reward the act, a sail speedily hove in sight—was a gentle boy that, with his face turned on hers, lay dying in a mother's arms, and between whose teeth the famished man put his own last precious morsel.

Of this feeling I met also a remarkable illustration in my old country parish. In one of its cottages dwelt a poor idiot child; horrible to all eyes but her parents'; and so helpless, that, though older than sisters just blooming into womanhood, she lay, unable either to walk or speak, a burden on her mother's lap, almost the whole day long,—a heavy handful to one who had the cares of a family, and was the wife of a hard working man,—and a most painful contrast to the very roses that flung their bright clusters over the cottage window as well as to the lark that, pleased with a grassy turf, carolled within its cage. Death, in most instances unwelcome visitor, came at length,—to her and to their relief. Relief! so I thought; and, when the father came with an invitation to the funeral, so I said. Though not roughly, but inadvertently spoken, the word jarred on a tender chord; and I was more than ever taught how helplessness begets affection in the very measure and proportion of itself, when he burst into a fit of sorrow, and, speaking of his beautiful boys and blooming girls, said, If it had been God's will, I would have parted with any of them rather than her.

Now this kindness to the helpless, of which man's home, both in the humblest and highest walks of life, presents so many lovely instances, and which, you will observe, moves the roughest crowd on the street, without taking time to inquire into its merits, to throw themselves into the quarrel of a woman or weeping child, is a flower of Eden, that clings to the ruins of our nature,—one beautiful feature of God's image which has to some extent survived the fall. "The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Well named, "Our Father who is in heaven;" He sets Himself forth in His Word as the Patron and Protector of the poor; He recommends them in many ways and by many considerations to our kindness; and teaches us that, if we would be like Himself, we must remember their miseries amid our enjoyments, and fill their empty cups with the overflowings of our own.

—*Guthrie.*

(2311.) God is in sympathy with you. Don't you think He knows how heavy the hod of bricks is that the workman carries up the ladder on the wall? Don't you think He hears the ring of the pickaxe of the miner down in the gold shaft? Don't you think He knows how hard the tempest strikes the sailor at masthead? Don't you think He sees the factory girl amid flying spindles, and knows how her arms ache? Don't you think He sees the sewing-woman in the fourth story, and knows how few pence she gets for making one garment? Ay, ay; I tell you that louder than the roar of the wheels and the din of the great cities, the sigh of the over-tasked working-man rises into the ear of God. Oh! ye who are weary of hand, weary of head, weary of foot, and weary of heart, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain thee." —*Talmage.*

5. His condescension to the lowly.

(2312.) There is no subject of contemplation, indeed, more marvellous than the unceasing attention and care lavished by Deity on *small* as well as on *great;* that the vast provinces of His giant empire do not withdraw His thoughts and care from the feeble and insignificant; that He who wheels the planets in their courses, and lights up the blazing suns of the firmament, can watch also the sparrows fall, and feed the young ravens when they cry! Just as the mountain supports the tiny blade of grass and the modest floweret as well as the giant pine or cedar; just as that ocean bears up in safety the seabird seated on its crested waves as well as the leviathan vessel: so while the Great Keeper of Israel can listen to the archangel's song and the seraph's burning devotions, He can carry in His bosom the feeblest lamb of the fold, and lead gently the most sorrowing spirit. The Psalmist delights to celebrate these two thoughts in conjunction:—God in the vastness of His omnipotence, and God in the condescending tenderness of lowly love to the feeble and fallen. "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations"—"The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down:" He telleth the number of the stars: He calleth them all by their names"—"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." —*Macduff.*

6. His pity for them that fear Him.

(2313.) The least degree of sincere sanctification, being an effect of regeneration, is a certain sign of adoption, and may minister a sure argument to him that has it, that he is the adopted child of God. Now, as parents love their children, not so much for their wit or comeliness, or the like qualities, as because they are theirs, so does God love His children: yea, had He not loved them before they had any good quality in them, for which He might affect them, they had never come to have any such. Parents delight as much in their young ones as in those that be at man's estate, as well in those that are not able to earn the bread that they eat, as in those that are able to do them the best service. Nor is any father so unnatural, that because his child, being weak and sickly, is therefore somewhat wayward, especially being a good-natured and otherwise dutiful child, will for that cause the less either regard or affect it. No, we are wont rather to be the more affectionate towards them when it is so with them. Yea, I say not what infirmity, but what disease, almost, is there so loathsome as will keep a mother from tendering and tending her child? In like manner it is with our heavenly Father whose love goes infinitely beyond the love of any earthly father or mother whatsoever. For as a father, says the Psalmist, is pitiful unto his children, so the Lord is pitiful to those that fear Him. And the most natural mother, the kindest and dearest parent that is, may sooner forget or not regard the fruit of their own body, than He can forget or not regard them. "And I will spare them," says He, "that fear Me, and think on My name, as a man spares his own son that serves him." He loves and delights in His little weak ones, His young babes in Christ, that can scarce almost creep, much less go well alone yet, as well as in His well-grown ones, that are able to help and to tend others. For the Lord's delight is in all those that fear Him, and that rely upon His mercy. He is content to accept at their hands what they are able. As a little done by a son gives his father much better contentment than a great deal more done by a mere stranger or servant. And there is a difference between a son and a servant; that a servant, if he cannot do his master's work, his master will not keep him, he must go, seek him some other service; whereas a son, albeit he be not able to do ought, yet he is not therefore cast off; his father keeps him not for the service he does or can do him, but he keeps him because he is his son. Yea, it is not the wants, and infirmities, and imperfections, or the remainders of sin and corruption in God's children, that can cause God to cast them off or to abhor them. "Our corruptions shall not hurt us, if they do not please us," says Augustine. Nor is it so much our corruptions as our pleasing of ourselves in them, that makes God to be displeased with us. Any beginning of sincere sanctifying grace, then, argues God's child; and a weak child of God being yet a child of God, as well as a strong, has good cause and great cause therein to rejoice.

—*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

(2314.) "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." "Like as a father"—but how is that? You see yonder dusky tents along the stream, and knots of cattle grazing on the neighbouring hills; but the chieftain stays at home. In the cradle lies the babe whom a foster-mother is bringing up, for his own mother died on the day when he was born; and hand in hand with his widowed sire walks a little boy full of love, full of notions bright and strange, asking hard questions, telling dreams; till a sudden change comes across the scene, and in the effort to be a playmate to Rachel's little son, for a moment the patriarch forgets his cares and griefs and, as men would say, his dignity.

How is it that a father pitieth his children? An old king is seated at the city gate. Not far away a battle is going forward—a battle on which hangs the monarch's crown, perhaps his very life. And there is panic through the town, the helpless running to and fro, and the fearful looking forth of those who think they already see their houses in the flames and red slaughter rushing through the streets. But now posting towards the city are seen the little clouds, the dust of separate couriers, and all rush to hear the tidings. "All's well!" exclaims the first; "Victory!" shouts the second; but with fierce impatience, demands the monarch, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" and, transfixed by the fatal truth in his cry of anguish, the cheers of exulta-

tion suddenly subside, and as he staggers up to his solitary chamber, the joyous crowd fall silent, and even the conquerors when they at last return, like the perpetrators of a crime, slink through the gate crestfallen.

How is it that a father pitieth his children? For long there has been only one son at home, and you might suppose there never had been more than one; all is so complete and orderly, and the new-come servants and the neighbours never speak of any other. But along the highroad there is this instant travelling a gaunt and haggard figure, his filthy tattered clothing showing little trace of bygone foppery, and in his looks not much to betoken gentle breeding; so shabby and so reprobate that those who pity common beggars shake the head or slam the door on this one. But though the dogs bark at him and charity turns away from him; though the meanest hut rejects him, and though the passengers scowl at his petitions, one heart awaits him, and keeps for him the original compartment, warm, ample, and unfilled. Yonder, as he has surmounted the summit of the hill and is gazing down on the long forsaken homestead and hesitating whether he may venture nearer, which quick eye is that which has recognised him a great way off, and what eager step is this which runs so fast to meet him? and who is this that in the folds of his kingly mantle hides the ragged wanderer, and clasps him to his bosom, and weeps upon his neck the tears of enraptured affection, and cuts short his confession with a call for the best robe and a command for instant festival? Oh, what a love is this which the heavenly Father hath unto His children! —*Hamilton*, 1814-1867.

(2315.) Dr. Kane, finding a flower under the Humboldt glacier, was more affected by it because it grew beneath the lip and cold bosom of the ice than he would have been by the most gorgeous garden bloom. So some single struggling grace, in the heart of one far removed from Divine influences, may be dearer to God than a whole catalogue of virtues in the life of one more favoured of heaven.

—*Beecher.*

7. Is not inconsistent with severity.

(2316.) The goodness for which Mr. Kentish pleads is mere undistinguishing beneficence of which we can form no idea without feeling at the same time a diminution of respect. If a supreme magistrate should possess such an attachment to his subjects as that, whatever were their crimes, he could in no case be induced to give any one of them up to condign punishment or to any other punishment than what should be adapted to promote his good, he would presently become an object of general contempt. Or if a father should possess such a fondness for his children that, let any one of them be guilty of what he might, suppose it were a murder, a hundred times repeated, yet he could never consent that any punishment should be inflicted upon him, excepting such as might be productive of his good, such a father would be detested by the community, and despised by his own family.

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754-1815.

(2317.) Goodness and severity are elements of a perfect character even among men. Without goodness, the character is stern and inflexible; it repels instead of winning. There may be certain qualities which command our respect in a Draco, who ordains death as the penalty for every trifling violation of the law, or in a Brutus, who, with tearless eye, gives orders in the way of duty for the execution of his sons; but from characters of such untempered austerity, sympathy and affection recoil. On the other hand, without severity goodness degenerates into weakness; into that moral pliancy which, under the name of good-nature, has often made men "consent" easily to the enticement of sinners, and has given them nothing in return but the insipid reputation of having been enemies to none but themselves. In a perfect character, if such existed among men, you would see the counterbalancing powers of goodness and severity held in exact equilibrium. And such, the Word of God assures us, is the character of Him with whom we have to do—"Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God."

A very beautiful illustration of this twofold element of the Divine character may be drawn from nature. "God is light," says the Scripture. Philosophers have discovered that light, though apparently so simple a substance, is compounded of seven different rays. It may be said to have two main ingredients: the sombre rays (blue, indigo, violet); the bright rays (orange, red, yellow, green). Both classes of rays are essential to the delicacy and purity of the substance. Without the sombre rays, light would be a glare,—the eyeball would ache beneath it; without the bright rays, light would approximate to the nature of darkness, and lose the gay smile which lights up the face of nature, and twinkles on the sea. Similarly, the holiness, justice, and truth of God (attributes which wear an awful aspect to the sinner), are an element of His nature, as essential to its perfectness as mercy, love, and goodness. Suppose in Him, for a moment, no stern defiance against moral evil, but an allowance and admission of it, and you degrade Jehovah to the level of a pagan deity, honoured with impure rites, and forming His worshippers on the model of His own licentiousness. Suppose in Him, on the other hand, an absence of love, and you supplant the very being of God, you overcloud the light, and convert it into its antagonist darkness; for "God is love." But combine both righteousness and love, intensified to the highest conceivable degree, and you are then possessed of the Scriptural idea of the Most High. "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God."

—*Goulburn.*

XXIII. *HIS LOVE.*

1. It preceded ours.

(2318.) Some years ago two gentlemen were riding together, and, as they were about to separate, one addressed the other thus: "Do you ever read your Bible?" "Yes, but I get no benefit from it, because, to tell the truth, I feel I do not love God." "Neither did I," replied the other, "but God loved me." This answer produced such an effect upon his friend, that, to use his own words, it was as if one had lifted him off the saddle into the skies. It opened up to his soul at once the great truth, that it is not how much I love God, but how much God loves me.

2. It was manifested in the gift of Christ.

(2319.) No man has ever manifested such love as this. In a few instances one man has been willing to sacrifice his life for a friend; and not a few

fathers and mothers have been willing to endanger their lives for the welfare of a son or daughter. But the instance has never yet occurred where a man was willing to give his own life, or the life of a child, for an enemy. No monarch on the throne has ever thought of giving the heir to his crown to die for a traitor, or a rebellious province; and amidst the multitudes of treason which have occurred, it has never, probably, for one instant, crossed the bosom of the offended sovereign to suppose that such a thing was possible; and if it had occurred it would have been at once dismissed as not worth more than a passing thought. No magistrate has ever lived who would have been willing to sentence his own son to the gallows in place of the guilty wretch whom it was his duty to sentence to death. Not an instance has ever occurred in our own country—rich as it is in examples of benignity and kindness—in which a judge on the bench would have been willing to commute a punishment in this manner, if it had been in strict accordance with equity and law; and probably the records of all nations might be searched in vain for such an instance. We know that monarchs often feel, and that magistrates are not destitute of a tender heart, and that the man on the bench who passes the severe sentence of the law often does it in tears. The present King of France passes every night to a late hour in carefully examining the cases of those who are condemned to death, and in the silence of the night-watches ponders all the reasons why a pardon should be extended in any case, and often with a heavy heart signs the warrant for death; and Washington wept when his duty constrained him to approve the sentence which doomed the accomplished André to the gallows; but would these feelings in either instance, or in any instance, prompt to the surrender of a son—an only son—to the disgrace of the gibbet to save the spy or the traitor? We are saying nothing in disparagement of such men—for they are but men, and not God—when we say that their feelings of compassion have made no approach to such a sacrifice. Their deep emotions, their tears, their genuine sorrow, their unaffected and noble benevolence — though an honour to our nature—have not approached the question whether such a sacrifice was possible or proper; and, we may add, it is not to be approached in this world. The nearest approach of which I have ever heard to anything like this feeling, was in the pathetic wish of David that he had himself been permitted to die in the place of a rebellious and ungrateful son. "O, my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee. O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Kings xviii. 33.) Strong was that love which would lead a monarch and a father to be willing to die for such a son; but how far removed still from the love which would lead to the sacrifice of a son for the guilty and the vile! —*Barnes*, 1798-1870.

(2320.) We have no higher conception of the love of a father than that he should give up his son to die. It is the last offering which he could make, and beyond this there is nothing that we can expect. When a man bids his only son to go into the tented field, and expose his life for his country, and with every prospect that he will die for its welfare, it is the highest expression of attachment for that country. Man has no possessions so valuable that he would not give them all to save the life of his son; and when he yields up his son in any cause, he has shown for it the highest love. It is impossible to conceive of a higher expression of love, if it could be done, than for a man on the bench, whose office required of him to condemn the guilty to death, to be willing to substitute his own son on the gallows, and bid the murderer go free.

—*Barnes*, 1798-1870.

(2321.) Suppose a man is lying under sentence of death! Shrinking from the gallows-tree, he has sent off a petition for mercy; and waits the answer in anxious suspense. One day his ear catches rapid steps approaching his door—they stop there. The chain is dropped; the bolts are drawn; a messenger enters with his fate—on these lips, death or life. And the answer? Ah, the answer is that the sovereign pities the criminal, but cannot pardon the crime. The blood deserts his cheeks; his hopes dashed to the ground, he wrings his hands, and gives himself up for lost. And now the messenger draws near; and, laying his hand kindly on the poor felon's shoulder, tells him that there is one way by which he may yet be saved—if the king's son would change places with him, put these fetters of his on his own limbs and die in his room, that would satisfy justice, and set him free. Drowning men will catch at straws; not he at that. The king give up his son! the king's son, the prince royal, the heir of the kingdom consent to die for a poor, obscure, guilty wretch like me, if there is no hope but that, there is no hope at all! Now fancy, if you can, his astonishment, sinking to incredulity and then rising into a paroxysm of joy, when the messenger says, "I am the king's son; it is my own wish, and my father's will, that I should die for you; for that purpose am I come, have I left the palace, and sought you in this dreary prison; take you the pardon and give me the fetters. In me shall the crime be punished; in you shall the criminal be saved. Escape! Behold, I set before you an open door!"

Such love never was shown by man. No. But greater love has been shown by God. He gave up His Son to death that we might not die but live.

—*Guthrie.*

3. Its tenderness.

(2322.) God has *a mother's favouritism.* A father sometimes shows a sort of favouritism. Here is a boy — strong, well, of high forehead and quick intellect. The father says, "I will take that boy into my firm yet;" or, "I will give him the very best possible education." There are instances where, for the culture of the one boy, all the others have been robbed. A sad favouritism; but that is not the mother's favourite. I will tell you her favourite. There is a child who, at two years of age, had a fall. He has never got over it. The scarlet fever muffled his hearing. He is not what he once was. That child has caused the mother more anxious nights than all the other children. If he coughs in the night, she springs out of a sound sleep and goes to him. The last thing she does when going out of the house, is to give a charge in regard to him. The first thing on coming in is to ask in regard to him. Why, the children of the family all know that he is the favourite, and say: "Mother, you let him do just as he pleases, and you give him a great many things which you do not give us. He is your favourite." The mother smiles; she knows it is so. So he ought to be; for if there is any one in the

world who needs sympathy more than another, it is an invalid child, weary on the first mile of life's journey; carrying an aching head, a weak side, an irritated lung. So the mother ought to make him a favourite. God, our Mother, has favourites. "Whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth." That is, one whom He *especially* loves He chasteneth. God loves us all; but is there one weak, and sick, and sore, and wounded, and suffering, and faint? That is the one who lies nearest and more perpetually on the great, loving heart of God.

—*Talmage.*

4 It embraces all His children.

(2323.) As the sun shining upon one place of the earth enlightens it no less than if it shined on no other, so in the very same manner is our Lord solicitous for all His dear children.

—*Francis de Sales.*

5. It is unchangeable.

(2324.) The sincerity of God's affection to His people appears in the unmovableness of His love. As there is no shadow of turning in the being of God, so not in the love of God to His people; there is no vertical point; His love stands still like the sun in *Gibeah*, it goes not down nor declines, but continues in its full strength. "*With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer.*" Sorry man repents of his love; the hottest affection cools in his bosom; love in the creature is like fire on the hearth, now blazing, anon blinking and going out; but in God, like fire in the element, that never fails. In the creature 'tis like water in a river that falls and rises; but in God, like water in the sea, that is always full.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

6. It should lead us always to trust Him.

(2325.) One great object of revelation was to show us God as our Father. It is thus the Son reveals Him when He says that no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth Him. And there are many passages of Scripture that point us to this delightful revelation —such as, "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him;" "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son." "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way." You have, doubtless, seen a kind and tender parent taking the little child by the hand when just beginning to walk, turning the steps aside when obstacles are in the way, directing the child where to walk, and bending over the little one with fond delight. I have seen young parents laughing with joy when they have observed the first steps which the little ones take— they delighted in their way. And so God is represented as bending from above over us, and ordering the steps of a good man, watching his pathway, holding him by the hand, leading him in the way he should go, and delighting in his way. And never was a tender and loving parent so delighted in marking the footsteps of a child, as God in watching the ways of a good man—delighted at all his efforts in the paths of piety and peace.

Such declarations present the doctrine of the watch-care of God over them that fear Him; or, as it is sometimes called, the doctrine of a special providence. This doctrine teaches us that God is especially watchful over those who love Him; and that, where men fear and serve Him, He has special care toward them — watches their pathway and directs their movements. —*Simpson.*

(2326.) Walking down W—— Street one morning, I saw a little blind boy standing on the side-walk, with his head bent forward as if eagerly listening. Stepping up to him, I said: "Shall I help you across the street, my little friend?"

"Oh! no, thank you; I am waiting for my father."

"Can you trust your father?"

"Oh! yes; my father always takes good care of me, leads me all the time, and when he has my hand I feel perfectly safe."

"But why do you feel safe?"

Raising his sightless eyes, with a sweet smile and look of perfect trust, he replied: "Oh! because my father knows the way. He can see, but I am blind."

This little blind boy preached a sermon to me. Do we, with our hand in our Father's, feel perfectly safe? We are poor blind children, yet do we not often rebel against the way the Father would lead us, and seek to go another way which seems best to us? Because we feel the thorns sometimes, and are pierced by their sharpness, we try some other path, which seems to our blinded eyes to lead to peace and rest. But the Father can see, and shall we shrink from the path He has marked out in wisdom and love — that path which, though it be one of trial and suffering, will best fit us for heaven?

(2327.) "Well, now," said Dick Hardy thoughtfully, "it's mighty odd to me, that if what you say is true, and that God loves people so much as to send His own Son to die in their stead, and to make them His children, why is it that some of them very children, yourself for instance, are struggling on with a large family, and only a pound a week to live on; why, if I had a power of money, I don't think I'd like to see my children want for anything."

"But if they want what you knew was bad for them, then," said Frank Foster, "I take it you would not give it to them."

"No," answered Dick, "I suppose I would not."

"Not even if they could not see the harm of it? If they took a fancy to have some arsenic, for instance, thinking it would be as nice as white sugar, I think the more you loved them the less you'd give it to them? Now, to show you that God sometimes takes away what we like, and gives us what we don't like, let me tell you a story of our little Mary.

"Last winter she was very bad with what the doctor called a gastric attack hanging over her for months; sometimes she'd be better, and sometimes she'd be worse; and though her appetite went to nothing, the doctor said it was better for her not to eat anything, than to eat what was bad for her; so that we were not to give her so much as a taste of anything sweet, no matter how much she might wish for it.

"Well, Christmas-eve came, and with it the Christmas cake frosted all over as if the snow had fallen on it and hardened. And when we had all sat down to tea, Jemmy said, 'Now, father, please help Mary first, and let her have the biggest bit of all because she is sick.' So I cut a fine large slice, and the poor little thing's eyes brightened as she saw me get up and take it over and sit down beside her. 'O father,' she said, 'that's a splendid piece; is

it all for me?' 'Every bit of it, darling,' I answered; and then with a heavy heart, for I knew the trial it would be to her, I added, 'I think you trust my love for you, Mary?'

"'Why, father, sure I know you love me; and now haven't you given me this beautiful piece of cake?'

"'But would you trust me as much if I told you that although I gave you the cake, and that it was really your very own, yet that you were not to eat it until you were quite well?'

"She laughed merrily at the idea, thinking I was joking, but in a moment seeing how grave I looked, she threw her arms round my neck and hid her face on my shoulder. 'Can't you trust my love, Mary darling,' I said again, 'even if I tell you not to eat your cake now? It's all your very own, and please God you'll soon be well, and then you shall eat it; but the doctor says that if you eat it now it would make you very sick; don't you think I would rather have you eat it than eat it myself fifty times over?'

"At that she looked up, and kissed me over again: 'I know you would,' she said, 'I do trust you, father,' and she tried bravely to keep back the tears. 'Don't mind,' she said, seeing how sad I looked, and that some of the other children were crying, and all of them saying they wouldn't have any cake unless Mary had some too. 'No, no,' she added, 'indeed I don't mind now; I know father is right, he always is.'

"Mary's smile was as bright as ever again, and her voice as merry; and I am sure she trusted me so much, that after the first moment of disappointment she did not even wish to eat her bit of cake."

"And," continued Frank, "that's just it; it does come natural to a father to like to see his children happy, and to give them nice things. The hard thing was—and I believe only a father could tell how hard it was—to refuse my sick child what she wished for; and if this is true of an earthly father, oh, how much more it must be true of our Father in heaven! With one word He could make me a rich man to-morrow, and He'd like to do it too; only He sees that riches would not be good for me, just as He sees that health would not be good for another; and so He keeps riches from me and health from him. But surely if my little Mary trusted me, I may well trust Him who so loved me as to send His only and well-beloved Son to die for me."—*A fragment of a conversation between two working-men.*

XXIV. *HIS MERCY.*

1. He delights in mercy.

(2328.) Joy is the highest testimony that can be given to our complacency in anything or person; love to joy is as fuel to the fire; if love lay little fuel of desires on the heart, then the flame of joy that comes thence will not be great. Now God's joy is great in pardoning poor sinners that come in; therefore His affection is great in the offer thereof. It is made the very motive that prevails with God to pardon sinners, "Because He delighteth in mercy." Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, for He delighteth in mercy. Ask why the fisher stands all night with his angle in the river; he will tell you, because he delights in the sport. Well, you now know the reason why God stands so long waiting on sinners, months, years, preaching to them; it is that He may be gracious in pardoning them, and in that act delight Himself. Princes very often pardon traitors to please others more than themselves, or else it would never be done; but God doth it chiefly to delight and glad His own merciful heart. Hence the business Christ came about (which was no other but to reconcile sinners to God) is called "the pleasure of the Lord" (Isa. liii. 10). —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

2. Is needed by all.

(2329.) The most holy men, although like the ark they keep both the first and second table of the law of God, and have in their hearts with the manna of His grace the rod of His fear, have always need to be covered with the mercy-seat; and their most holy and devout aspirations have always something faulty in them, as the strong scent of the galbanum was mingled with all the perfumes of the law.
—*Faucheur.*

(2330.) Though we have sinned less than others, we cannot be saved by merit; even as, thank God, though we have sinned more than others, we may be saved by mercy. How idle to talk of other men being greater sinners than we are—to flatter and deceive ourselves with that! He drowns as surely who has his head beneath one inch of water, as he who, with a millstone hung round his neck, has sunk a hundred fathoms down. Let the strain of the tempest come, and the ship that has one bad link in her cable, as certainly goes ashore to be dashed to pieces on the rocks, as another that has twenty bad. It is, no doubt, by repeated strokes of the woodman's axe that the oak, bending slowly to fate, bows its proud head and falls to the ground, and it is by long dropping that water hollows the hardest stone. But those who speak of great and little, of few or many sins, seem to forget that man's ruin was the work of one moment, and of one sin. The weight of only one sin sank this great world into perdition; and now all of us, all men, lie under the same sentence of condemnation. Extinguishing every hope of salvation through works, and sounding as ominous of evil in men's ears, as the cracking of ice beneath our feet, or the roar of an avalanche, or the grating of a keel on the sunken reef, or the hammer that wakens the felon from dreams of life and liberty, that sentence is this —"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

Such is our position; and instead of shutting our eyes to it, like the foolish ostrich that hides her head in the bush when the hunters are at her heels, it is well to know, and to face it. —*Guthrie.*

3. Is offered to all.

(2331.) There are many who, being conscious of wickedness and not being Christians, do not see why they should ask Divine succour. There are many who are conscious of being bound by evil, and they fain would break away from it. If only they were Christians, and in the Church, God would help them; but they are sinners, and out of the Church, and they dare not go to God. Many a man would fain break away from the cup, but he knows that his own strength is insufficient; and as he is not a Christian, as he has made his investments in evil, he does not feel that he has a right to draw upon the bank of Divine mercy. He keeps no account there, and he has no reason to think

that his check will be honoured there if he presents it.

Now, there is not a human being in or out of the Church who is not an object of Divine compassion and divine love. God may have the love of complacency when His Spirit shall have drawn you more and more into the lines and lineaments of His own blessed beauty; but God is love, and He will not wait for your turning before He loves you. God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for it, and to die for it while yet it was in sin—yea, and at enmity to Him. God's love precedes all reformation. And there is no man—not a drunkard, not a gambler, not a thief, not a person that is filled full of passions and appetites—who has not a right, today, now, here, in his heart, to look up and say, "God help me!" Your sinfulness is not a reason why you should keep away from God. It is the very reason why you should go to Him. He is to your soul what the physician is to your body. When your body is racked with pains, or is swollen with disease, you go to the physician that he may heal you. And so, the consciousness of your sin, and of the hatefulness of it, is the very reason why you should go to God. —*Beecher.*

4. Exceeds our sin.

(2332.) Our faults are like a grain of sand beside the great mountain of the mercies of God.
—*Vianney.*

(2333.) He is rich in mercy, abundant in goodness and truth. Thy sins are like a spark of fire that falls into the ocean, it is quenched presently; so are all thy sins in the ocean of God's mercy. There is not more water in the sea, than there is mercy in God. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2334.) Oh, who can read a *Manasseh*, a *Magdalene*, a *Saul*; yea, an *Adam* (who undid himself, and a whole world with him), in the roll of pardoned sinners, and yet turn away from the promise, out of a fear that there is not mercy enough in it to serve his turn? These are as land-marks, that show what large boundaries mercy hath set to itself, and how far it hath gone, even to take into its pardoning arms the greatest sinners, that make not themselves incapable thereof by final impenitency. It were a healthful walk, poor doubting Christian, for thy soul, to go this circuit, and oft to see where the utmost stone is laid, and boundary set by God's pardoning mercy, further than which He will not go. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2335.) Impossible it is, that He should reject any poor penitent sinner, merely for the greatness of the sins he hath committed. It is the exaltation of His mercy (saith faith) that God hath in His eye when He promiseth pardon to poor sinners. Now, which exalts this most, to pardon little or great sinners? whose voice will be highest and shrillest in the song of praise, thinkest thou? surely his, to whom most is forgiven; and therefore God cannot but be most ready to pardon the greatest sinners when truly penitent. A physician that means to be famous, will not send away those that most need his skill and art; and only practise upon such diseases as are slight and ordinary. They are the great cures, which ring far and near: when one given over by himself and others, as a dead man, is by the skill and care of a physician rescued out of the jaws of death, that seemed to have enclosed him, and raised to health. This commends him to all that hear of it, and gains him more reputation than a whole year's practice in ordinary cures.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2336.) Why dost thou not believe in God's mercy? Is it thy sins discourage? God's mercy can pardon great sins, nay, because they are great (Ps. xxv. 11). The sea covers great rocks as well as lesser sands. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2337.) You cannot believe too much in God's mercy. You cannot expect too much at His hands. He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." No sin is so great but that, coming straight from it, a repentant sinner may hope and believe that all God's love will be lavished upon him, and the richest of God's gifts granted to his desires. Even if our transgression be aggravated by a previous life of godliness, and have given the enemies great occasion to blaspheme, as David did, yet David's penitence may in our souls lead on to David's hope, and the answer will not fail us. Let no sin, however dark, however repeated, drive us to despair of ourselves, because it hides from us our loving Saviour. Though beaten back again and again by the surge of our passions and sins, like some poor shipwrecked sailor sucked back with every retreating wave and tossed about in the angry surf, yet keep your face towards the beach where there is safety, and you will struggle through it all, and, though it were but on some floating boards and broken pieces of the ship, will come safe to land. He will uphold you with His Spirit, and take away the weight of sin that would sink you, by His forgiving mercy, and bring you out of all the weltering waste of waters to the solid shore.
—*Maclaren.*

5. Is accorded instantly.

(2338.) It is harder to get sin felt by the creature, than the burden, when felt, removed, by the hand of a forgiving God. Never was tender-hearted surgeon more willing to take up the vein, and bind up the wound of his fainting patient when he hath bled enough, than God is by His pardoning mercy to ease the troubled spirit of a mourning penitent.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2339.) God will pardon a repentant sinner more quickly than a mother would snatch her child out of the fire. —*Vianney.*

6. How wonderfully we are urged to seek it.

(2340.) If a judge of an assize should say to a felon, or some malefactor in the gaol, "Confess but your faults and become an honest man, I will pardon you; and not only so, but you shall be made a justice of peace, or some great man, whereby you shall have power to judge and examine others!" surely, he would, upon this promise, be moved quickly to confess the felony and forego his theft. Thus it is that the Judge of all the world makes great tenders of mercy, that if a sinner will truly and from his heart confess his sins, and resolve to leave them, he shall have pardon; and not only so, but he shall be made a king and priest unto God the Father, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ Jesus. —*Hill.*

7. It is inexhaustible.

(2341.) There is as great an ability in God, when

we are in need of new mercies, as there was when He gave former ones; nay, as much as there was from eternity. He is not a God whose arm is shortened, that is not what He was, or shall ever cease to be what He is: "Is My hand shortened at all that I cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver?" He is always, "I am that I am." There is no diminution of light in the sun no more that there was at the first moment of its creation, and the last man upon earth shall enjoy as much of it as we do now. No more does the Father of lights lose by imparting it to others. Thus we light many candles at a torch, yet it burns never the dimmer. Standing waters may be drawn dry, but a fountain cannot. God is a spring, this day and to-morrow, Jehovah unchangeable. The God of Isaac is not like Isaac, that had one blessing and no more; He has as much now as He had the first moment that mercy streamed from Him to His creature, and the same for as many as shall believe in Christ to the end of the world; nay, the more we receive from God in a way of faith, the more God has for us. A believer's harvest for present mercies is his seed-time for more. The more mercies he reaps, the more hopes of future mercy he has. God's mercies, when full-blown, seed again and come up thicker. Can the creature want more than the Everlasting Fountain can supply? Can the creature's indigency be greater than God's sufficiency? What an irrational way of arguing was that: "He smote the rock that the waters gushed out; can He give bread also? can He provide for His people?" as if He that filled their cup could not spread their table, as if He that had a hidden cellar for their drink had not a secret and as full a cupboard for their meat. Do we want mercies for soul and body? Look to the Rock whence former mercies were hewn! the same fulness can supply again.

—*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

(2342.) A benevolent person gave Mr. Rowland Hill a hundred pounds to dispense to a poor minister, and thinking it was too much to send him all at once, Mr. Hill forwarded five pounds in a letter, with simply these words within the envelope, "More to follow." In a few day's time, the good man received another letter by the post—and letters by the post were rarities in those days; this second messenger contained another five pounds, with the same motto, "And more to follow." A day or two after came a third and a fourth, and still the same promise, "And more to follow." Till the whole sum had been received the astonished minister was made familiar with the cheering words, "And more to follow."

Every blessing that comes from God is sent with the selfsame message, "And more to follow." "I forgive you your sins, but there's more to follow." "I justify you in the righteousness of Christ, but there's more to follow." "I adopt you into My family, but there's more to follow." "I educate you for heaven, but there's more to follow." "I give you grace upon grace, but there's more to follow." "I have helped you even to old age, but there's still more to follow." "I will uphold you in the hour of death, and as you are passing into the world of spirits My mercy shall still continue with you, and when you land in the world to come there shall still be MORE TO FOLLOW." —*Spurgeon.*

(2343.) It is by no means pleasant when reading an interesting article in your magazine to find yourself pulled up short with the ominous words, "*to be continued.*" Yet they are words of good cheer if applied to other matters. What a comfort to remember that the Lord's mercy and loving-kindness is *to be continued!* Much as we have experienced in the long years of our pilgrimage, we have by no means outlived eternal love. Providential goodness is an endless chain, a stream which follows the pilgrim, a wheel perpetually revolving, a star for ever shining, and leading us to the place where He is who was once a babe in Bethlehem. All the volumes which record the doings of Divine grace are but part of a series *to be continued.* —*Spurgeon.*

(2344.) I know of a father who, after his son came back the fourth time, said, "No! I forgave you three times, but I will never forgive you again." And the son went off and died. But God takes back His children the thousandth time as cheerfully as the first. As easily as with my handkerchief I strike the dust off this book, God will wipe out all our sins.

Oh this mercy of God! I am told it is an ocean. Then I place on it four swift-sailing craft, with compass, and charts, and choice rigging, and skilful navigators, and I tell them to launch away, and discover for me the extent of this ocean. That craft puts out in one direction, and sails to the north; this to the south; this to the east; this to the west. They crowd on all their canvas, and sail ten thousand years, and one day come up the harbour of heaven; and I shout to them from the beach, "Have you found the shore?" and they answer, "No shore to God's mercy." Swift angels, despatched from the throne, attempt to go across it. For a million years they fly and fly; but then come back and fold their wings at the foot of the throne, and cry, "No shore! no shore to God's mercy!" —*Talmage.*

(2345.) And now we beseech of Thee that we may have every day some such sense of the fulness of God's mercy and of the power of God around about us, as we have of the fulness of the light of heaven before us. Our tapers we trim, and we fear lest the lamp shall go out without oil; but none of us have ever had a thought or a care lest the sun should be emptied, or lest the air should be exhausted. The supply is over-abundant, and the waste is infinitely more than that which we use.

—*Beecher.*

8. Must be personally sought.

(2346.) As a man is saved by catching hold of a cable; God's mercy is a great cable let down from heaven to us; now, taking fast hold of this cable by faith, we are saved. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2347.) If God show mercy to thousands, labour to know that this mercy is for you. "He is the God of my mercy" (Ps. lix. 17). A man that was ready to drown, saw a rainbow; saith he, "What am I the better, though God will not drown the world, if I drown?" So, what are we the better God is merciful, if we perish? let us labour to know God's special mercy is for us. —*Watson*, 1696.

9. Is limited to this life.

(2348.) Let us take heed, for mercy is like a rainbow, which God set in the clouds to remember mankind: it shines here as long as it is not hindered; but we must never look for it after it is

night, and it shines not in the other world. If we refuse mercy here, we shall have justice there.
—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

10. Is not to be abused.

(2349.) Take heed of abusing this mercy of God. Suck not poison out of the sweet flower of God's mercy: do not think, that because God is merciful, you may go on in sin; this is to make mercy become your enemy. None might touch the ark but the priests, who by their office were more holy; none may touch this ark of God's mercy but such as are resolved to be holy. To sin because mercy abounds, is the devil's logic. He that sins because of mercy, is like one that wounds his head because he hath a plaister; he that sins because of God's mercy, shall have judgment without mercy. Mercy abused turns to fury. "If he bless himself, saying, I shall have peace though I walk after the imaginations of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst, the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against that man." Nothing sweeter than mercy when it is improved; nothing fiercer, when it is abused; nothing colder than lead, when it is taken out of the mine; nothing more scalding than lead, when it is heated; nothing blunter than iron; nothing sharper, when it is whetted. "The mercy of the Lord is upon them that fear him." Mercy is not for them that sin and fear not, but for them that fear and sin not. God's mercy is an holy mercy; where it pardons, it heals.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(2350.) Would we not cry, Shame of him, who had a friend always feeding him with money, and he should betray and injure that friend. Thus ungratefully do sinners deal with God, they do not only forget His mercies, but abuse them. "When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery." Oh how horrid is this, to sin against a bountiful God! to strike (as it were) those hands that relieve us! This gives a dye and tincture to men's sins, and makes them crimson. How many make a dart of God's mercies, and shoot at Him? He gives them wit, and they serve the devil with it; He gives them strength, and they waste it among harlots; He gives them bread to eat, and they lift up the heel against Him. "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." These are like Absalom, who, as soon as David his father kissed him, plotted treason against him (2 Sam. xv. 10). Like the mule, who kicks the dam after she hath given it milk. Those who sin against their giver, and abuse God's royal favours, the mercies of God will come in as witnesses against them. What smoother than oil? But if it be heated, what more scalding? What sweeter than mercy? But if it be abused, what more dreadful? It turns to fury.
—*Watson*, 1696.

XXV. *HIS GRACE.*

1. Is ever needful.

(2351.) All our power for sacred performances is wholly from another; "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything." To think, we suppose, is an easy thing; but unless God help, it is too hard for us. God gave Israel their manna every day, or they could not have subsisted. God must give us fresh supplies of His Spirit in every duty, or they cannot be rightly performed. The greatest fulness of a Christian is not the fulness of a fountain, but of a vessel, which, because always is letting out, must be always taking in. The conduit, which is continually running, must be always receiving from the river. The Christian's disbursements are great and constant; therefore such must his incomes from God be, or he will quickly prove a bankrupt. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2352.) Our preservation from evil and perseverance in good is a most free unmerited favour, the effect of God's renewed grace in the course of our lives. Without His special assistance, we should every hour forsake Him, and provoke Him to forsake us. As the iron cannot ascend or hang in the air longer than the virtue of the loadstone draws it, so our affections cannot ascend to those glorious things that are above without the continually attracting power of grace. —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(2353.) Alas, O Lord, what am I when left to myself but a dry parched ground, which, being rent on every side, witnesses its thirst for rain from heaven, but which in the meantime is dispersed by the wind and reduced to dust. —*Francis de Sales.*

(2354.) As the earth can produce nothing unless it is fertilised by the sun, so we can do nothing without the grace of God. —*Vianney.*

(2355.) It (grace) is God taking the sinner by the hand, and wishing to teach him to walk. We are like little children, we do not know how to walk on the road to heaven; we stagger, we fall, unless the hand of God is always ready to support us.

The grace of God helps us to walk, and supports us. He is as necessary to us as crutches are to a lame man. —*Vianney.*

(2356.) Let the lily be exposed to the scorching sun, and deprived of the refreshing dew, and its leaves will droop and die. Just so the Christian: let him be exposed to the scorching heat of indwelling corruption, the world's cares, and Satan's wiles, without the dew of God's grace, he will not advance in holiness of heart and life. But when that descends, his leaves stand erect, and, like the lily, his growth is rapid. Integrity strengthens, benevolence expands, holiness opens in all its lily-like loveliness, and in due time the plant is removed to the paradise of God, there to bloom in unfading beauty.
—*Jackson.*

(2357.) The acts of breathing which I performed yesterday will not keep me alive to-day; I must continue to breathe afresh every moment, or animal life ceases. In like manner, yesterday's grace and spiritual strength must be renewed, and the Holy Spirit must continue to breathe on my soul, from moment to moment, in order to my enjoying the consolations, and to my working the works of God.
—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2358.) What man can re-create himself? I go, in January, into my garden. This plum tree has ceased growing. So has that pear tree—and so have all these other trees. And my flowers, to all appearance, are dead. And I propose a resurrection. It may be that by building a shelter around one single plant or tree, I can thaw out the soil, and by artificial heat wake up the dormant bud, and bring spring into it. But what man can enclose his whole garden, and bring summer into that in the middle of winter?

And if a man can't do this with his garden, who can do it with his whole farm? It is a task that defies all human power. Not till God calls the sun, and it comes hastening back, full of vivific powers, and fruitful influences—not till then does the soil heave, and the root swell, and the leaf shoot forth, and the bud protrude, and the blossom exhale, and all things show that more than a man, with his artificial appliances, is at work.

Now, with regard to a man's character, it is true that, so far as any special disposition is concerned, the power of the will to do right or wrong is undoubted. You can correct a single habit; but the great outlying domain of the soul, with its multitudinous habits, formed and forming—what man can look upon this and say, "By the power of my own volition, I will bring up good where there is evil; love shall rule where selfishness reigns?" There is not one single moment when a man does not run away from himself; when his disposition does not break loose from his will. It is not till some influence from God is shed down upon a man, vivifying him as summer vivifies the soil, that he feels, "I have hope." Therefore it is said, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," as a man must that works in such a crater as the human heart; "for it is God which worketh in you."

—*Beecher.*

2. Ever available.

(2359.) When a child has been away all day long, playing truant, and the afternoon comes, and with it hunger and the necessity of shelter, he must go home; and he goes towards his father's house, thinking to himself what plausible lie to tell—how he can make tattered truth seem like an unrent garment. And so, with an ill-feigned appearance of innocence, and perhaps with a forced smile on his face, he enters the door, trying to look as if he were not a guilty child. He runs with alacrity to perform every errand imposed upon him. His conduct, however, is suspicious; for he is too good for an innocent child. He thinks nothing is known of his disobedience. But while he sits with the family at tea, the burden on his mind grows heavier and heavier; and he says to himself, "They are very kind to me, and if I thought that they knew it all, and they were so kind, how happy I should be!" He expects that they will find it out, and that then there will be a time of it. Now his father and mother are pleasant toward him, but he thinks that by and by it will come out, and that then will follow chastisement and trouble. And that great undiscovered guilt in the soul, that account yet to be settled, takes away all the joys of his home, and makes the evening a torment. But if, when he came in, his mother had stolen behind him, and said to him in a gentle tone, "We know it all, my child; we are sorry; but we shall say nothing about it; we shall let it pass," the child, as soon as he found that it was all known and forgiven, and that he was the recipient of so much love, not because they did not know it, but because knowing it they saw sufficient reasons why it should be passed by, and not laid to his account, how sweet to him would have been his father's and mother's kindness! It would have brought tears to his eyes as it had never done before. And when he went to his couch at night, how sweet would their unscolding forgiveness have been to him! It would have been all the sweeter because all the time they knew his guilt.

Now, the apostle says, "With your guilt, with your trouble, go before God." He knows all. What nobody else knows, He knows. He knows what even the wife of your bosom does not know. He knows what has never been divulged to any living soul. Wicked thoughts and intentions in connection with your business, which perhaps no man knows except yourself, He knows. And when you feel an impulse to go before God, do not say, "I would go; but that crime." He knew of that crime before He invited you to go to Him. Do not say, "I would go; but that unwashed lust." He has known that lust from the beginning. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." "Let us, therefore," says the apostle, "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help." *Grace to help*—that is it: grace to help you out of your sin. Let no one, then, who has a sense of his sinfulness, who is truly repentant, and who is striving to do better, hesitate to go to God, saying, "Have mercy upon me, and help me." —*Beecher.*

(2360.) The truth of the bountifulness and largeness of God's grace and goodness is true for everybody, provided everybody will put himself in a relation to take it. The reason why the sun produces in one place geraniums, camellias, azaleas, all forms of exquisite flowers, and does not produce them in another place, is not in the sun. The cause of the difference is in the use to which you put the sun. It shines on the south side of my barn, and what does it produce there? A warm spot, where chickens and cows gather. It shines on the south side of my neighbour's barn, and what does it produce there? Flowers and grapes. What is the reason of the difference? Does the sun change? No, but it is put to different uses. It is just the same sun, with just the same vivific power to all; but its effects are different when it is differently employed. In one man's hands it amounts to nothing, because he does not make any use of it; but in another man's hands it amounts to a great deal, because he does make use of it, and makes it do a great deal for him. The nature of God is the same to all men, but the effects are not the same on all men; because they do not all put it to the same uses. —*H. W. Beecher.*

3. Unmerited.

(2361.) The way to heaven lies, not over a toll-bridge, but over a free-bridge; even the unmerited grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Grace finds us beggars, and always leaves us debtors. —*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2362.) We are apt to suppose that God is such an one as ourselves. If we wish to enjoy the patronage of a great man, we very naturally think we must say or do something that may acquire his esteem, and recommend us to his notice. Thus would we also treat with God; when, alas! the plain truth is, we can have, and say, and do, nothing that He approves, until He Himself give it of His free grace, and work it in us by His Spirit.

—*Salter.*

4. All-sufficient.

(2363.) The heart of every believer is like a vessel with a narrow neck, which, being cast into the sea, is not filled at the first easily, but by reason of the strait passage receiveth water drop by drop. Thus God giveth unto us even a sea of mercy, but the

same on our part is apprehended and received by little and little: we go from strength to strength, from grace to grace, and from one degree of virtue to another. —*Boys*, 1560–1643.

(2364.) Go and ransack thy heart, Christian, from one end to the other, find out thy wants, acquaint thyself with all thy weaknesses, and set them before the Almighty, as the widow her empty vessels before the prophet; hadst thou more than thou canst bring thou mayst have them all filled.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2365.) The Gospel supposeth a power going along with it, and that the Holy Spirit of God works upon the minds of men, to quicken, and excite, and assist them in their duty. And if it were not so, the exhortations of preachers would be nothing else but a cruel and bitter mocking of sinners, and an ironical insulting over the misery and weakness of poor creatures; and for ministers to preach, or people to hear sermons, upon other terms, would be the vainest expense of time, and the idlest thing we do all the week; and all our dissuasives from sin, and exhortations to holiness and a good life, and vehement persuasions of men to strive to get to heaven and to escape hell, would be just as if one should urge a blind man, by many reasons and arguments, taken from the advantages of sight and the comfort of that sense and the beauty of external objects, by all means to open his eyes, and to behold the delights of nature, to see his way and to look to his steps, and should upbraid him, and be very angry with him, for not doing so.
—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(2366.) There is in God not only a sufficiency, but a redundancy; He is not only full as a vessel, but as a spring. Other things can no more fill the soul, than a mariner's breath can fill the sails of a ship: but in God is a cornucopia, an infinite fulness; He hath enough to fill the angels, therefore enough to fill us. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2367.) God is a sun, which, though but one, is sufficient to enlighten and vivify a whole world.
—*Michel le Faucheur.*

(2368.) The moral impotence in men to vanquish their lusts, though it will be no apology at the day of judgment, will discourage them from making resistance: for who will attempt an impossibility? Despair relaxes the active powers, cuts the nerves of our endeavours, and blunts the edge of industry. 'Tis related of the West Indians, that upon the first incursion of the Spaniards into their country, they tamely yielded to their tyranny; for seeing them clad in armour which their spears could not pierce, they fancied them to be the children of the sun, invulnerable and immortal. But an Indian carrying a Spaniard over the water, resolved to try whether he were mortal, and plunged him into the river so long that he was drowned. From that experiment they took courage, and resolved to kill their enemies, who were capable of dying, and recover their dear liberty, lost by such a foolish conceit. Thus men will languish in a worse servitude if they fancy the lusts of the flesh, their intimate enemies, to be inseparable. Fear congeals the spirits, and disables from noble enterprises, which hope persuades, and courage executes. Now we have an army of conquerors to encourage us in the spiritual war with the flesh, the world, and Satan, enemies in combination against us. How many saints have preserved themselves unspotted from the most alluring temptations! They were not statues, without sensible faculties, they were not without a conflict of carnal passions, but by the Holy Spirit subdued them; and though some obtained a clearer victory than others, yet all were victorious by divine grace.
—*Salter.*

(2369.) It is equally easy for God to supply our greatest as our smallest wants, to carry our heaviest as our lightest burden—just as it is as easy for the great ocean to bear on her bosom a ship of war with all its guns and crew aboard, as a fisherman's boat, or the tiniest craft that floats, falling and rising on her swell. —*Guthrie.*

(2370.) The grace of God is marked by the affluence which characterises all His works. What abundance in that sun which has shown so many thousand years, and yet presents no appearance of exhaustion, no sign of decay! What abundance of stars bespangle the sky; of leaves clothe the forest; of raindrops fall in the shower; of dews sparkle on the grass; of snow-flakes within the winter hills; of flowers adorn the meadow; of living creatures that, walking on the ground, or playing in the waters, or burrowing in the soil, or dancing in the sunbeams, or flying in the air, find a home in every element—but that red fire in which, type of hell, all beauty perishes and all life expires!

This lavish profusion of life, and forms, and beauty, in nature, is an emblem of the affluence of grace, of God's saving, sanctifying grace. In Christ all fulness dwells. We are complete in Him. There is in His blood sufficient virtue to discharge all the sins of a guilty world, and in His Spirit sufficient power to cleanse the foulest and break the hardest heart. Ye are not straitened in me, says God, but in yourselves. Try me herewith, He says—ask, seek, knock! Who does will find that it is only a faint image of the plentitude of grace we behold in that palace-scene where the king, looking kindly on a lovely suppliant, bends from his throne to extend his golden sceptre, and says, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request, Queen Esther, and it shall be given thee to the half of my kingdom?" —*Guthrie.*

(2371.) Men do not avail themselves of the riches of God's grace. They love to nurse their cares, and seem as uneasy without some fret, as an old friar would be without his hair girdle. They are commanded to cast their cares upon the Lord; but, even when they attempt it, they do not fail to catch them up again, and think it meritorious to walk burdened. They take God's ticket to heaven, and then put their baggage on their shoulders, and tramp, tramp, the whole way there afoot.
—*Beecher.*

(2372.) A man says to his agent, "I want you to go on a business tour for me. First go to Buffalo. Here is the money, and here are the directions that you will need while there. Thence go to Cleveland, and there you will find remittances and further directions. When you get to Cincinnati you will find other remittances and other directions. At St. Louis you will find others; and at New Orleans still others." "But," says the agent, "suppose when I get to Cleveland, or any of the other places, I should not

find anything?" He is so afraid that he will not, that he asks the man to give him money and directions for the whole tour before he starts. "No," says the man, "it will be sufficient if you have the money and directions you need for each place when you get to it: and when you do get to it you will find them there."

Now God sends us in the same way. He says, "Here is your duty for to-day, and the means with which to do it. To-morrow you will find remittances and further directions; next week you will find other remittances and other directions; next month you will find others; and next year still others. I will be with you at all times, and will see that you have strength for every emergency."
—*Beecher.*

(2373.) Suppose I were to set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and before I started, were to go to Brown Brothers & Co., and obtain letters of credit for the cities of London, Jericho, &c. Then, with these papers, which a child might destroy, which would be but ashes in the teeth of flame, which a thousand chances might take from me, I should go on with confidence and cheer, saying to myself, "As soon as I come to London I shall be in funds. I have a letter in my pocket from Brown Brothers & Co. which will give me five hundred dollars there; and in the other cities to which I am bound I shall find similar supplies, all at my command, through the agency of these magic papers and pen strokes of these enterprising men." But suppose that, instead of this confidence, I were to sit down on shipboard, and go to tormenting myself in this fashion—"Now, what *am* I to do when I get to London? I have no money, and how do I know that these bits of paper which I have with me mean anything, or will amount to anything? What shall I do? I am afraid I shall starve in the strange city to which I am going." I should be a fool, you say; but should I be half the fool that that man is, who, bearing the letters of credit of the Eternal God, yet goes fearing all his way, cast down and doubting whether he shall ever get safe through his journey? No fire, no violence, nor any chance, can destroy the cheques of the Lord. When He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and "My grace shall be sufficient for thee," believe it; and no longer dishonour your God by withholding from Him the confidence which you freely accord to Brown Brothers & Co. —*Beecher.*

(2374.) Many people are afraid to embrace religion, for fear they shall not succeed in maintaining it.

Does the spring say, "I will not come unless I can bring all fruits and sheaves under my wings?" No. She casts down loving glances in February, and in March she ventures near in mild days, but is beaten back and overthrown by storm and wind. Yet she returns, and finally yields the earth to April, far readier for life than she found it. The rains are still cold, but the grass is growing green, and the buds are swelling. In May the air is yet chilly, but it has the odour of flowers, and every day grows warmer till the delicious June, when all is bloom and softness, and even the storms have nourishment in them. Then come the glowing July and the fervid August, followed by the glorious autumn of harvest and victory!

And shall nature do so much, while we dare not attempt to overcome the coldness and deadness of our hearts, and to fill them with the summer of love?

When stars, first created, start forth upon their vast circuits, not knowing their way, if they were conscious and sentient, they might feel hopeless of maintaining their revolutions and orbits, and despair in the face of coming ages. But, without hands or arms, the sun holds them. Without cords or bands the solar king drives them unharnessed on their mighty rounds without a single misstep, and will bring them, in the end, to their bound without a wanderer. Now, if the sun can do this—the sun, which is but a thing itself, driven and held—shall not He who created the heavens, and gave the sun his power, be able to hold *us* by the attraction of His heart, the strength of His hands, and the omnipotence of His affectionate will?

5. Is the source of all spiritual excellencies.

(2375.) Day and night, the tides are rising along our shores, filling bay and estuary, silently for the most part, yet surely. The power that draws them resides afar off in the heavenly bodies, and is not seen nor noticed, but only inferred. All the goodness of men, their generous impulses, their loves and faiths and inspirations of purity, their zeal and enthusiasm in self-denial and devotion—that great human tide of goodness which is moving in upon the human heart—is derived from God, who, afar off, silent as the moon in summer nights, is drawing all men unto Him. —*Beecher.*

6. Its transforming power.

(2376.) In nature there is hardly a stone that is not capable of crystallising into something purer and brighter than its normal state. Coal, by a slightly different arrangement of its particles, is capable of becoming the radiant diamond. The slag cast out from the furnace as useless waste, forms into globular masses of radiating crystals. From tar and pitch the loveliest colours are now manufactured. The very mud of the road, trampled under foot as the type of all impurity, can be changed by chemical art into metals and gems of surpassing beauty. And so the most unpromising materials, from the most worthless moral rubbish that men cast out and despise, may be converted by the Divine alchemy into the gold of the sanctuary, and made jewels fit for the mediatorial crown of the Redeemer. Let the case of Mary Magdalene, of John Newton, of John Bunyan, of thousands more, encourage those who are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Seek to be subjected to the same purifying process: lay yourselves open to the same spiritual influences; yield yourselves up into the hands of the Spirit to become His finished and exquisite workmanship. Seek diligently a saving and sanctifying union with Christ through faith; and He will perfect that which concerneth you, and lay your stones with fair colours. "Though ye have lien among the pots, ye shall yet be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." —*Macmillan.*

7. Inexhaustible.

(2377.) God is ever giving to His children, yet hath not the less: His riches are imparted, not impaired: like the sun that still shines, yet hath not the less light. —*Watson*, 1696.

XXVI. *THE REST AND PORTION OF THE SOUL.*

(2378.) As he that walketh in the sun careth not whether the moon shine or no, because he hath no need of her light: even so, when a man hath found the heavenly riches, he careth not for earthly riches.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2379.) The favour of God makes a little estate great riches, every state contentful. A little thing, given as a token of the king's goodwill, do we not prize it more than thrice the value of that which is no pledge of his favour? And when the love of a sinful man is of such force that many a woman, while she may enjoy it, feels not beggary itself to be grievous, what a force is there in the grace of God, while it is perceived, to make us find no grievance in greatest extremity! Whereas without this, were a man in a paradise of the earth, with all the good of it, all were nothing. There are noblemen in the Tower who may ride their great horses, have their ladies, fare deliciously, want not for wealth, yet because they are out of the king's favour, no wise man would be in their coats, none esteem their state happy. How much more, then, are all things of no value, if they be possessed without this favour of which we entreat? This grace is our life; it is better than life. As the marigold opens when the sun shines over it, and shuts when it is withdrawn, so our life follows this favour, we are enlarged if we feel it; if it be hidden, we are troubled. Finally, that which the king's favourable aspect does in his subject, that which the sun and dew do in the creatures of the earth, which they make to smile in their manner, the like does this grace, through all the world of spirits, who feel the influence of it.
—*Bayne*, 1617.

(2380.) All the world without God's favour cannot make a man happy. What will it profit us if the whole world smile upon us, and God frown and be angry with us? All the candle in the world cannot make it day, nay all the stars shining together cannot dispel the darkness of night nor make it day, unless the sun shines; so whatever comforts we have of a higher or lower nature, they cannot make it day with a gracious heart, unless God's face shine upon us, for He can blast all in an instant. A prisoner is never the more secure, though his fellows and companions applaud, and tell him his cause is good, and that he shall escape, when he that is judge condemns him. Though we have the good word of all the world, yet if the Lord speak not peace to our souls, and shine not upon our consciences, what will the good word of the world do? —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2381.) A man that is hungry finds his stomach still craving. Something he wants, without which he cannot be well. Give him music, company, pictures, houses, honours, yet there follows no satisfaction (these are not suitable to his appetite), still his stomach craves; but set before this man some wholesome food, and let him eat, and his craving is over. So it is with man's soul as with his body; the soul is full of cravings and longings, spending itself in sallies out after its proper food. Give it the credit, and profits, and pleasures of the world, and they cannot abate its desire; it craves still (for these do not answer the soul's nature, and therefore cannot answer its necessity); but once set God before it, and it feeding on Him, it is satisfied; its very inordinate, dogged appetite after the world is now cured. He, tasting his manna, tramples on the onions of Egypt: "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he that drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst." —*Swinnock*, 1773.

(2382.) It is with God and the soul as between the sun and the earth. In the decline of the year, when the sun seems to draw afar off from us, how doth the earth mourn and droop; how do the trees cast off the ornament of their leaves and fruits; how doth the sap of all plants run down to the roots, leaving the bare boughs seemingly sere and dead! But, at the manifestation of it in the rising of the spring, all things seem revived; the earth decks herself in the fresh habiliments of blossoms, leaves, and flowers, to entertain those comfortable heats and influences. So, and no more, in the declining and approach of this all-glorious Sun of Righteousness; in His presence there is life and blessedness, in His absence nothing but grief, disconsolateness, and despair. If an earthly being do but withdraw himself from us for a time, we are troubled; how much more if the King of glory shall absent Himself from us in displeasure!
—*Salter.*

(2383.) God is not only the rewarder, but is Himself the reward of His saints. A king may enrich his subjects with gratuities; but he bestows himself upon his queen.

(2384.) As bees can never stay upon any corrupt thing, but only stop among the flowers, so no creature can ever satisfy your heart, for it can never rest but in God alone; God not being willing that our hearts should find any resting-place, no more than the dove which went out of Noah's ark, to the end it may return to Himself from whom it proceeded. —*De Sales.*

(2385.) And now is the question asked, Why is this world unsatisfying? Brethren, it is the grandeur of the soul which God has given us, which makes it insatiable in its desires—with an infinite void which cannot be filled up. A soul which was made for God, how can the world fill it? If the ocean can be still with miles of unstable waters beneath it, then, the soul of man, rocking itself upon its own deep longings, with the Infinite beneath it, may rest. We were created once in majesty, to find enjoyment in God, and if our hearts are empty now, there is nothing for it but to fill up the hollowness of the soul with God.

Let not that expression—filling the soul with God—pass away without a distinct meaning. God is love and goodness. Fill the soul with goodness, and fill the soul with love, *that* is the filling it with God. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. There is nothing else that can satisfy.
—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(2386.) The objects of human desire and ambition are very fair, and at a distance promise very well to him who can come up with them. But the pursuit of them (and the whole natural life of man is one long pursuit) is like the countryman's chase after the rainbow. He thought that one limb of the bright arch rested in the field close to him, but when he had cleared the hedge, and come up to

the spot on which it seemed to rest, the rainbow had adjourned into another field. Even so these various earthly objects of desire or ambition, one after another disappoint those who attain them; their prismatic colours all vanish when we come up close to them, they are found to have their anxieties and their troubles (not the least of which is the precarious tenure of them), and some new rainbow is seen ahead, two or three fields off, to lure us into a pursuit which turns out to be as fruitless as the former. Must it ever be so? Is there no really satisfactory object in which the soul of man may find a full and perfect contentment? assuredly there is. Our Creator does not mock and baffle us by implanting strong instincts in our nature, and great yearnings after happiness, which have nothing corresponding to them. In the knowledge of God, in the appreciation of God, in the enjoyment of God, in communion with God, but in nothing short of this, man can find rest. —*Goulburn.*

(2387.) As when I hunger, my hunger says that there is food; as when my eye was made, that eye said that there was light to match it and to meet it; so in the higher realms of experience, I do know that certain struggles and yearnings, certain mute wants, certain indefinite and indescribable experiences, all point to something higher than I am.

What is it that the vine seeks, day by day, struggling through the leaves, and twining itself upon whatever comes in its way? Is it support? It would be just as well supported if it lay on the ground. Why does the vine go still twining up? It is because it is in love with the light. Why is it that men's souls twine, and rise, and aspire? Is it instinct? What is instinct but this: that there is something in the nature of the soul which reaches out after a stimulus which it feels, as the plant grows toward the light which looks upon it and stimulates it? As everything in the vegetable kingdom reaches toward the sun, so the soul reaches toward God. He yearns for us, and we reach out toward Him. —*Beecher.*

XXVII. *HIS INDWELLING IN THE SOUL.*

(2388.) We would be receptacles of Thine influence. As the sun shines in the dewdrop according to its measure, so shine in us. Fill the whole of our little orbs with Thy presence, so that Thy life shall augment ours, and sustain it. —*Beecher.*

(2389.) To creatures made in God's image, and renewed in God's image, God Himself must ever be the standard of completeness. Between God and all His creatures there is, we reverently acknowledge, a vast difference; but the pitcher may be full as well as the river, and the hand may be full as well as the storehouse. There is a fulness which is as really the attribute of that which in capacity is small, as of that which in capacity is infinite. The sweet little flower "forget-me-not," is as full of colour as the bright blue sky over its tiny head. The vine of the cottager may be as full of fruit as the vineyard of the wealthy vine-grower. The baby, which smiles on its mother's breast, may be as full of joy as the seraph before the throne The vast difference which exists between God's nature and ours, does not prevent that nature in some respects being a standard. The fulness of man may be as the fulness of God. God is full, and man in his capacity, may be full as God.

—*S. Martin.*

XXVIII. *THE EVER-FAITHFUL FRIEND.*

(2390.) It is the saying of Euripides, that a faithful friend in adversity is better than a calm sea to a weather-beaten mariner. Indeed, the world is full of false lovers, who use their friends as we do candles, burn them to the snuff, and when all their substance is wasted, trample them under their feet, and light others; but God to His chosen is as the ivy clasping about a wall, which will as soon die as desert it. Extremity doth but fasten a trusty friend; whilst he, as a well-wrought vault, is the stronger by how much more weight he beareth. Though many men are as ponds, dry in the heat of summer, when there is most need of them, yet the blessed God dealeth not so with His saints; but His help is nearest when their hardships are greatest. When they walk in the valley of the shadow of death, He is with them. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

GOOD WORKS.

1. Can be performed by none but good men.

(2391.) All our works before repentance are dead works (Heb. vi. 1). And these works have no true beauty in them, with whatsoever gloss they may appear to a natural eye. A dead body may have something of the features and beauty of a living, but it is but the beauty of a carcase, not of a man. A statue, by the stone-cutter's art, and the painter's skill, may be made very comely, yet it is but a statue still; where is the life? Such services are but the works of art, as flowers painted on the wall with curious colours, but where is the vegetative principle? Since man, therefore, is spiritually dead, he cannot perform a living service. As a natural death does incapacitate for natural actions, so a spiritual death must incapacitate for spiritual actions.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

2. In what sense any man's works can be said to be good.

(2392.) When we mingle water with wine in a cup, that which is poured out from it is called wine though water be mingled with it; and albeit there be more water than wine, yet that which is the principal and most precious part of all beareth the name: even so the good works which we do by the grace of God, be it that they have a great many spots and imperfections as they proceed from us, yet for all that they hold always the name and reputation of Him who is the principal Author.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

3. Are required of all who profess to be Christ's.

(2393.) Of such as have His special love, He looks for obedience and honour, wherein is there thankfulness. The courtier that is advanced above others ought to be more respective of the prince and his will, and with more care and cheerfulness perform all obedience and the duty of his place than others. He that hath his life, liberty, and living given unto him when all was lost, if he should not respect him, every tongue should be ready to condemn him. But if he should be made heir to the crown, if his issue fail, or he have no child, then more. So in this, and this not being, nothing will more prove that they are not that they would seem to be, and that they have not that they brag on.

—*Stock*, 1568–1626.

(2394.) Howsoever God may endure barrenness out of the Church, in want of means, yet He will never endure it under means. It is better for a bramble to be in the wilderness than in an orchard; for a weed to be abroad, than in a garden, where it is sure to be weeded out, as the other to be cut down. If a man will be unprofitable, let him be unprofitable out of the Church. But to be so where he has the dew of grace falling on him, in the means of salvation, where are all God's sweet favours, to be a bramble in the orchard, to be a weed in the garden, to be noisome in a place where we should be fruitful, will God, the great husbandman, endure this? Whatsoever is not for fruit is for the fire (Matt. iii. 10). —*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

(2395.) The husbandman, the more he improves his ground the greater crop he looks for; the more completely the soldier is armed, the better service is required of him; the scholar that is well instructed must show great fruits of his proficiency. Thus the earthly part of man drinks in the sweet showers of grace that fall upon it. The blessed Spirit of God puts upon us that panoply, the whole armour of God. And the same Spirit teacheth us all things, leads us into all truth, and brings all things to our remembrance which Christ hath spoken for our good. Shall we then, being thus cultivated, thus armed, thus instructed, not bring forth fruits in some measure answerable to so great indulgence? Shall such blessings of God be received in vain?
—*T. Stapleton.*

(2396.) You make a grand mistake if, because you are warned not to trust in your good works, you grow less diligent in doing them.

If a skilful architect, observing you expending your summer days and your manhood's strength in an effort to build a house upon the sand, should benevolently warn you that the labour would be labour lost, you would poorly profit by his counsel if you should simply desist from the work and loiter idle near the spot. The architect, your friend, did not object to the expenditure of your time and strength in building, but he saw that the higher your wall should rise on that foundation, the more certain and more destructive would be its fall. He meant that you should find the solid rock, and build there—build with all your might.

The Gospel rejects good works, not as the fruit of faith, but as the meritorious ground of hope before God. The place of man's works in the Christian system decisively affects their nature. Although in form they may be good, if they are made the foundation of the doer's hope, they are dead, and therefore loathsome to the living. They are the offerings which guilt makes under the pressure of fear to the God whom the conscience dislikes because of His holiness. Those who work thus are workers of iniquity, although they give all their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned to boot. But when we labour to keep good works out of the wrong place, we do not disparage them in the right place. Beneath a sinner as the material of his confidence, they are not only useless but ruinous; in the life of a believer they are natural and necessary. Life does not spring from them, but they spring from life. As ciphers added one by one in an endless row to the left hand of a unit are of no value, but on the right hand rapidly multiply its power; so, although good works are of no avail to make a man a Christian, yet a Christian's good works are both pleasing to God and profitable to men. —*Arnot.*

(2397.) I ask you to remember, at home, in the shop, and in the counting-house, that you are epistles of Christ; and that in your spirit, habits, and character, His very thoughts are to be translated into forms which common men can read and understand. You would condemn with heaviest censure the presumptuous hand which wilfully corrupted the text of the printed book in which the acts and thoughts of God are preserved for the instruction of the world; you would condemn with censure hardly less severe the carelessness which should omit chapter after chapter, and give false readings instead of true. But *you* are the living revelation of God to mankind. Through you it is meant that the Holy Ghost should speak, not in mere words, but in acts, which are more intelligible and emphatic than words. The very life of the Spirit of God is intended to be manifested in your conduct, as the life of a plant is manifested in the flower, and the life of a tree in the fruit. Are you giving a true revelation to mankind, or are you perverting, corrupting, falsifying it?

Your religious emotions irreligious men can know nothing of, but your virtues and vices are a language plain and familiar to them as their mother tongue. They can read these without note or comment. They can judge of the divine inspiration of these, without any argument from miracles. As the style of a great artist is recognised in the drawing and colouring of his pictures; as the genius of Mozart or Beethoven may be known at once by the movement of the melody and the flowing sweetness or mysterious complexity of the chorus, so—if you are really God's workmanship—there ought to be the manifested impress of the divine hand in your character, and to those who know you well, your life ought to be plainly the revelation of a divine idea. —*R. W. Dale.*

4. Their relation to faith.

(2398.) Works without faith are like a fish without water; in which, though there may seem to be some quick actions of life and symptoms of agility, yet they are, indeed, but forerunners of their end, and the very presages of death.

Faith, again, without works, is like a bird without wings; who, though she may hop with her companions here on earth, yet, if she live till the world ends, she will never fly to heaven.

But when both are joined together, then doth the soul mount up to the hill of eternal rest; these can bravely raise her to her first height; yea, carry her beyond it; taking away both the will that did betray her, and the possibility that might. The former, without the latter, is self-cozenage; the last without the former is mere hypocrisy; together, the excellency of religion. Faith is the rock, while every good action is as a stone laid; one the foundation, the other the structure. The foundation without the walls is of slender value; the building without a basis cannot stand. They are so inseparable, as their conjunction makes them good. Chiefly will I labour for a future foundation, saving faith; and equally will I seek for strong walls, good works. For a man judges the house by the edifice more than by the foundation; so, not according to his faith, but according to his works, shall God judge man. —*Feltham*, 1668.

(2399.) Eternal bliss is not immediately superstructed on the most orthodox beliefs; but, as our Saviour saith, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" the doing must be first superstructed on the knowing or believing, before any happiness can be built on it.
—*Hammond*, 1605–1666.

(2400.) The bark which covers the tree, seems to be of little worth compared with the body of the tree; yet if that be peeled off, the tree dies. Though righteous dealings seem to be but the bark and outside of thy religion, yet if once thou castest them off, thy religion, as thriving as thou thoughtest it to be, will quickly wither and come to nothing. The heart-blood of thy godliness may be let out by a wound in thy hand. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2401.) True faith is of a working, stirring nature; without good works it is dead or dying. 'Tis kept in plight and heart by a holy life, as the flesh which plaisters over the frame of man's body, though it receive his heat from the vitals within, yet helps to preserve the very life of those vitals: tnus good works and gracious actions have their life from faith, yet are necessary helps to preserve the life of faith; thus we see sometimes the child nursing the parent that bare it, and therein performs but his duty. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2402.) It is as impossible that a spiritual life should be without acts consonant to it, as that the sun should appear in the firmament without darting out its beams. All life is accompanied with natural heat, which is the band of it, whereby the body is enabled to a vigorous motion. The new creature is not a marble statue or a transparent piece of crystal, which has purity but not life. It is a living spirit, and therefore active. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2403.) "A renewed man whose seed is within himself brings forth fruit after his kind, as well as the herbs and the trees." (Gen. i. 12.) All living creatures move agreeably to their natures, with a spontaneity and freedom of nature. The bramble does not more naturally bring forth thorns, than a habit of sin does steam out sinful actions; nor a fountain more freely bubble up its water, than a habit of grace springs up in holy actions.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2404.) We cannot perform any good works, unless we are created unto them in Christ Jesus; and hence that creation in Christ Jesus cannot be anywise the effect or consequence of our good works; we were saved, as the apostles tell us, by grace, when we were dead in trespasses and sins. But if we are indeed created anew in Christ Jesus, our good works must follow, as a necessary, certain, irrepressible result. They are the only evidence of that creation to others; and they are no less indispensable to ourselves, to certify us of its reality. If we do not bring forth good works, we ought to be convinced that we cannot have been created anew in Christ Jesus, that in one way or other the process of our regeneration has been marred. Good works are the mark, the proof, the evidence of Christian life; they are the badge of a Christian community; and they are the means through which the members of that community are bound together, and the Christian life is brought to pervade them all. When they are scanty, the Christian life must be feeble; when they are totally wanting, whether in an individual or a community, the Christian life must be all but extinct. They are the evidences of the Christian life; and they are also the means of growing in it; for it is by exercise, by action, that every living principle is strengthened. This is no way at variance with the assertion that the Christian life is not the effect of our good works. The primary creative cause is, in all instances except the highest, distinct from the highest nutritive causes. The bread which feeds will not beget a man. By study we do not acquire the power of knowing; but we improve and increase that power, and may do so almost indefinitely. By practising any art—be it music, or painting, or statuary—we do not acquire that particular faculty of the mind which fits a man for becoming a musician, or a painter, or a sculptor, any more than we acquire our eyes by seeing: indeed if a man has not that faculty already within him, no teaching or practising will draw it out of him; but when he has it, practice will greatly sharpen and better it. Such, too, is the case with the Christian life. It is not created by our good works, but it is to be fostered and nourished by them, and may be so to a wonderful extent, if we always bear in mind how it originated, and are careful to have it replenish from its only source; while, on the other hand, without them it will pine and die. Indeed in this instance we have the special assurance: And to him who hath shall be given; and from him who hath not shall be taken away even what he hath. —*Hare*.

5. Their relation to salvation.

(2405.) As the apple is not the cause of the apple-tree, but a fruit of it: even so good works are not the cause of our salvation, but a sign and a fruit of the same. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2406.) "Over a few things . . . many things." One reason against all merit in our good works is this: there is no just proportion between our works of righteousness and the reward of them. Our good works are but a few seeds, but the reward is a harvest. —*Bishop Bull*, 1634–1710.

(2407.) If we are saved and justified entirely by a righteousness imputed, to what purpose are those good works which the Bible everywhere inculcates? I answer, that as robes and a coronet do not constitute a peer, but are ensigns and appendages of his peerage (for the will of the sovereign is the grand efficient cause which elevates a commoner to noble rank); and as the very patent of creation is only an authentic manifesto, not causal, but declarative, of the king's pleasure to make his subject a nobleman; just so, good works do not make us alive to God, nor justify us before Him, nor exalt us to the dignity and felicity of celestial peerage; they are but the robes, the coronet, and the manifesto, shining in our lives and conversations; and making evident to all around us that we are indeed and in truth chosen to salvation, justified through Christ, and renewed by the Holy Ghost.
—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2408.) He that for giving a draught of water to a thirsty person should expect to be paid with a good plantation, would be modest in his demands compared with those who think they deserve heaven for the little good they do on earth.
—*Franklin*.

(2409.) There can be no doubt at all that salvation is by faith, and that its being by faith is one of those special circumstances which make the Gospel a new covenant; but still it may be by works also; for, to use a familiar illustration, obedience is the road to heaven, and faith the gate. Those who attempt to be saved simply without works, are like persons who should attempt to travel to a place not along the road, but across the fields. If we wish to get to our journey's end, we shall keep to the road; but even then we may go the wrong road. This was the case with the Jews. They professed to go along the road of works, they did not wander into the fields, so far well; but they took the wrong road. That particular road of which faith is the gate, that particular obedience, those particular works, which commence in faith, these are the only right and sure road to heaven. It is wrong to leave the road for the open country; again, it is wrong to go along the wrong road; but it is not wrong to go along the right road! And in like manner it is sinful to attempt no obedience whatever; it is blind perversity to attempt obedience by the Jewish law of nature; but it is not sinful, it is not perverse, it is nothing else than wisdom, nothing else than true godliness, to follow after that obedience which is of faith.

The illustration may be pursued further. A road may want repairing, it may get worse and worse as we go on till it ceases to be a road; it may fall off from a road into a lane, from a lane to a path, or a wild heath, or a marsh; or it may be cut off by high impassable mountains, so that a person who attempts that way will never arrive at his journey's end. This was the case with the works of the law by which the Jews thought to gain heaven,—this is the case with all works done in our natural strength; they are like a road over fens or precipices, which is sure to fail us. At first we might seem to go on well, but we should find at length that we made no progress. We should never get to our journey's end. Our best obedience in our own strength is worth nothing; it is altogether unsound, it is ever-failing, it never grows firmer, it never can be reckoned on, it does nothing well, it has nothing in it pleasing or acceptable to God; and not only so, it is the obedience of souls born and living under God's wrath, for a state of nature is a state of wrath. On the other hand, obedience which is done in faith is done with the aid of the Holy Spirit; it is holy and acceptable in God's sight; it grows habitual and consistent, it tends to possess the soul wholly, and it leads straight onward to heaven. —*Newman.*

6. Are the life of devotion.

(2410.) All devotional feelings require sacrificial expression. There is "a sacrifice of the lips," and there is also a sacrifice of an offering which involves expense and suffering. The first, being the readiest at command, is that most usually given; and, being given, it unfortunately prevents the other, because, first of all, costing little, words are given prodigally, and sacrificial acts must toil for years to cover the space which a single fervid promise has stretched itself over. No wonder that the slow acts are superseded by the available words, the weighty bullion by the current paper-money. If I have conveyed all I feel by language, I am tempted to fancy, by the relief experienced, that the feeling has attained its end and realised itself. Farewell, then, to the toil of "daily sacrifice!" Devotion has found for itself a vent in words.

Now there seems to me to be a great difference in the effects produced by these two kinds of sacrificial expression. That by words is simply relief--necessary, blessed—without which smothered feeling would be torture—sometimes, in some minds, madness. But, being only relief, it does not strengthen the feeling, except so far as it prevents morbidness. It rather weakens it, by getting rid of the painfulness. It is a safety-valve; but the danger is that so much force should escape by an impetuous rush through this—that there should be little left to bring higher energies into action. For this reason I rejoice, even though made restless, when my words cannot be commensurate with emotions. The other kind of expression, on the contrary—the sacrifice of acts—is not only a relief, but a strength to feeling. You condense your floating vogue desires in something that does not disperse into thin air. There it is, visible—done; one of the facts of life; part of your history, credit realised in gold; a pledge for the future, for this reason, that if your feelings should alter afterwards, all those acts which have cost so much are thrown away, and become so much time, suffering and expense lost for ever. You guard the feeling for the sake of not losing all this.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

7. Are not to be boasted of.

(2411.) If the king freely, without desert of mine, and at the mediation of another, give me a place about him, and never so much right unto it, yet I am bound, if I will enjoy it, to come unto him and do the things that the place requireth. And if he give me a tree growing in his forest, this his gift ties me to be at cost to cut it down and bring it home, if I will have it. And when I have done all this, I cannot brag that by my coming and service I merited this place, or by my cost in cutting down and carrying home the tree made myself worthy of the tree, as the Jesuits speak of their works. But only the deed is the way that leads to the fruition of that which is freely given. There cannot be produced a place in all the Scripture, nor a sentence in all the Fathers, which extends our works any further, or makes them exceed the latitude of a mere condition or way whereby to walk to that which not themselves, but the blood of Christ hath deserved.

—*White*, 1576–1648.

(2412.) A gardener offering a rape-root (being the best present the poor man had) to the Duke of Burgundy, was bountifully rewarded by the duke, which his steward observing, and thinking to make use of his bounty, presented him with a very fair horse; the duke, being a very wise, discreet man, perceived the project, received the horse, and gave him nothing for it. Right so will God deal with all merit-mongers who think, by their good works, to purchase heaven, which cannot be, the work being finite, the wages infinite; so that merit must needs be a mere fiction, since there can be no proportion betwixt the work and reward. There is, indeed, mention made of a mercy-seat in the temple, but there was never heard of any school of merit but in the chapel of Antichrist.

—*Trapp*, 1601–1669.

8. Are scrutinised by God.

(2413.) Be careful of your words, thoughts, ways, affections, desires, all which are the fruits of your

souls; for God takes notice of all; He walks in this His garden every day, and spies out how many raw, unripe, indigested performances, as prayers, &c., hang on such or such a branch, what gum of pride, what leaves, what luxuriant sprigs, what are rotten boughs and which are sound, and goes up and down with His pruning-knife in His hand, and cuts and slashes where He sees things amiss; He turns up all your leaves, sees what fruit is under, and deals with men accordingly. —*Goodwin*, 1600–1667.

9. Evangelical preachers are not enemies to good works.

(2414.) Because we deny salvation by our own works, many charge us with being enemies to good works. But am I an enemy to a nobleman, because I will not attribute to him those honours which are due only to the king? If I say to a common soldier in an army, You cannot lead that army against the enemy, will he therefore say, Then I may begone: there is no need of me? Or, if I see a man at his day labour, and say to him, You will never be able to purchase an estate of £10,000 per annum by working in that manner, will he therefore give over his work, and say he is discouraged?

—*Salter*, 1840.

GOSPEL, THE

1. A Great Mystery.

(2415.) We are far from suppressing our conviction that this is a great mystery. We rejoice, on the contrary, in its incomprehensibility. We delight to lose ourselves in the impenetrable shades which invest the subject; because in the darkness and cloud which envelop it God dwells. It is the greatness which forms the mystery of the fact; the matchless love and condescension constitute the very nucleus of the difficulty. It could only be brought within the sphere of our comprehension by a contraction of its vast dimensions, by a depression of its natural grandeur. A prostration of it to the level of our feeble capacities would only render it incapable of being the magnet of souls, the attraction of hearts, the wonder of the universe.

—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

2. The Gladdest Tidings.

(2416.) We have many sweet and precious promises to cheer our present existence, and enliven the gloom of an untried futurity. But the glorious announcement of a free and full salvation through the merits of the Lord Jesus, imputed to the believer simply through faith in Him, eclipses them all. Like the stars in the presence of the sun, they hide their diminished heads, lost in the effulgence of this bright luminary; and as the moon will pour from one end of the heavens to the other, a light which could not be contributed from the whole host of minute studding stars—so it is with this wonderful gift of God's salvation. It sheds a brighter and wider light than the whole hemisphere of God's love, starred with all His other precious promises, can dispense. —*Salter*, 1840.

3. Is Addressed to all Mankind.

(2417.) While there is eternal life in the Gospel sufficient for all, none are specially excluded from its benefits. Those only are excluded who exclude themselves, and refuse to be saved on God's own terms. His proclamation of mercy to a lost, rebel world, is clogged with no exceptions. After our brave men had crushed that terrible revolt which some years ago shook our Indian empire to its foundations, and filled many of our homes with grief, an amnesty was proclaimed, but not to all. Some were by name excluded from its grace; and, as might have been expected, these desperate men fought it out to the last in the fastnesses and deadly jungles of Nepaul. They did not come in to accept the amnesty. There was no reason why they should. It was not for them. Heads of the revolt, and guilty of cold-blooded murders, as well as of the blackest treachery, there was no hope of mercy held out to them; and so, standing to their arms, they resolved to spin out their lives to the last thread, and sell them at the dearest price. What a contrast to this, the Gospel! Whatever be men's sins and crimes, none are excluded, by name or by character, from the amnesty which God proclaims, from the benefits of eternal life. "Whosoever cometh unto Me," says Jesus, "I will in nowise cast out." —*Guthrie.*

4. Universally and permanently needful.

(2418.) Let us for a moment suppose (what can never be proved), that mankind are now much better able to investigate the truth, and to find out their duty by themselves, than they were in former ages; and that reason can give us (the utmost it ever did or can pretend to give) a perfect system of morality. But what will that avail us, unless it can be shown that man is also perfect and uncorrupt? A religion that contains nothing more than a perfect system of morality, might perhaps suit an angel, but it is only one part, it is only a subordinate part, of the religion of a man and a sinner. It would be but very poor consolation to a nobleman expecting to be led forth for execution, to put into his hand a complete collection of the laws of his country, when the poor wretch perhaps expected a reprieve. It could serve no other purpose than to embitter his agonies, and make him see more clearly the justice of his condemnation. If you choose to do the unhappy man a real service, and to give him any substantial comfort, you must assure him that the offence for which he was going to die was forgiven him; that his sentence was reversed; that he would not only be restored to his prince's favour, but put in a way of preserving it for the future; and if his conduct afterwards was honest and upright, he should be deemed capable of enjoying the highest honours in his master's kingdom. But no one could tell him this, or at least he would credit no one that did, except he was commissioned and authorised by the prince himself to tell him so. He might study the laws in his hands till the very moment of his execution, without ever finding out from them that he should obtain a pardon.

Such, the Scriptures inform us, was the state of man before Christ came into the world. The sentence of death had passed upon him, and he had no plea to offer to arrest the execution of it. Reason, you say, gives him a perfect rule to walk by. But he has already transgressed this rule, and if even this transgression were cancelled, yet if left to himself he may transgress it again the next moment. He is uneasy under his sentence, he wants forgiveness for the past, assistance for the future, and the prospect of being restored to the honours and favour

of the King of heaven, which he has forfeited by rebellion; and till you can give him this, it is an insult upon his misery to talk to him of a perfect rule of action. If this be all that reason can give him (and it really is much more than it can give him), he must necessarily have recourse to revelation. God only knows, and God only can tell, whether He will forgive, and upon what terms He will forgive, the offences done against Him; what mode of worship He requires; what helps He will afford us, and what condition He will place us in hereafter. All this God actually has told us in the Gospel. It was to tell us this He sent His Son into the world. —*Salter*, 1840.

(2419.) "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me." So said the Saviour of men. The cross is for all ages, and all countries, the great moral magnet to draw men from barbarism to civilisation, from sin to holiness, from misery to happiness, and from earth to heaven; and it were as rational to say the loadstone had lost its original property of popular attraction, and that the mariner's compass is an old stale invention, and must now be replaced with some new device better adapted to the modern light of science, as to suppose that the doctrine of the cross has become effete, and must give way to some new phase of theological truth. —*James.*

(2420.) It is never to be forgotten, amidst all the fluctuations of opinion, all the vicissitudes of earthly affairs, and even the advance of civilisation, science, and social improvement, that human nature, in its spiritual condition and its relation to God, remains unchanged. The lapse of ages will never wear out our natural corruption, nor will the progress of science and advance of civilisation eradicate it. Man as he is born into the world, and grows up in it, will still, as ever, need both the redemption and the regeneration of the Gospel of Christ. Amidst the light of the nineteenth century, he as much needs this as he did amidst the darkness of the Middle Ages; it is as needful to the philosopher of Great Britain as to the savage of the Pacific Ocean: and let science carry on its discoveries, and art multiply its inventions, and literature polish the surface of society, as they may, the redemption and regeneration of the Gospel will be as much needed by our posterity, amidst the universal triumphs of civilisation, and the light and glory of the millennium, as they now are. Infidels may babble as they please, and it is but babble, after all, though it calls itself philosophy, about society outgrowing the need of old Christianity. They may just as rationally talk about human nature outgrowing the need of the old laws of the material universe; doing without the old sun to enlighten us, the old atmosphere to sustain us, the old water to refresh us, and the old corn to nourish us, as without the Gospel to renew, sanctify, and save mankind; for the relation of these to our material nature is not one whit more fixed and unalterable than is the Gospel as a remedial system to our lapsed and diseased moral nature.
—*James.*

5. Its universal adaptation.

(2421.) Heaven's gate is no wider open to a Jew than to a Grecian. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The sun of the Gospel, as of the world, is not confined to lighten Judea only, but shines universally. —*Adams*, 1654.

(2422.) However we may differ from one another in training, in habits, in caste of thought, in idiosyncracies of character, in circumstances, in age, all these are but the upper strata which vary locally. Beneath all these there lie everywhere the solid foundations of the primeval rocks, and beneath these, again, the glowing central mass, the flaming heart of the world. Christianity sends its shaft right down through all these upper and local beds, till it reaches the deepest depths which are the same in every man—the obstinate wilfulness of a nature averse from God, and the yet deeper-lying longings of a soul that flames with the consciousness of God, and yearns for rest and peace. To the sense of sin, to the sense of sorrow, to the conscience never wholly stifled, to the desires after good never utterly eradicated and never slaked by ought beside itself, does this mighty word come. . . . .

Hence its universal adaptation to mankind. It alone of all so-called faiths overleaps all geographical limits and lives in all centuries. It alone wins its trophies and bestows its gifts on all sorts and conditions of men. Other plants which the "Heavenly Father hath not planted," have their zones of vegetation and die outside certain degrees of latitude, but the seed of the kingdom is like corn, an exotic nowhere, for wherever man lives it will grow, and yet an exotic everywhere, for it came down from heaven. Other food requires an educated palate for its appreciation, but any hungry man in any land will relish bread. For every soul on earth this living, dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ addresses itself to and satisfies his deepest wants. It is the bread which gives life to the world. —*Maclaren.*

(2423.) God's Gospel is made not for Englishmen but for all men. There is a light for every land, and a blessing for every nation and kindred and people. Many think the Gospel is a very beautiful thing if you would only keep it at home; but the moment you try to apply it to anybody else it will not suit them. Try it upon the negro: "Well, the fact is, he is too low; he is not capable of being elevated to the height of Christianity." Try it upon the Brahmin: he is too high, far above; you cannot reach him. Each of these must have some particular religion adapted to himself; but one religion would not suit them all. A man looked into the eye of an Anglo-Saxon and found it blue, and into the eye of a negro, and found it black, and he said, These are different organisations; you are not so bewildered as to think you can enlighten both these eyes with the same sun. You must have a sun for each of them; you must have different suns, you see, because the eyes are differently organised. Very well, that is exceedingly fine in theory, but try it—try whether the sun which God put in the heaven will not illuminate the pale eye of the northerner and the dark eye of the southerner. —*Arthur.*

(2424.) Think not that the beauties of this world are for the rich and great alone. The illuminated drawing-room, the green-house, and the hot-house, they are theirs; but the quiet moonlight, the nightly heavens, with their multitude of shining worlds, the sun spreading his splendour over a sky of cloudless blue, or lighting up the clouds of even-

ing with a thousand gorgeous hues, the air perfumed in its passage over fields and heath, the lovely flowers of the field and hedge-row, these are provided by a beneficent God for rich and poor alike. And who would leave these for the painted gaieties of art? So the blessings of the Gospel are not for the learned alone. They may taste the beauties of the inspired poetry better, and penetrate more deeply into the few obscurities of holy writ; but the comforts of the Bible, pardon of sin, reconciliation with God, peace, and holiness, and heaven—these are for all; these gladden the heart of the labourer at his toil, of the patient of an hospital on his dying bed. And beware then how thou quit these divine consolations for all that learning can offer. —*Salter.*

6. Its adaptation to our need a proof of its divine origin.

(2425.) The sin and misery of the world is such that it groaneth for a Saviour; and when I hear of a physician sent from heaven, I easily believe it, when I see the woful world mortally diseased, and gasping in its deep distress. The condition of the world is visibly so suitable to the whole office of Christ, and to the doctrine of the Gospel, that I am driven to think that if God have mercy for it, some physician and extraordinary help shall be afforded it. And when I see none else but Jesus Christ whom reason will allow me to believe is that Physician, it somewhat prepareth my mind to look toward Him and hope.

And also the evil of this present world is very suitable to the doctrine of Christ, when He telleth us how He came not to settle us here in a state of prosperity, nor to make the world our rest or portion; but to save us from it, as our enemy and calamity, our danger, and our wilderness and trouble, and to bring up our hearts first and then ourselves to a better world, which He calleth us to seek and to make sure of, whereas I find that most other religions, though they say something of a life hereafter, yet lead men to look for most or much of their felicity here, as consisting in the fruition of this world, which experience tells me is so miserable. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2426.) If a man but see his deficiencies, then by a single glance of the eye may he also see how the doctrines of the Gospel and these deficiencies fit to one another; and thus, by an act of intuition, may a man without learning, but with a conscience simply awakened, be made to perceive what no erudition, and no elaborate contemplation of the articles of orthodoxy, will make another man to perceive whose conscience is unawakened. It is somewhat as if a fragment of anything was broken away from some mass of which at one time it formed a part. All the hollows and all the protuberances on one surface will be in a state of most accurate adjustment with the corresponding protuberances and hollows upon the other. But it is not looking, however intently, to one of these surfaces, that we shall come to ascertain the truth of this separation; or if re-union be possible, the place at which the re-union should be made. It is not by the most strict and scientific measurement of the various angles and unevennesses which have been made at the place of disruption, if we have only one side of the fracture to look upon. But if we have both sides to compare the one with the other, we may, with the rapid inspection of a moment, perceive what the labour of a whole life expended on the inspection of one side could not have enabled us to perceive. We may come at once to the belief, that here at one time a part was rent away—and this is the very fragment which has fallen off—and that on the rock from which it was detached, we behold its precise and certain counterpart—a conclusion to which we never should have come by the single contemplation of the precipice that is above us, but to which we come immediately, and as if by the light of intuition, on comparing it to the dissevered piece that is beneath us. And such is the certainty of our religious experience. —*Chalmers*, 1780–1847.

(2427.) The Divine character of the Gospel appears in this—in its wonderful capacity to adapt itself to the boundless wants of the whole family of man. It is like the mighty ocean which rolls itself on the wide-spreading shores of a hundred empires, and yet replenishes and fills with its tide the little creek. Thus the Gospel, while it visits with its healing waters the wide-spreading Church of Christ, fills, and supplies with the waters of life, the soul of the meanest believer in Jesus. —*Salter.*

7. Its power.

(2428) The Gospel is a true Bethesda, a pool of grace, where such poor, lame, and infirm creatures as we are, upon the moving of God's Spirit in it, may descend down, not only to wash our skin and outside, but also to be cured of our diseases within. The Gospel is not like Abana and Pharpar, those common rivers of Damascus, that could only cleanse the outside; but it is a true Jordan, in which such leprous Naamans as we all are may wash and be clean. —*Cudworth*, 1617–1688.

(2429.) The river Wye is considered one of the most beautiful streams that flow across our country. It is admitted that it winds its beautiful course through some of the fairest scenery and the richest and most fruitful districts of our land,—scenes so fair, so varied, so lovely, and so beautiful, that one would think that in themselves they would be sufficient to win the hearts of the inhabitants to God, and to inspire them with holy thoughts and admiration of the great Source of nature, and of beauty, and goodness. But, alas! the history of man shows that in some of the fairest regions of the world man has been the most degraded. So it was on the banks of that beautiful stream. On the south side there were a number of parishes, and these parishes were in deadly feud between each other. We will call, if you please, those on the one side the northerners, and those on the other side the southerners. I cannot say the number of parishes on each side that were engaged in this matter, but this was a fact—that once a year some hundreds of men met in a village upon the banks of this beautiful river to fight a battle that lasted several hours, with sticks and clubs loaded with lead. Nobody knew the origin of it, nor what it was about; but they had commenced settling some unknown question by blows, and, though the one party sometimes was satisfied, or gained the victory, the other side was never satisfied, who lost it, and the result was, it had to be fought out again, and settled again, and it never got settled at all. The magistrates were in the habit of guarding the peace against these rude people by swearing in a great number of constables;

but, in spite of all the constables, farmers and their sons,—men who held respectable positions in the neighbourhood,—with their dependencies, came and met on the anniversary of this battle, and always would fight it out. The last time they fought, the northerners gained the day; they went home with flying colours; the southerners went home swearing vengeance upon their old enemies, and saying they would give it them the next time they met. However, during the course of the summer, one fine afternoon, a stranger, decently clad, was seen walking into one of the villages belonging to the conquered army. He looked round about, turned into a cottage, and asked for the loan of a chair. The good woman of the cottage saw he was a stranger, but as he had a decent appearance, she judged that he might be trusted with an old chair for a short time. He walked off and planted his chair under a tall elm growing in the centre of the village green. He mounted the chair, and commenced singing a hymn. The villagers all come out of their doors, and there is a strange speculation going on as to what all this could mean: "This man is not begging,—he would not beg there; what is he about?" Nobody knew where he came from nor where he was going to. He had brought no letter of recommendation or commendation to the clergyman of the parish, to Mr. Boniface of the "Red Lion," to the churchwardens, or to anybody else. Nobody knew anything about him. After singing the hymn he prayed. By the time he had opened his eyes after prayer, he found two or three hundred people about him. Then he sang a hymn—then he preached. The people were astonished that the man could pray without a prayer-book, and that he could preach without a manuscript. It was a thing they had never witnessed before. They listened to him, and, with power, and energy, and Divine unction, he spoke the truth to these rude people. Many of the people who were accustomed to fight the neighbouring villages once a year were there, and for the first time heard the truth in that honest, earnest manner, delivered in their hearing. It was a fortnight after, and a fortnight after that; and then he went to the other villages, and, in the course of six or eight months, numbers of these rough people were converted to God. A society was formed. The 17th of May, the anniversary of the battle, returned. The northerners were there to fight their old enemies, but not a southerner was there to fight that day. Never has a battle of that character been fought there since. And this peace was not brought about by the interference of the magistrate, nor by the powerful arm of the police, but by a simple stranger that nobody knew, with God's love in his heart, and God's Book in his hand, preaching the truth to these people.

—*Henry Phillips.*

(2430.) The Gospel is the spiritual medicine of the soul. In numberless cases, certainly, it does not restore the health of the soul; but let the blame be cast where it ought to rest. Let it never be forgotten that the fault is not in the medicine, but in the indisposition of sinners to take it. In a case where the Gospel does not produce holy perceptions and affections, are we warranted to suppose that it is essentially incompetent to their production, even when by the power of faith it is brought to bear upon the mind? Ought we not rather to suppose that it has *not* been brought to bear upon the mind of this individual in consequence of his rejection of its testimony? The latter, surely, is the true state of the case. I can scarcely imagine a greater mistake than one which I fear is committed by many who speak as if they thought that, when the Gospel is scripturally understood and firmly believed, it has no power to raise the affections from sin to holiness; from the world to God;—that even in this case some additional influence must be imparted to it, or that it would remain totally inoperative. To entertain this notion is virtually to maintain that the sinner may not be blameable even while he remains unsanctified, having by supposition exhausted his duty by believing the Gospel. He has done, on this admission, all that God requires of him. He has taken the right medicine—taken it in the prescribed manner, and yet his spiritual malady remains. How could we avoid feeling that, if this were indeed the case, the fault would be in the medicine, and that he would be an object of pity, and not of censure? On these accounts, I cannot but strongly object to the phraseology of some who apply the words, "a dead letter," to the Word of God. If the terms were merely meant to intimate the fact that Divine revelation is never understood and received as the record of God without Divine influences, they would convey a most undeniable and important truth. But I fear that, in many cases at least, the words are designed to teach that the medicine itself is essentially inoperative; and when this idea is conveyed to the mind of the sinner, it will veil the full extent of his guilt, by failing to fix his attention upon his own obstinate rejection of the medicine, as the direct and, indeed, exclusive cause of his remaining under the full power of spiritual disease. —*Payne.*

8. How it is to be treated by us.

(2431.) We look at flowers and admire them, but the bees extract from them honey and wax. Some admire the Gospel; others get blessing from it.—*R.*

(2432.) We may form some idea of the manner in which the Gospel ought to be received from its being represented as an embassy. "We are ambassadors for Christ," saith the apostle, "as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The object of an embassy, in all cases, is peace. Ambassadors are sometimes employed between friendly powers for the adjustment of their affairs; but the allusion, in this case, is manifestly to a righteous prince, who should condescend to speak peaceably to his rebellious subjects, and, as it were, to entreat them for their own sakes to be reconciled. The language of the apostle supposes that the world is engaged in an unnatural and unprovoked rebellion against its Maker; that it is in His power utterly to destroy sinners; that if He were to deal with them according to their deserts, this must be their portion; but that, through the mediation of His Son, He had, as it were, suspended hostilities, had sent His servants with words of peace, and commissioned them to persuade, to entreat, and even to beseech them to be reconciled. But reconciliation to God includes everything that belongs to true conversion. It is the opposite of a state of alienation and enmity to Him (Col. i. 21). It includes a justification of His government, a condemnation of their own unprovoked rebellion against Him, and a thankful reception of the message of peace; which is the

same for substance as to repent and believe the Gospel. To speak of an embassy from the God of heaven and earth to His rebellious creatures being entitled to nothing more than an audience, or a decent attention, must itself be highly offensive to the honour of His Majesty; and that such language should proceed from His professed friends must render it still more so.

"When the apostle beseecheth us to be 'reconciled' to God I would know," says Dr. Owen, "whether it be not a part of our duty to yield obedience? If not, the exhortation is frivolous and vain." If sinners are not obliged to be reconciled to God, both as a Lawgiver and a Saviour, and that with all their hearts, it is no sin to be unreconciled. All the enmity of their hearts to God, His law, His gospel, or His Son, must be guiltless. For there can be no neutrality in this case: not to be reconciled is to be unreconciled; not to fall in with the message of peace is to fall out with it; and not to lay down arms and submit to mercy is to maintain the war. —*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

(2433.) I only wish I saw people as eager to be saved from hell, as I once saw a man to be saved from drowning. It was at yonder ferry. Procrastination, the ruin of souls, was almost his death. The time was up; the bell was rung; the gangway withdrawn; the boat in motion; when, after too many delays, he came running along the pier, and, deaf to the cries of warning, took a bold and desperate spring to catch our bulwark. He caught it, but lost his hold, fell backwards; and went down instantly—engulphed in the roaring sea. Sucked out by the receding wave, he rose to the surface a good way off. And though it was a blessed sight to see his head emerge from the water, every eye was still anxiously fixed on him. He floated on his back, but could not swim; and therefore must soon perish. And he had perished; but that then one, bearing a life-buoy aloft in his hand, came rushing down the pier at the top of his speed. Anxiety was now wound up to the highest pitch. Shall he save him? He stops; and with the spray of the stormy sea flying in his face, takes aim; now he bends like a bow; and then, rising to the spring, with herculean arm he sends the life-buoy spinning through the air, away over the waves, to the drowning man. What a moment of suspense for him; for us—the on-lookers! Well thrown by man, and well directed by a watchful Providence, it fell right over his sinking head. With what joy he caught it! How he laid hold of it! Never lover embraced lover with such eager, happy arms. I saw him holding on, pulled from a watery grave; and thought, Would God, that poor sinners, that every man ready to perish, laid hold as eagerly of eternal life!

—*Guthrie.*

(2434.) Scatter money in a crowd, how they scramble for it; offer bread to the starving, how greedily they seize it; throw a rope to the drowning, how he eagerly grasps it! With like eagerness and earnestness may the Spirit of God help you to lay hold on Christ. —*Guthrie.*

9. The danger of neglecting it.

(2435.) The Gospel is a proclamation of free mercy to guilty creatures—an act of grace to rebels. Now, though a rebel should throw away his pistols, and determine to go into the woods, and make his mind better before he goes to court and pleads the act; he may indeed not be found in *arms*, yet being taken in his reforming scheme he will be hanged. So will it be with those who delay coming to Christ. Hell is paved with good intentions.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

10. Not to be rejected because of the imperfections of its preachers.

(2436.) As a famished man, who doth never refuse any wholesome food prepared for him by his host, though his host himself will not taste thereof; and, likewise, a very sick patient, who never rejecteth healthful medicine, though his physician doth minister the same with a leprous hand; or as a miserable beggar will not forsake a fair piece of silver or gold, though it be proffered him in a filthy fist; and like as unto an imprisoned rebel, who will never reject the prince's pardon, though it be brought him by a most lewd ribald; or as a sorrowful, distressed caitiff would willingly hear any joyful news, notwithstanding the messenger who brings the same be a very ungracious varlet: so there can be no more dainty diet provided for Christians than the food of their souls; there cannot be a more healthful medicine made for Christian hearers of the Word than that which amendeth their spiritual maladies, nor can a more golden gift be given unto them than the seven times purified gold of the Sacred Scriptures rightly divided, neither can there be any more welcome pardon proclaimed to men than that which concerns the inheritance of everlasting life. Notwithstanding the preacher himself be careless, be leprous, be filthy, be beastly, or vile, yet the godly hearer will not forsake this heavenly food, or make light account of this wholesome medicine, or lightly esteem this gold, or reject this pardon, or scorn this news, but feed hungrily upon it, apply it in time, lay it up in his heart, yield all reverence unto it, and delight only therein, as in the very joy of his soul.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

11. Not to be rejected on account of the scepticism of able men.

(2437.) It should not surprise us when men of acute and powerful understandings more or less reject the Gospel, for this reason, that the Christian revelation addresses itself to our hearts, to our love of truth and goodness, our fear of sinning, and our desire to gain God's favour; and quickness, sagacity, depth of thought, strength of mind, power of comprehension, perception of the beautiful, power of language, and the like, though they are excellent gifts, are clearly quite of a different kind from these excellencies—a man may have the one without having the other. This, then, is the plain reason why able, or, again, why learned men are so defective Christians, because there is no necessary connection between faith and ability; because faith is one thing and ability is another; because ability of mind is a gift, and faith is a grace. Who would ever argue that a man could, like Samson, conquer lions or throw down the gates of a city, because he was able, or accomplished, or experienced in the business of life? Who would ever argue that a man could see because he could hear, or run with the swift because he had "the tongue of the learned"? These gifts are different in kind. In like manner, powers of mind and religious principles and feelings are distinct gifts; and as all the highest spiritual

excellence, humility, firmness, patience, would never enable a man to read an unknown tongue, or to enter into the depths of science, so all the most brilliant mental endowments, wit, or imagination, or penetration, or depth, will never of themselves make us wise in religion. And as we should fairly and justly deride the savage who wished to decide questions of science or literature by the sword, so may we justly look with amazement on the error of those who think that they can master the high mysteries of spiritual truth, and find their way to God, by what is commonly called reason, *i.e.*, by the random and blind efforts of mere mental acuteness, and mere experience of the world.

That truth, which St. Paul preached, addresses itself to our spiritual nature; it will be rightly understood, valued, accepted, by none but lovers of truth, virtue, purity, humility, and peace. Wisdom will be justified of her children. Those, indeed, who are thus endowed may and will go on to use their powers of mind, whatever they are, in the service of religion; none but they can use them aright. Those who reject revealed truth wilfully, are such as do not love moral and religious truth. It is bad men, proud men, men of hard hearts, and unhumbled tempers, and immoral lives, these are they who reject the Gospel. These are they of whom St. Paul speaks in another epistle—"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not." With this agrees the instances of turning the ears from the truth which the New Testament affords us. Who were they who were the enemies of Christ and His apostles? The infidel Sadducees, the immoral, hard-hearted, yet hypocritical Pharisees; Herod, who married his brother Philip's wife; and Felix, who trembled when St. Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. On the other hand, men of holy and consistent lives, as Cornelius the centurion, and those who were frequenters of religious ordinances, as Simeon and Anna, these became Christians. So it is now. If men turn unto fables of their own will, they do it on account of their pride, or their love of indolence and self-indulgence.

This should be kept in the mind when Christians are alarmed, as they sometimes are, on hearing instances of infidelity or heresy among those who read, reflect, and inquire; whereas, however we may mourn over such instances, we have no reason to be surprised at them. It is quite enough for Christians to be able to show, as they well can, that belief in revealed religion is not inconsistent with the highest gifts and acquirements of mind, that men even of the strongest and highest intellect have been Christians; but they have as little reason to be perplexed at finding other men of ability not true believers, as at finding that certain rich men are not true believers, or certain poor men, or some in every rank and circumstance of life. A belief in Christianity has hardly more connection with what is called talent, than it has with riches, station, power, or bodily strength. —*J. H. Newman.*

12. In what sense men are damned for rejecting it.

(2438.) It may, in a sense, be said of a rebel who refuses to lay down his arms and submit to mercy (which is a case more in point than that of a condemned criminal in the hands of justice), that when he comes to be punished, he will die because he refused the king's pardon; but it is easy to see that the word "because" is, in this connection, used improperly. It does not mean that the refusal of mercy is the crime, and the only crime, for which he suffers; no, this is not the direct or procuring, so much as the occasional cause of his punishment. Rebellion is that for which he suffers; and his refusal of mercy is no further a procuring cause of it than as it is a perseverance in rebellion, and, as it were, the completion of it. —*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

13. Its diverse effects.

(2439.) As the same light of the sun offendeth weak eyes, but comforteth those that are stronger-sighted; and as the heat thereof hardens clay, but softens wax; or as the same star is to some a morning star, ushering in light and day, and to others an evening star, bringing darkness and night: so the Gospel is preached indifferently to all manner of persons, but it works in a different manner. It hath not the like effect on all people; forasmuch as, being received by the faithful, it produceth in them life and salvation, as containing all the causes thereof in itself; but being rejected by unbelievers, it becometh in them the occasion of a greater condemnation, and makes their perdition inevitable: to some it is a comfort, to others a terror; the rise of one man, and the fall of another.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(2440.) Even as it is with the proclamation of a prince, which he sendeth out to his rebellious subjects, wherein he maketh offer not only of pardon, but of grace and favour, to those who will lay down their arms and come in, showing themselves loyal and obedient, but, on the other hand, threateneth extremity of punishment to those who shall yet stand out; now, this proclamation, with the same breath, breatheth out both life and death—life to those who will hearken to it (which is the main end and intent of proclaiming it), but death to those who oppose themselves against it: even so it is with the evangelical proclamation, the preaching of the Gospel. It reacheth out life and death after the same manner—life to penitent believers, who readily accept the offers of grace and mercy there tendered, but death to obstinate and rebellious sinners, who reject them. To the one it is a savour of life unto life, to the other a savour of death unto death; to believers the morning star, bringing the light of grace here and of glory hereafter; to others the evening star, leading to everlasting darkness. Not that it is so in itself, being in its own nature the Word of Life; but accidentally it becometh so to them, through their unbelief and rejection of it.

—*Brinsley*, 1600–1665.

(2441.) The Gospel becomes a trial of men's spirits; and, by it, "the thoughts of many hearts are revealed." The man who loathes his dungeon will gladly take this Lamp, and explore his way to liberty; while another, who loves his bondage, will only dispute or slumber by it.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(2442.) The Gospel is preached equally to every man. The same message comes to us all, offering us the same terms. Christ stands before each of us in the same attitude. And what is the consequence?

A parting of the whole mass of us, some on one side, and some on the other. As when you take a magnet, and hold it to an indiscriminate heap of metal filings, it will gather out all the iron, and leave behind all the rest! "I, if I be lifted up," said He, "will draw all men unto Me." The attractive power will go out over the whole race of His brethren; but from some there will be no response. In some hearts there will be no yielding to the attraction. Some will remain rooted, obstinate, steadfast in their place; and to some the lightest word will be mighty enough to stir all the slumbering pulses of their sin-ridden hearts, and to bring them, broken and penitent, for mercy to His feet. To the one He is "a savour of life unto life, and to the other a savour of death unto death." The broadest doctrine of the universal adaptation, and the universal intention, too, of the Gospel, as the "power of God unto salvation," contains hidden in its depths this undeniable fact, that, be the cause what it may (and, as I believe, the cause lies with us, and is our fault), this separating, judging effect follows from all faithful preaching of Christ's words. He came to judge the world, "that they which see not (as He Himself said) might see, and that they which see might be made blind." And on the cross that process went on in two men, alike in necessity, alike in criminality, alike in this, that Death's icy finger was just being laid upon their hearts, to stop all the flow of its wild blood and passion, but different in this, that the one of them turned himself, by God's grace, and laid hold of the Gospel that was offered to him, and the other turned himself away, and derided, and died. —*Maclaren.*

14. To what its success is to be attributed.

(2443.) Our dispute is not whether the Gospel be a suitable means in the hand of the Holy Spirit to convert a sinner, but whether it is sufficient, in virtue of this its suitableness, to effect the change without an almighty and invincible agency attending it. A sword is a suitable instrument to cause a wound; but it does not thence follow that it is of itself sufficient to effect this without a hand to wield it. Three things I would here beg leave to offer:

(1.) The Holy Spirit can and does make use of the law as well as the Gospel, in a sinner's conversion. "I had not known sin," says the apostle, "but by the law." "The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ."

(2.) If the success of the Gospel is to be attributed to its suitableness, then I suppose, it must be on account of its containing good tidings; and so tending to slay men's native enmity, and to conciliate their hearts to God. But the Scripture represents the human heart as equally prone to abuse God's mercy as to despise His severity. "Let favour be showed to the wicked," says the prophet, "yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." The reason why men hate God is not because they consider Him, in every sense, as their enemy; if so, could you but persuade them that God loved them, and Christ died for them, their enmity would subside. But is that indeed the case? Do not the generality of men consider God as their friend? Nor can you persuade them that they are under His displeasure. Yet this has no tendency to remove their enmity. What they hate in God is that from which their hearts are wholly averse, and that is, His true character.

(3.) The success which has attended the Gospel is not ascribed to its supposed fitness to conciliate a sinner's heart, but to the power of Almighty God attending it. I hope this last has been sufficiently proved already. God ordered Moses to take a rod, and smite the rock. The rod, to be sure, was the means of breaking the rock, not, however, on account of its being equal to such an effect; the rock rather had a tendency to break the rod than the rod the rock. But an almighty energy attended it from Him with whom all things are possible.

—*Fuller*, 1754–1815.

15. The permanence of its influence.

(2444.) It is not merely as a subtle and diffused influence that the Gospel establishes a permanent effect upon us. It is presented to each of us here individually, in the definite form of an actual offer of salvation for each, and of an actual demand of trust from each. The words pass into our souls, and thenceforward it can never be the same as if they had not been there. The smallest particle of light falling on the sensitive plate produces a chemical change that can never be undone again, and the light of Christ's love once brought to the knowledge and presented for the acceptance of a soul, stamps on it an ineffaceable sign of its having been there. The Gospel once heard, is always the Gospel which has been heard. Nothing can alter that. Once heard, it is henceforward a perpetual element in the whole condition, character, and destiny of the hearer. —*Maclaren.*

16. Symbols of the Gospel.

(2445.) The Gospel is like leaven, sour to the natural spirit, yet makes him holy bread. . . . As leaven spreads into the whole lump, so the Gospel regenerates the whole man.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(2446.) "I am come to send fire on the earth." A fire is a power. What a reality, what a vitality, what a sweeping and resistless strength resides in that element of fire. How it spreads, and glows, and rages, and devours! How it strides from point to point, from wood to stone, from gallery to wall, from floor to tower, licking, and devouring, and consuming, while a whole population cowers before it, and can only stand idly by, beholding and weeping over its work! Now, I say that, when the Gospel is called a fire sent upon the earth, we shall do well to remember that a fire is a power; not a name, not an idea, not a poor, faint, creeping thing which may be disregarded and let alone, because at any moment human exertion can interpose and put it down; but a great, an active, at least a domineering and irresistible force, against which all the skill and all the strength in the world is as powerless as an infant's touch. Never suppose that the Gospel is an insignificant or despicable thing; whatever else it is or is not, it is certainly not that. The Gospel is a fire; and what a fire is, you know and you have seen. —*C. J. Vaughan.*

17. Nothing else will satisfy believers.

(2447.) Take away a toy from a child, and give him another, and he is satisfied; but if he be hungry no toy will do. As new-born babes, true believers desire the sincere milk of the Word; and the desire of grace in this way is grace.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

18. It is our duty to spread it.

(2448.) Huber, the great naturalist, tells us, that if a single wasp discovers a deposit of honey or other food, he will return to his nest, and impart the good news to his companions, who will sally forth in great numbers to partake of the fare which has been discovered for them. Shall we who have found honey in the rock Christ Jesus, be less considerate of our fellowmen than wasps are of their fellow insects? Ought we not rather like the Samaritan woman to hasten to tell the good news? Common humanity should prevent one of us from concealing the great discovery which grace has enabled us to make. —*Spurgeon.*

19. Fear for it is not inconsistent with faith in it.

(2449.) The hearts of God's people have ever been alternating, as St. Paul's did, between faith in the Gospel and fear for the Gospel. Men have asked us, as they asked him, "How can you reconcile the intensity of your faith in the Divinity of your religion with the nervousness of your fear for its success? If your Christianity be a Divine thing, why are you Christians so afraid of the unbelief and godlessness in the world? Why not trust God with His religion? And if you are so much afraid, how can you tell us it is Divine?" The answer to this is a very simple one, and it is one which needs to be remembered in all times of the Church's history; never more than when we are starting a new work for God. We are afraid for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not because it is not Divine, but because it is. It is just because it is the Gospel of God; it is just because it comes down from heaven to earth that we are afraid for it. The world may be trusted to provide for its own. The product of the world's soil grows naturally, as the weeds or wilder fruit grow. But the Divine teaching, the Divine gift, is not of this world's growth. It is a foreign plant; it is an exotic. It comes from another clime, and it is entrusted to us to tend, to water, to train, to prune; and just because it will not thrive without care or without culture, and because to our trembling hands has been committed the care and culture of the Divine gift, we fear. It is just because the kingdom is not of this earth that we fear for it. It is because it is the ark of God we carry that we tremble, as we put our hands to it, to lift it up and carry it into the battle of our day. The ark shall never perish, but yet the hands that carry it may falter, and for a time let it fall into the hands of its enemies. The Church of Christ shall never perish, but there is no promise that the living branch shall not be scathed here and there by the storm of unbelief and godlessness. The kingdom of Christ shall never perish, but there is no promise that some part of it shall not grievously err from the faith. Thus it is because of the preciousness of the treasure that we hold in earthen vessels, because the treasure is Divine and the vessels earthen and fragile—the potter's vessels it is borne in—that we rejoice and yet tremble as we receive in trust this gift from God. —*Magee.*

20. The great hindrance to its progress.

(2450.) The small progress and scanty triumphs of that Gospel are not owing to its inherent weakness, nor to the fewness of its friends. The Gospel is mighty. The truth of eternity—the power of God is in it: and its believers are many—perhaps never so numerous as now; and their aggregate resources are immense. It is astonishing, when you consider the amount of learning, and intellectual eloquence, and social influence—it is delightful to recount the various accomplishments and talents which, in one form and another, and within this living age, have been laid at the Saviour's feet. And whilst the Church is numerous aud powerful, there is no lack of zeal. There is vitality, and there is energy, and sometimes stupendous exertion; but the misery is that so much of it is zeal misspent—that so much of it is energy devoted to mutual destruction. The elastic vapour which murmurs in the earthquake, or explodes in the mud-volcano, if properly secured and turned on in the right direction, might send the navy of an empire all round the world, or clothe with plenty an industrious realm. And the zeal which has hitherto rumbled in ecclesiastical earthquakes, and left no nobler mementoes than so many steaming cones—so many mud-craters, on the sides of the great controversial Jorullo—if rightly directed, might long before this time have sent the Gospel all over the globe, and covered a rejoicing earth with the fruits of righteousness. The river which Ezekiel saw was a tiny rill when it first escaped from the temple, but a course of a thousand cubits made it ankle-deep, and a few more furlongs saw it a river that he could not pass over—the waters were waters to swim in. And this is the course of the Gospel when Christians do not hinder it. But instead of clearing the common channel, and strengthening the main embankments for its universal and world-gladdening flow, the effort hitherto has been to divert it all into denominational reservoirs. Each one has gone with his spade and his pickaxe—has breached the grand embankment, and tried to tempt the mighty stream into his own more orthodox canal. And the consequence of these sectarian efforts—these poor attempts to monopolise the Gospel—the consequence is, that, like a certain river in the southern hemisphere, which has only been known to reach the ocean once during the last thirty years—betwixt the scorching secularity overhead, and the selfish interruptions of the stream, it is only now and then that the Gospel is allowed to flow far enough to fertilise new territory, and gladden weary souls.

But a day is coming, and in these movements we hail its dawn. Instead of monopolising or dividing the stream—instead of breaking its banks, or interrupting its course—our individual and our united efforts shall hereafter seek to clear its channel and deepen its flow; and the work of our different denominations shall be, not to pierce the bank or dig diverting canals, but each to strengthen the enclosing mounds, and remove the interrupting rocks as it sweeps alongside of their respective territories. Thus acting, thus seeking not our own things, but the things of Jesus Christ, we shall soon behold the little stream which welled up Jerusalem eighteen hundred years ago, holding on in its prosperous course. We shall see life leaping in its sunny ripple, and a joyful world resorting to its genial current; we shall see one flock reposing on its green margin, and besides its still waters One Shepherd leading them. And, best of all, on its teeming brink we shall again behold the long exotic Tree of Life—its laden branches mirrored in the tranquil tide, and showering on the azure amplitudes its leaves of heavenly healing. *Hamilton*, 1814–1865.

21. Its ultimate triumph.

(2451.) At first but a beam of light is seen to glimmer in the midst of the darkness. And the night still seems to hold its undisturbed sway. But the beam becomes slowly a streak of light shooting its way in the path of heaven. It becomes more fixed and determinate in its character; it increases, it is a glowing light. There is a mass of darkness still around, and clouds yet hang about it; but it contends successfully with the darkness, still it penetrates, still it breaks through the hideous mass; the contest is no longer doubtful, and the clouds and shadows flee away. But the rising beam at first so faintly seen, and dimly visible, would have been soon lost and overwhelmed in the darkness which it invaded, if it had not been a beam from an exhaustless fountain of light, the sun, that continued to send forth supplies of strength, by adding beam upon beam. And now it pours out its effulgent rays, and now this dawning beam is become a bright and glorious sun, ascending majestically through the heavens, the mighty creative principle of fruitfulness, ripening, maturing, and enriching the vegetable kingdom, and in its brightness showing forth a faint image of its Maker's glory. In like manner the first manifestation of the Gospel is like that little beam of light. The land which it visits is involved in the deepest shades of darkness. A mental and spiritual midnight rests upon it. But it becomes a growing light, and as it flashes its beams around, it only serves to make more visible the darkness and misery of the benighted inhabitants. What though its enemies deny it to be the true light—and though all the clouds of heathen darkness and superstition overhang its pathway, yet it still contends, and contends successfully, penetrating the foul and hideous mass of corruption around it. And so this little beam would have been long since overwhelmed and swallowed up, if it had not been supplied from the exhaustless fountain of the Sun of Righteousness; if it had not the promise, "Thy light shall no more go down;" yes, and soon this increasing light is destined to ascend the heavens, and fill the whole horizon with its beams. Like the natural sun it shall continue its noble and majestic course till its light shall fall upon every darkened nook of the habitable world, manifesting itself, as it everywhere rolls its course, the mighty creative principle of fruitfulness, enriching the world, civilising it with true knowledge, and making it to flourish everywhere with the fruits of peace, happiness, good will and love to God and man:—a sun that shall never go down, but continue to shine till the light of grace is lost and swallowed up in the more illustrious splendours of the light of glory. —*Salter.*

GRACE.

I. *CONSIDERED AS A DIVINE ENERGY WORKING IN THE SOUL.*

1. The mode of its operation.

(2452.) Grace does not pluck up by the roots and wholly destroy the natural passions of the mind, because they are distempered by sin. That were an extreme remedy, to cure by killing, and to heal by cutting off. No; but it corrects the distemper in them. It dries not up the main stream of love, but purifies it from the mud it is full of in its wrong course, or calls it to its right channel, by which it may run into happiness, and empty itself in the ocean of goodness. *Leighton*, 1681-1684.

2. The transformations it effects.

(2453.) Take a river: Let it be dammed and stopped up, yet if the course of it be natural, if the vent and stream of it be to go downward, at length it will overbear, and ride triumphantly over. Or let water that is sweet be made brackish by the coming in of salt water; yet, if it naturally be sweet, at length it will work it out. So it is with every man. Look what the constant stream of his disposition is, look what the frame of it is; that which is most natural and inward to a man, though it may be dammed up and stopped in such a course for a while, yet it will break through all at the last; and though there be some brackish, some sinful dispositions that may break in upon a man, yet he, by the grace of God, will wear them out, because his natural disposition, the frame of his heart, runs another way. —*Preston*, 1587-1628.

(2454.) A rough jewel lay in the sand among many common stones. A boy picked up some of these to use them for playthings, and took them home together with the jewel; but he did not know this. The boy's father looked on when he was playing; he perceived the rough jewel, and said to his son, "Give me that stone."

The boy did so, and smiled, for he thought, "What is my father going to do with this stone?"

The father took the stone and polished it skilfully into regular planes and angles, and behold a diamond glittered brilliantly.

"See," said the father, "here is the stone you gave me."

The boy wondered at the splendour and brilliancy of the stone, and exclaimed, "My father, how could you accomplish this?"

The father said, "I knew the hidden virtue, and the value of the stone; therefore I freed it from its coating of dross. Now it sparkles with its natural radiance."

When the boy had increased in years, the father gave him the precious stone, as an emblem of the worth and dignity of life.

—*F. A. Krummacher.*

3. It cannot be hid.

(2455.) Grace, like fire, cannot be hid; you may as soon conceal musk in your hand as grace in your heart. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

4. Its fruits are unmistakable.

(2456.) Fruits are infallible evidence of the nature of the tree that brings them forth. Therefore, if these are good, the tree is certainly good, an engrafted tree. If there be fervent desires, pantings, and breathings of the soul after God, delight in the Word and ordinances, love to God and His people, secret goings out of the soul after, and closing with spiritual things, disliking and hating corruptions, and whatsoever is against the mind of God, and opposing of it, with a rising of spirit against it, with zeal and indignation; if there be a secret joy and cheerfulness in the spirit when things go well with the people of God, when holiness and the power of godliness is like to be set up, promoted, and encouraged, and sin suppressed; if the spirit be stirred to pray against the dominion and power of wicked and unregenerate men, not only such as are profane, but also such as are but morally honest, yea though they

be accomplished with the utmost of natural and moral endowments, prizing and preferring sincerity and holiness in any person, before all gifts without grace. These fruits (I say) are infallible evidences of a good tree, of a tree engrafted into Christ, and that soul that finds them in itself (if the Spirit of God shine upon them and show them) may as certainly conclude upon the truth of grace there, as if an angel were sent from God to tell such a one, that he is beloved of God.

It is as possible in nature for thorns to bring forth grapes, or thistles figs, as for a bad tree (a person out of Christ) to bring forth these fruits. Let not such souls, therefore, so dishonour God, wrong themselves, and gratify Satan, as to question the truth of grace in themselves; but rejoice evermore, because their names are written in heaven. Hereby we know we are translated from death to life, because of these fruits. —*Austen.*

5. Its conflicts.

(2457.) The dispensation of grace to some is little more than a continual combat with corruptions; so that, instead of advancing, a man seems to be but just able to preserve himself from sinking. A boat, with the tide full against it, does well if it can keep from driving back, and must have strong force indeed to get forward. We must estimate grace by the opposition which it meets with.

—*Cecil*, 1748-1810.

(2458.) It is the nature of all the works of God's creation to seek, and to go on to, their perfection. The first dawn of morn continues to increase until it shines in the noontide radiance. The feeble plant which is just breaking the clod, continues to grow until in the course of years it stands a flourishing and a stately tree. In the animal kingdom we see God's creatures gradually emerging from the weakness and insignificance of infancy, and rising, where no obstructions exist, into the vigour and maturity of age. And shall the light go on to perfection, the plant and the flower to blossom, the tree to bring forth its fruit; and all God's creatures grow up and flourish each its own perfection—and grace—the immortal plant of grace—"the incorruptible seed," which is to "live and abide for ever,"—this little tree of the Lord's own planting—shall this alone be denied the benefits of God's universal law,—let all things grow until the harvest? No! grace has its destined perfection. True grace is a seed which, though sown in a lowly soil, will soon manifest its heavenly origin. It will infallibly spring forth, and be ever aspiring to ascend upwards, until it climbs the skies, and there transplanted, shall bloom in the courts of the Lord for ever. —*Salter.*

(2459.) Our old corrupt nature is eventually destined to fall before the power of grace. Its case is that of an ancient castle that had been for days assaulted by the battering-ram. It was long before the stroke of that engine made any sensible impression, but the continual repetition at length communicated a slight tremor to the wall; the next, and the next, and the next blow increased it. Another shock put the whole mass in motion, from the top to the foundation; it bends forward, and is every moment driven farther from the perpendicular, till at last the decisive blow is given, and down it comes. And so must fall the strong tower of corruption. At first it seems to defy the efforts of grace; but by little and little its wall gives way, for "the weapons" in the divine warfare are mighty through God for the pulling down of these strongholds; till at last it shall be shaken to its deep foundations, and fall a glorious ruin for the saint to rejoice over. "We shall be satisfied with His likeness."

—*Salter.*

II. *CONSIDERED AS CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.*

1. Its source.

(2460.) As in nature there is one common influence from heaven, but yet variety of flowers, violets, roses, gilliflowers, spices, all sweet in their several kind, with a different kind of sweetness; so all graces have their beginning from the common influences of Christ's Spirit, though they differ one from another; and are all accepted of the "Father of lights," from whence they come.

—*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

(2461.) There is never a grace but it is beautiful and fair; for what is grace but the beams of Christ, the Sun of righteousness? —*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

(2462.) The sea enters into the rivers before the rivers can run into the sea. In like manner, God comes to us before we go to Him; and heaven enters into our souls before we can enter into heaven.

—*Drelincourt*, 1666.

2. Adorns the soul.

(2463.) Grace sheds a glory and lustre upon the soul. As the diamond to the ring, so is grace to the soul. A heart beautified with grace hath the King of heaven's picture hung in it.

—*Watson*, 1696.

3. How it is wrought in the soul.

(2464.) Many pray to be made "men in Christ Jesus," and think in some miraculous way it will be given to them; but God says, "I will try My child, and see if he is sincere," and so He lays a burden upon Him, and says, "Now, stand up under it, for thus you are to grow strong." He sends a provocation, and says to him, "Be patient." He throws him into perplexities, and says, "Where now are thy resources?" If the ambitious ore dreads the furnace, the forge, the anvil, the rasp, and the file, it should never desire to be made a sword. Man is the iron, and God is the smith; and we are always either in the forge or on the anvil. God is shaping us for higher things. —*Beecher.*

(2465.) You pray for the graces of faith and hope and love; but prayer alone will not bring them. They must be wrought in you through labour and patience and suffering.

A garden has heard that the royal garden has a fountain, and sends up a petition to the head gardener that it may have a fountain too. He favours the request, and comes with workmen and the necessary implements to make it. The flower beds are torn up, the turf is cut and removed, the earth is thrown out in piles, and the astonished garden exclaims, "What is this? you are killing all my violets and roses." And now the boring commences, down through the quicksands and the surface soil, till a bed of rock is gained. Then, when the severer drilling begins, the terrified garden cries out, "My foundations will be destroyed! I thought I was to have a fountain." A small stream of water appears, but the gardener knows it would not al-

ways flow, and so he penetrates the earth yet further, till at last, hundreds of feet below the surface, he reaches unfailing springs. Now the pipes are brought, and when they are adjusted, the earth is thrown back, the stones are removed, the turf is replaced, the ground is swept, and the flowers returned to their beds; and day in and day out the fountain plays, falling into its marble basin with ceaseless shower. The plants revive in its cooling spray, the birds come to sing to its music, and the whole garden rejoices in its beauty.

Now, who is willing that God should bore in his heart for the graces of faith, and hope, and love? You pray for them, but when God begins to work, you cry out, "O Lord! save my flower beds. You are killing all my violets and roses." Yet only through this working are the wells of salvation dug in our hearts, and the living waters made to flow.
—*Beecher.*

(2466.) Every man that has cultivated fruit knows that no tree can bear very rich the first year. The first year a tree bears, the fruit is of the lowest quality; the second year it is a little better; the third year it is still better; the fourth year it is better yet; and it continues to improve every year until the tenth; and then you begin to know what is the best thing that tree can do. Trees have to go through a maturing process of ten years' duration, before they can bear fruit of the highest flavours.

So it is with Christians and Christian graces. You cannot bear high spiritual fruit until the spirit of Christ has dwelt with you, so as to form the very wood and fibre of your life. It is not until you have borne the fruits of Christian life and conduct year after year, that you can bring them forth in their highest state of development.

Besides, there are some things that no mere flush touches, just as low degrees of heat do not affect the roots of some plants. Some plants—for instance, the chick-weed—feel the influence of spring in March. They shake hands with the frost, and say, "How do you do?" to the snow. Others do not feel anything till the next month comes along. As a sleeper, when called, knows that something disturbs him, and begins to turn himself; so the roots of these plants, when April invites them to come forth, know that something is rousing them, and commence to bestir themselves. It is not until June makes its appearance that they begin to lift up their heads; and they are not above the ground before the middle of June. July and August develop the stalk and branches and buds; and September gives us the flower that would not show itself till the whole summer had passed.

So it is in respect to the fruits of the Spirit. Some come quick and early, at the first touches of divine grace; and some not until, through a long summer of experience, the rays of the Sun of righteousness have penetrated the deepest parts of the soul. Then you can gather the most beautiful fruits of Christian life. —*Beecher.*

4. How it is maintained in the soul.

(2467.) Grace in the saints is not like light in the sun, that springs from itself, but like the light of a lamp that is constantly fed with supplies of oil, otherwise the weak light will faint and die. Inherent grace is maintained by the continual emanations from the Holy Spirit: nay, the habits of grace are drawn forth into active and vigorous exercise, by supervehement exciting grace, without which they would be ineffective and useless. As there cannot be actual sight unless the organs of sight be irradiated by light of the air; so without special assisting grace we cannot do any spiritual good, nor avoid evil: we shall be foiled by every temptation, even the best will leave God, and provoke God to leave them. —*Salter*, 1840.

(2468.) There is no greater delusion than the idea that all things are well with us, if we are in a state of grace. The inquiry should be, whether it is grace in operation, grace in living exercise, and daily working in us. It is with grace as it is with fire—it may be in a half lifeless and inert state, and therefore useless. Fire is one of the most active agents in nature with which we are acquainted. You may see it smouldering in the ashes, without any power to burn or emit any heat. Here, though there is undoubtedly fire in the embers, yet in this state it is profitable to no purpose. But let its dying embers be kindled into flame, and it can rend the living rocks, control the mightiest engines, and prove itself to be endowed with the most astonishing power. So grace, which is capable of the greatest things, may be in a dull and torpid state, and effect nothing; and while in this state, the believer is weak as another man. Here is the presence of grace, but it is without its strength, and so far useless. But let him stir up the grace that is in him, and his soul shall be clothed with energies, and endued with a living power that is truly surprising. It is nature now rising out of her native feebleness, a living active thing exhibiting powers hitherto unknown to herself, and capable of passing on to perfection till the believer shall be filled with all the fulness of God. —*Salter.*

5. Its development may be hindered.

(2469.) The Holy Spirit, as given to the Church, and to each member of the Church, is not an illumination once for all, or a confirmation once for all, but a germ of, and strength capable of, indefinite development. It is potentially, *but only potentially*, a revelation of all truth to the intellect, and a communication of all power to the will. It is a growing and expansive force, not a force which exhausts itself in one impulse. In short, it is a seed, not a full-formed flower; and like all seeds, its growth is liable to checks and drawbacks. It is planted in the poor barren soil of the human heart, which by nature engenders weeds only. It shoots up into the climate of a wicked world. And just as, in the world of nature, plants are exposed to blight, which is said to be composed of hosts of minute insects, so in the moral world Grace is apt to be thwarted by the legions of fallen angels, whom the Scriptures speak of as swarming around us on every side, "principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world." What wonder if the spiritual development of the saints be often thrown back, and if their best graces be sadly marred by infirmities?
—*Goulburn.*

6. Weak grace is real grace.

(2470.) Smoke is of the same nature with flame; for what is flame but smoke set on fire? The least spark of fire, if cherished, will endeavour to rise above the air as well as the greatest. So a little grace may be true grace, as the filings of gold are as good gold (though not so much of it) as the whole wedge. —*J. Trapp*, 1601–1669.

(2471.) However feeble its commencement, yet is it a reality in the soul of man. If we had rescued some poor struggling creature from the waves, one whom we had watched buffeting with the storm, and had seen sink at last beneath the many waters—if we had brought him to the shore, and yet could mark no evidence of life in him, not a breath stirring, not an eyelid moving, not one single gesture to describe consciousness, but all apparent death—we go on in hope, we use every means, persevere in every remedy, and at last we hear one feeble sigh, we see the eyelash gently move, we see some little change in the features. What conclusion do we draw from it? *He lives; he has life;* life as real as if he walked and moved; as essentially as if we saw him rise in all the vigour, and strength, and power of health and animation. Look at the dead sinner—there he stands, "dead in trespasses and sins;" nothing moves him; we preach to him the terrors of the law, we speak to him, though dead, just as Ezekiel spake to the dry bones; the mandate goes forth from the eternal God, "Go, My Spirit, and touch his heart; go and enlighten his conscience; go and take away that hard clod that bears upon his affections; go and convey life into his soul." What is the effect? He begins to feel sin; he begins now to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord, save me, or I perish." We begin now to see him a praying man. "Behold he prayeth." We find that individual who was "enmity against God, by reason of his wicked works," now turning to the wall, and calling upon God. We find him now pleading the blood of Christ—looking to Him for mercy to pardon, and grace to sanctify. This is a reality. It is as real as the evil principle is real within him. It is no fancy that he has inherited an evil principle in his heart from the first Adam; so is it no fancy, but a reality, that he hath received a holy principle from the second Adam, communicated to him by the eternal Spirit. —*Salter*, 1840.

7. Its relation to glory.

(2472.) The kingdom of grace is nothing but the inchoation or beginning of the kingdom of glory; the kingdom of grace is glory in the seed, and the kingdom of glory is grace in the flower; the kingdom of grace is glory in the daybreak, and the kingdom of glory is grace in the full meridian; the kingdom of grace is glory militant, and the kingdom of glory is grace triumphant. There is such an inseparable connection between these two kingdoms, grace and glory, that there is no passing into the one kingdom but by the other. At Athens there were two temples, a temple of virtue and a temple of honour; and there was no going into the temple of honour, but through the temple of virtue; so the kingdoms of grace and glory are so close joined together, that we cannot go into the kingdom of glory, but through the kingdom of grace. Many people aspire after the kingdom of glory, but never look after grace; but these two, which God hath joined together, may not be put asunder; the kingdom of grace leads to the kingdom of glory.
—*Watson*, 1696.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

I. *IN WHAT IT CONSISTS.*

(2473.) Growth in grace doth not always consist in doing of other works for the kind, but in doing the same works over and over again better than before. As now, when one learns to write, when a man hath attained to a great perfection in writing, he doth not make other letters than he made at first; he makes the same letters that he did, only he makes them better and sets them closer.
—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(2474.) Young Christians perform more duties, and withal spoil more duties; young carpenters make many chips. But the more spiritual your performances grow, the more fruit there is to be esteemed. It is not the bigness of the fruit, or juiciness of them, for then crabs were better than apples, but the relish it is that gives the commendation. And it is the end you have therein that puts this relish into them: when your ends are raised more to aim at God, and to sanctify them more, and to debase yourselves in a sense of your own vileness and emptiness and inability; and when your obedience proceeds more out of thankfulness, and less out of the constraint of conscience. As the greatest growth of wicked men is in spiritual wickedness, in which the Pharisees grew, and sinners against the Holy Ghost do grow, when yet it may be they leave more gross evils—so the greatest growth of grace is in spiritual holiness, in sanctifying God much in the heart, and "worshipping Him in spirit and truth." —*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(2475.) I am sure there are too many of us, that have long pretended to be in Christ, who make little or no progress in Christianity, that is, holiness of life; that ever hang hovering in a twilight of grace, and never seriously put ourselves forward into clear daylight, but esteem that glimmering *crepusculum* which we are in, and like that faint twilight better than broad open day: whereas "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." I am sure there be many of us, that are perpetual dwarfs in our spiritual stature—like those silly women, that St. Paul speaks of, laden with sins and led away with divers lusts, that are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;" that are not now one jot taller in Christianity than we were many years ago, but have still as sickly, crazy, and unsound a temper of soul as we had long before.

Indeed, we seem to do something; we are always moving and lifting at the stone of corruption that lies upon our hearts, but yet we never stir it notwithstanding, or at least never roll it off from us. We are sometimes a little troubled with the guilt of our sins, and then we think we must thrust our lusts out of our hearts; but afterwards we sprinkle ourselves over with I know not what holy water, and so we are contented to let them still abide quietly within us. We do every day truly confess the same sins; and yet still commit them as much as ever, and lie as deeply under the power of them. We have the same water to pump out in every prayer, and still we let the same leak in again upon us. We make a great deal of noise, and raise a great deal of dust with our feet; but we do not move from off the ground which we had gained: as if religion were nothing else but a dancing up and down upon the same piece of ground, and making several motions and friskings upon it; and not a sober journeying and travelling onwards to a certain place. We do and undo; we do *Penelopes*

telam tenere; we weave sometimes a web of holiness, but then we let our lusts come, and undo and unravel all again. Like Sysyphus in the fable, we roll up a mighty stone with much ado, sweating and tugging up the hill; and then we let it go, and tumble down again unto the bottom; and this is our constant work. Like those Danaides, which the poets speak of, we are always filling water into a sieve, by our prayers, duties, and performances, which still runs out as fast as we pour it in.

What is it that thus cheats us, and gulls us out of our religion? that makes us thus constantly to tread the same ring and circle of duties, where we make no progress at all forwards, and the further we go, are still never the nearer to our journey's end. —*Cudworth*, 1617–1688.

(2476.) It is a permanent improvement of Christ. A man that takes a step or two forward, and then sits down again, cannot be said to walk; so, some take a start of devotion, a fit of zeal and concern for religion, perhaps about a communion, but it dies out. These cannot be said to walk in Christ; for walking in Him is a constant, permanent, preserving, and continued improvement of Him.
—*Erskine*, 1685–1754.

(2477.) Some professors are like the mill-wheel, it goes round, yet still it stands in the same place where it was: they go the round of duties, and morning and evening prayers; and attend Sabbath and week-day sermons, which is well done: but they are at a stand; they are the same now, that they were ten, twenty years ago, if not worse. But, in gathering to Shiloh, the people are made to advance nearer and nearer to heaven, getting more knowledge, more experience, more hatred of sin, more love and likeness to Christ. It is true, the saints themselves have their winter-decays, but they have also their summer-revivings, that set them forward again. And thus the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto a perfect day. —*Erskine*, 1685–1754.

(2478.) There may be a continual motion that is not progressive, like that of a door which continually moves on its hinges, yet never removes from its place; but walking in the Spirit imports a progressive motion in a course of spirituality. When persons make still nearer and nearer approaches unto their end, the term of their course; draw nearer and nearer to God; and, as they draw nearer to Him, find a gradual influence of divine light, and life, and power; more discernible impressions of the Divine image; grow more and more into suitableness to Him; are more acquainted with Him, are brought into higher delectations, and to take more complacency in Him; this is walking in the Spirit; when a man's path, as it is said concerning the righteous man, is as the shining light, that shines more and more, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day. As you know, the nearer approach we make unto the light of a glorious lucid object the more light we have, still, all along as we go, our way grows more and more lightsome. *They* do not walk in the Spirit, therefore, who keep moving but move in a circle, or in a round of empty, sapless duties, who keep up the formalities of religion, and no more; but *they* walk in the Spirit who make a progress, who go forward, who draw nearer and nearer unto God, and become more suitable to, and like Him, and fit for His eternal converse, and for all the present service wherein He calls them.
—*Salter*, 1840.

II. *IS NECESSARY.*

1. Because we are born into the Divine life imperfect.

(2479.) God deals in spiritual proceedings, as in natural, to extremes by the mean. We are not born old men; but first an infant, then a man, then old. We are conceived of immortal seed, born of the Spirit, so go on to perfection. There is first a seed, then a plant, then a tree. We get not at one jump into heaven, nor at one stroke kill the enemy.
—*Adams*, 1653.

(2480.) Who starts up a finished Christian? The very best men come from their graves, like Lazarus, "bound with grave clothes"—not like Jesus, who left the death-dress behind Him; and, alas! in their remaining corruptions, all carry some of these cerements about with them, nor drop them but at the gate of heaven. —*Guthrie.*

(2481.) The process of being born again is like that which a portrait goes through under the hand of the artist. When a man is converted, he is but the outline sketch of a character which he is to fill up. He first lays in the dead colouring. Then comes the work of laying in the colours; and he goes on, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, blending them, and heightening the effect. It is a life's work; and when he dies he is still laying in and blending the colours, and heightening the effect. And if men suppose the work is done when they are converted, why should we expect anything but lopsided Christian characters? —*Beecher.*

(2482.) No man is born into the full Christian character, any more than he is born into the character of a man when he comes into the world. A man at conversion is in the state of one who has just come into possession of an old homestead. He has the title, and he can make for himself a beautiful home. But the dust, the dirt, and the cobwebs of years choke all the rooms, and must be cleared away. Many sills and beams are rotten, and must be replaced by new ones. Chambers must be refitted, walls newly plastered, the whole roof must be searched over, and every leak stopped. There must be a thorough cleansing and repair before the mansion is habitable; and when all this is done, 'tis only *an empty house* that the man has.

The same kind of thing that man is, who has trained himself into freedom from wrong, without having become faithful in right deeds.

Now for a man's house he may buy carpets ready made; but there is no loom that will weave carpets for his heart, except the loom that is in himself. Furniture, beds, chairs, and tables, he may buy for his house, but rest and peace for his soul can only be worked out within his soul, and long labour it often proves. He may purchase paintings, whose voiceless language shall make eloquent his walls, and statues to grace niche and pedestal, and books to fill his many shelves, but the painter, the sculptor, and the publisher, for the man's mental house, are all in his own heart.
—*Beecher.*

2. To prove the sincerity of our profession and the reality of our grace.

(2483.) We are pilgrims and travellers, as we profess, towards our heavenly home, who are still going on, and every day despatch some part of the way. But if we stand at a stay, and after many years spent are no more forward in our journey than we were at our first setting forth, it shows plainly that we are no true travellers, but loiterers, that lazily lie lurking in our ruin, or that we have not gone in the right way that leads to our country.

We would be counted soldiers in the Christian warfare, and profess that we fight against the spiritual enemies of our salvation. But if Satan in every temptation prevails with us; if the world has so allured us by her bewitching baits, that we are in league and love with it; if after many years we have got no conquest over our corruptions, pride, covetousness, voluptuousness, malice, envy, and such like, but that they still reign and rule in us as in former times; it is a sign that we are either none of God's soldiers, seeing we have made a peace with His enemies, or that we are notable cowards, who justly deserve to be cashiered, and that there is little grace or goodness in us, seeing so long time and such large means have so little improved and increased it. —*Downame*, 1644.

(2484.) Look where you will in God's book, you shall never find any lively member of God's Church, any true Christian compared to any but a fruitful tree; not to a tall cypress, the emblem of unprofitable honour; nor to the smooth ash, the emblem of unprofitable prelacy, that doth nothing but bear keys; nor to a double-coloured poplar, the emblem of dissimulation; nor to a well-shaded plane, that hath nothing else but form; nor to a hollow maple, nor to a trembling asp; nor to a prickly thorn; nor to the scratching bramble, nor to any plant whatsoever, whose fruit is not useful and beneficial; but to the fruitful vine, the fat olive, the seasonable sapling planted by the rivers of water. Yet it is most true, that the goodly cedars, strong elms, fast-growing willows, sappy sycamores, and all the rest of the fruitful trees of the earth, *i.e.*, all fashionable and barren professors whatsoever, they may shoot up in height, spread far, show fair, but what are they good for? Yes, they may be fit for the forest, the ditches, the hedge-rows of the world; not for the true saving soil of God's Israel, that is a soil of use and fruit, that is a place for none but vines, for trees of righteousness, fruitful trees, fruitful Christians. He that abideth in Me, bringeth forth much fruit, saith our Saviour (John xv. 5).

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(2485.) We must increase our talents, enlarge our graces, shoot up in tallness, grow up to this stature. For God's family admits no dwarfs: stunted profession was never sound. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2486.) The growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of it: things that have no life will not grow, a picture will not grow, a stake in the hedge will not grow; but a plant that hath a vegetative life grows. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2487.) Where there is life, real, spiritual life, there is also progress in that life. A plant which makes no shoots or growth, is dead or sickly. Even the tree which has reached its full height does not remain as it is, but constantly renews and varies its outward appearance. Thus it is with the kingdom of nature, and so it is with the kingdom of grace. "Be ye therefore renewed in the spirit of your minds." "Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day."

—*Salter.*

(2488.) It is only living things that grow; and all living things do grow. Be it the lichen that clings to the rock, or the eagle that has her nest on its craggy shelf, or man that rends its heart with powder and draws the gold from its bowels— from the germ out of which they spring they grow onwards to maturity; in the words of my text, they "increase more and more."

These words are as true of spiritual as of natural life. According to heathen fables, Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and daughter of Jupiter, sprung full-grown and full-armed from her father's head. No man thus comes from the hand of the Holy Spirit, in sudden, mature, perfect saintship. There is nothing in the spiritual world which resembles this: no, nor even what the natural world presents in the development of the insect tribes. During their last and perfect stage, in the condition, as it is called, of the *imago*, be their life long or short, they undergo no increase. So soon as the green worm that once crawled on the ground and fed on garbage, bursting its coffin-shell, comes forth, a creature with silken wings, to roam in the sunny air, to sleep by night on a bed of flowers, and by day banquet on their nectar, it grows no more— neither larger nor wiser; its flight and faculties being as perfect on the day of what may be called its new birth, as when, touched by early frosts or drowned in rain, it dies. Here, indeed, we have a symbol of the resurrection-body as it shall step from the tomb; in beauty perfect, in growth mature; to undergo henceforth, and through eternal ages, neither change nor decay. It is otherwise with the renewed soul. Before it, in righteousness, and knowledge, and true holiness, stretches a field of illimitable progress—upwards and onwards to what it shall be for ever approaching, yet never reach, the throne of God. —*Guthrie.*

3. To preserve us from apostacy.

(2489.) The best remedy against apostacy is growth in goodness. It is a rule in policy that the ambitious man should never stay at any step of preferment until he comes at the top, because it is some security to be in motion. Our ascent to heaven is steep and narrow, and we are safest when we do not stand still; temptation cannot so well take its aim at us. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(2490.) There is no standing at a stay in religion, either we go forward or backward: if faith doth not grow, unbelief will; if heavenly-mindedness doth not grow, covetousness will. A man that doth not increase his stock, diminisheth it; if you do not improve your stock of grace, your stock will decay. The angels on Jacob's ladder were either ascending or descending; if you do not ascend in religion, you descend. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2491.) By reason of corruption, we are like the boat in the stream; if we go not forward by the oar, we go backward by the tide; so, if we go not forward by the strength of grace, we will go backward by the strength and power of corruption.

—*Erskine*, 1685–1754

(2492.) If an examination of conscience should show hat we are not growing in grace, there is but one alternative, which is that we are falling back. An awful truth, but one as infallibly certain as any other phenomenon of our moral state. Neither in mind nor body does man ever "continue in one stay." His body is constantly throwing off old particles of matter, and appropriating new ones. Every breath he breathes, every exertion of his muscles and limbs, every particle of food he swallows, makes some minute change in the bodily framework, so that it is never entirely the same. Of each individual among us it may be said with truth at any given moment, that he is either rising to, or declining from, the prime of life and the maturity of his physical powers. And the mind, no less than the body, is in a continual flux. It, too, has its moral element,—the society in which it lives; it, too, has its nourishment, which it is constantly imbibing,—the influences of the world and the lower nature, or those of the Spirit of God. One or other of those influences is always imperceptibly passing into the mind and effecting a gradual change. And the awful thought is, that if the change is not for the better, it must be for the worse; if the mind is not appropriating the higher, it must be appropriating the lower influences; if there is no growth in grace, there must be a growth in worldliness and sin. —*Goulburn.*

4. To qualify us to receive more grace.

(2493.) As they who try a vessel first put water into it, to see whether it will hold water, then they commit wine unto it; so God gives us one grace; if we use that well, then He gives another, and another, and another. According to that, "He which is found faithful in a little shall be made lord over much." —*Henry Smith*, 1593.

5. To secure God's commendation.

(2494.) A child that stayeth at one stature, and never groweth bigger, is a monster. The ground that prospereth not, and is not fruitful, is cursed. The tree that is barren, and proveth not, is cut down. —*Jewel*, 1522–1571.

(2495.) If a man should bind his son apprentice to some science or occupation, and when he had served his time should have to seek his trade, and be never a whit the more his craft's-master in the ending of his years than he was at the beginning, he would think he had lost his time, and complain of the injury of the master or the carelessness of the servant. Or, if a father should put his son to school, and he always should continue on the lowest form, and never get higher, we should judge either great negligence in the master or in the scholar. Behold, such apprentices or such scholars are most of us! The Church of God is the school of Christ, and the best place to learn the science of all sciences. Now, if we have many of us lived long therein, some of us twenty, some thirty, some forty, some fifty years, &c., and some longer, and we no wiser than a child of seven, were it not a great shame for us? What! no forwarder in religion than so? O disgrace! And may we not be condemned of great negligence in the matters of our salvation? —*Attersol*, 1618.

6. To our comfort and joy.

(2496.) When there is no growth in grace, nor in the practice of holy duties, we can take little comfort in such a state. But as it is a grief to parents, when their children grow in age and not in wisdom; and an ill-sign that nature is out of frame and hindered in her course; when in their bodies they stand at a stay, and though they eat, and drink, and sleep, yet do not grow at all in their stature: so have we more just cause to grieve, when after many years we remain children in knowledge, and weaklings in saving grace; and may take it as an ill-sign that there is little grace in us, or some notable impediment which stops and hinders it in its operations, when, having enjoyed for a long time the spiritual food of the Word and sacraments, we grow not up thereby, nor any whit increase in our strength and stature. —*Downame*, 1644.

(2497.) If you do not strengthen your grace, you will make way to strengthen your doubts. Though weak grace will carry a man to heaven, it will be just as a small and weak vessel surprised by a shattering storm, which though it may get to the shore, yet with excessive hardships and fears; such will sail through a stormy sea, and have a daily contest with stormy doubts ready to overset their hopes; whereas a stout ship, well rigged, will play with the waves in the midst of a tempest, and at last pass through all difficulties, without many fears, and into its haven. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

7. To bring us to heaven.

(2498.) There is a medium betwixt sin and glory, and that is grace, a royal road, a milky way: walk this way, or expect not this end. God did enough to bring the way to us, who could never else have brought ourselves to the way: would we have Him bring down heaven and glory too? We are in the bondage of sin, as the Israelites were in Egypt: Canaan was theirs, heaven is our promised land; if neither of us fall to walking, nor admit a motion and removal, they through the desert, we through amendment of life, neither can arrive at their home. If thou think thyself too good for this journey, God will think thee too bad for His glory.
—*Adams*, 1653.

III. *WHAT IT IS THAT IS REQUIRED OF US.*

(2499.) Gotthold observed a boy in a writing school eyeing attentively the line placed before him as a copy, and labouring to write with equal correctness and beauty. Mark, said he to the bystanders, how all perfection is the offspring of imperfection, and how, by frequent mistakes, we learn to do well. It is not required of this boy that his penmanship shall equal that of the line. He satisfies his master by the pains he takes; for these are a ground of hope that he will progressively improve, and at last learn to write with rapidity and elegance. We have also a pattern to copy. It has been left to us by the Lord Jesus (1 Peter ii. 21), and in His most perfect and holy life. And think not that He exacts from us more than the teacher does from the pupil. No, indeed; if He find us carefully studying His example, and diligent in our endeavour to imitate it, He exercises forbearance towards our faults, and by His grace and Spirit daily strengthens us to amend. —*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

IV. *SHOULD BE EARNESTLY DESIRED.*

(2500.) Let us not content ourselves with that

small measure of grace which we have received, nor rest in those duties which we have already performed. but let us labour to grow daily, and increase in grace and in the Christian practice of a godly life. For as in nature things stand not at a stay, but as weary of the state of imperfection, tend to perfection, growing up therein from one degree to another till they come to the highest—as the grain of corn, taking root in the earth, shoots up into a blade, and then grows to have an ear, and so ripening multiplies itself in its kind; and the little kernel, springing first into a small shoot, and then grows by degrees to a flourishing and fruitful tree—so the growth of grace proceeds from imperfection to one degree of perfection after another until we come into a perfect age in Christ.

And as sick men newly recovered cannot rest contented that they live, but long after their wonted strength, desiring first to sit up; and when they can do this are not satisfied, but desire ability to walk and to recover their stomach and appetite, and then to go abroad; and not so content wish to be freed from faintness, to be restored to their former good habitude, plight, and liking, and, in a word, are never quiet in their desires till they have recovered their perfect health; so we, having been sick unto death, after we are revived and quickened by God's Spirit, must not content ourselves with some first degrees of spiritual life and beginnings of health and strength, but long and labour by all good means, that we may daily increase in them until we attain to them in full perfection.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(2501.) As some cannot hear of a curious flower, but they will have it in their garden, so a Christian cannot hear of any grace but he will labour to obtain it. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

V. *HOW IT IS TO BE SECURED.*

1. By constant contemplation of the character of Christ.

(2502.) A painter requires, by long and repeatedly viewing the countenance he has to paint, to impress it in the first instance on his heart in order afterwards, as far as possible, to produce it with colours upon the canvas. And in the same way, it is upon the heart that the image of Jesus Christ must first be formed, and then afterwards transferred into a holy life, and an affectionate and godly walk. Once impressed upon the heart, it will soon show itself in the thoughts, words, actions, and gestures. And, in this work, never must we grow weary or dispirited. A picture is not painted at a stroke, but is brought by slow degrees, after many sittings, and with cautious touches, to perfection. To have the Saviour formed in his heart and copied into his life, is a task that will last the Christian all his days.

—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

2. By a wise use of the means of grace.

(2503.) That we may grow in grace, we need to use the means of grace in their due proportion. Nothing is more common than the almost exclusive use of particular means of growth to the neglect of others. Meditation is good, but where it becomes exclusive it is evil. So outward activity, in labouring for the salvation of men, it is of the highest importance; but let this absorb the Christian; let there be but little time for the soul to pass into the shade and night of retirement, and self-reflection and private communion with God, and the most fruitful branch of piety will wither and die. The Saviour went frequently into solitary places for prayer. He left ministering to thousands, that His own soul might be refreshed in communion with the Father.

Give the soul to any one means of religious growth alone, and it will suffer. Thought of God is a precious means of grace, but exclusive thought of God would turn the brain, and send the mistaken one to an asylum. In times of deep religious interest, persons have lost their reason, and it has been said that religion occasioned it. It was not religion, but an exclusive attention to some one department of religion. The best food we eat, if eaten exclusively, would cause dyspepsia, perhaps death. Hence Christians are always injured when any one thought of duty, or usefulness, or reform of society takes possession of them, to the neglect of other spiritual nourishment or other calls upon their sympathy and assistance.

This excessive use of particular means is adopted very naturally. The Christian, perhaps, has found, on some occasion, great benefit from meditation, and forthwith concludes that this is all he needs. Or he has waked up to see the worth of the soul and the need of direct labour for its salvation, and now he feels that this is the only end of life. This is all natural, but not the less mistaken. When there has been no rain for a long season, and all vegetation is withering and dying, as we see the first shower descend, and mark its effects, we feel, Oh! this is all that is needed; but do we not know that if the shower continues unabated, it will as readily destroy as the burning sun? Christians must grow as plants grow, not by the use of one means alone, but by every means. The plant grows by day and by night, in the sun and in the shade, in the clear sky and in the shower, by means of earth, air, dew, rain. Any one alone will injure and destroy. In combination they will cause the plant to grow in beauty and fruitfulness. —*John M'Leod.*

3. By earnest effort.

(2504.) As the widow's oil increased, not in the vessel, but by pouring out; and as the barley bread in the Gospel multiplied, not in the whole loaf, but by *breaking* and *distributing;* and as the grain bringeth increase, not when it lieth on a heap in the garner, but by scattering upon the land; so are these spiritual graces best improved, not by keeping them together, but by distributing them abroad. The talent gathereth nothing in the napkin, unless it be rust and canker; but travelling in the bank, besides the good it doth as it passeth to and fro, it ever returneth home with increase.

—*Sanderson*, 1587–1662.

(2505.) Growth demands earnestness. No one grows who does not mean to grow. Paul made great progress; but Paul had a great purpose; mark his emphatic language: "This one thing I do." This earnestness of purpose will lead one to watch for every opportunity of growth. It will turn every event, and especially every annoyance of life into a round of the ladder, by which the soul may daily ascend to God. Annoyance—what is annoyance but something permitted by thy Father to discipline thy spirit?

That man will grow in grace who understands the meaning and value of these little but frequent

trials of our temper, just as a man may become wealthy by the income of small but constant profits.

Where there is earnestness there will be growth under the most unpromising circumstances. Earnest souls may seldom hear the Gospel. They live in some destitute region; yet they grow. The Church may be dead about them, the pure doctrines of the Gospel may be so encrusted with superstitions and ceremonies as scarcely to be recognised, yet such will grow on the little gleams of light and the little nutriment which may be separated from the gross adulterations; just as you sometimes see a living and growing tree whose roots seem to grasp nothing but rocks. As you see a flower flourishing right by the edge of a glacier—a field of ice. Fenelon, Madame Zuion, A. Kempis, lived the life of God, surrounded by the forms of the Roman Catholic Church. And, no doubt, to-day may be found many of the hidden ones of the Saviour in the midst of that corrupt communion.

The earnest Christian will find nutriment for his piety everywhere. Want of growth will not be for want of material for assimilation, but for want of a principle to assimilate. —*John M'Leod.*

(2506.) We are to make efforts to grow. Some men have mooted the strange notion that that peculiar adaptation of the bodies of certain animals to their habits, in which we see the wisdom of their Maker, has resulted from the efforts which they made to adapt themselves to their circumstances—that the heron, for instance, by stretching itself up to preserve its feathers, from the water of the stream or shore where it fishes, got its limbs lengthened into stilts, and acquired also its taper neck by constant and long continued efforts to strike its prey at the bottom of the pool. Any theory more absurd can hardly be imagined. Yet, in the spiritual kingdom, the very wish and effort to be good has, with God's blessing and through operation of the Holy Spirit, a tendency to improve us. In the attempt to be better we grow better, even as the flapping of a nestling's wing, impotent though it be to raise the bird into the air, fits its pinions for future flight; or as the creeping of an infant on the floor prepares its limbs for walking. It is to efforts, not to idleness, to supineness, to sleep, that God promises the blessing—those heavenly aids, without which the arm of a giant, to say nothing of a child in grace, cannot snap the feeblest cord that binds us to earth and sin. God works; and we are to be fellow-workers with Him, that we may "increase more and more." —*Guthrie.*

(2507.) Cast a sponge into water, and the fluid filling its empty cells, it swells out before our eyes; increases more and more. There is no effort here, and could be none; for though once a living animal, the sponge is now dead and dry. But it is not as sponges fill with water, nor, to use a Scripture figure often employed, and sometimes misapplied, as Gideon's fleece was filled with dews, that God's people are replenished with His grace. More is needed than simply to bring ourselves in contact with ordinances; to read the Bible; to repair on Sabbath to the church; to sit down in communion seasons at the Lord's table. The babe, for example, is laid in a mother's arms, and in contact with her breast; but is laid there only to die, unless, with slumbering instincts awakened, it fasten, and suck by its own efforts the nourishment provided for it, independent of itself; and there, drawing life from a mother's bosom, it lies in her loving arms, the symbol of him who hangs by faith on Christ, and, fed on the sincere milk of the Word, is nourished up into the likeness and image of God. And after all, this picture conveys but an inadequate idea of what is required of us, in order that we may increase more and more. It is by other and greater efforts than the infant's we are to grow in grace, and get to heaven: for instance, Search the Scriptures—Watch unto prayer—Pray without ceasing—Fight the good fight—Labour for the bread that never perisheth—Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure—Work out your salvation with fear and trembling—See that no man take your crown.

While all our hopes of salvation centre in the cross of Christ, and all our hopes of progress hang on the promised aids of the Holy Spirit, let us therefore exert ourselves to the utmost; reaching forth to higher attainments, and aiming at daily increase in every holy and Christian habit.

—*Guthrie.*

VI. *ITS METHOD.*

1. It is gradual.

(2508.) Natural fruit-trees increase by little and little every year, they are not suddenly great and large trees, but they increase by degrees; every year they grow larger every way, by the culture and diligence of the husbandman, and influences of heaven, until they attain their full growth.

This shadows out unto us the state of spiritual fruit-trees in this proposition—that grace in the hearts of believers is not suddenly strong, but strength is gotten by degrees. —*Austen.*

(2509.) Perfection comes by leisure, and no excellent thing is done at once. The gourd, which came up in a night, withered in a day; but the plants that live long rise slowly. It is the rising and setting of many suns that ripens the business both of nature and art. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2510.) God is the God of order, not of confusion. As, therefore, in natural things He useth to proceed from one extreme to another by degrees, through the mean; so doth He in spiritual. The sun rises not at once to its highest, from the darkness of midnight; but first sends forth some feeble glimmering of light in the dawning, then looks out with weak and waterish beams, and so by degrees ascends to the midst of heaven. So in the seasons of the year, we are not one day scorched with a summer heat, and on the next frozen with a sudden extremity of cold. But winter comes on softly; first, by cold dews, then hoar frosts, until at last it descends to the hardest weather of all. Such are God's spiritual proceedings. He never brings any man from the estate of sin to the estate of glory, but through the estate of grace. And as for grace, He seldom brings a man from gross wickedness to any eminence of perfection. I will be charitably jealous of those men, who, from notorious lewdness leap at once into a sudden forwardness of profession. Holiness does not, like Jonah's gourd, grow up in a night. I like it better to go on soft and sure, than for a hasty fit to run myself out of wind, and after stand still and breath me. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(2511.) A Christian is not of hasty growth, like a

mushroom ; but rather like the oak, which, from a little acorn and a tender plant, advances with an almost imperceptible growth from year to year, till it becomes a broad spreading and deep-rooted tree, and then it stands for ages. The Christian oak shall grow and flourish for ever.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(2512.) The growth of grace in the heart may be compared to the process of polishing metals. First, you have a dark opaque substance, neither possessing nor reflecting light. Presently, as the polisher plies his work, you will see here and there a spark darting out ; then a strong light, till, by and by, it sends back a perfect image of the sun which shines upon it. So the work of grace, if begun in our hearts, must be gradually and continually going on ; and it will not be completed till the image of God can be seen perfectly reflected in us.

—*Salter*, 1840.

(2513.) Lettuces, radishes, and such like garden crops, are soon out of the ground and ready for the table, a month almost suffices to perfect them ; but an oak requires long centuries to come to the fulness of its growth. Those graces which are most precious and durable will cost us longest to produce ; those good things which spring up hastily may have some transient worth about them, but we cannot look for permanence and value in them. There is no need to deplore the slowness of our spiritual growth, if that which comes of it be of a solid character. —*Spurgeon.*

(2514.) The lustre of the glass can be produced in a few minutes by man's agency ; but the radiance of the diamond takes unknown ages to develop in the bowels of the earth, under the subtle action of Nature's most powerful forces. The fair colours of grace are of slow growth. They do not spring up quickly, but are wrought out through long weary days of discipline, as the flower grows a long time in dull uniform greenness, through storm and sunshine, before it is crowned with the rainbow blossom.

—*Macmillan.*

(2515.) A Christian, just born into the kingdom, is often like a loaf of bread when its materials are just put together. The baker has mixed them, and left the bread to rise. You go to the dough and say, "Are *you* bread?"—"No," says the dough, "I am not." In an hour you go again and ask, "*Are* you bread?"—"No, I am not," replies the dough. "I feel a little stirring" (said with a rising of the shoulders) "in me, but I am not bread." In two hours more you try : "Are you bread now?" —"No," is still the reply ; "I'm sponge, but not bread. I'm not baked, nor eaten yet." But by and by, after the baker gives it the final kneading, and it is ready for the oven, when it is *baked*, it owns that now it is really bread. Yet it has gained no new element since the first mixing. The kingdom of heaven in the heart is like leaven which a woman hid in a measure of meal until the whole was leavened. —*Beecher.*

(2516.) Young Christians often get discouraged, and think that they bear no fruit, and shall be cut off. They say that Christ promised His disciples that He would dwell in them, and that they shall bear much fruit. Christ did not mean that fruit should come at once, all ripened. Remember to whom He spoke—men who were for years after this getting it through their heads that He was to die for them. It was twenty-five years before the fruit grew upon them that we find clustering in the Epistles ; and then only two or three of them had anything to do out of their own time.

When the gardener looks in the spring to see if the branches of his vine are alive, he is satisfied if he sees the tip of the most tiny bud—he don't call that a dead branch. There was but one of the disciples that seemed much changed for the better during the life of Christ—that was John. He was one of those persons who, soft and velvety outside, have in them a core of granite, who, under a smooth aspect, carry the charge of thunder. He was the one who wanted to call down fire from heaven to burn up the people who had offended his Master. His affections, when not disturbed, were tender and sweet ; but thwarted, he grew bitter as gall. Yet he came at last to that gentleness of character, by which he is now known ; and, after a score of years, grew able to pen those fervent letters, so remarkable for ringing all the changes of love. Indeed John seems to have forgot every word in the language but "love." It is not in one year, nor five, nor ten, that you will ripen. —*Beecher.*

2. And therefore is frequently imperceptible.

(1.) *In its commencement.*

(2517.) Nothing is so little as grace at first, and nothing more glorious afterward. Things of greatest perfection are longest in coming to their growth. Man, the perfectest creature, comes to perfection by little and little. Worthless things, as mushrooms and the like, like Jonah's gourd, soon spring up, and soon vanish. A new creature is the most excellent creature. Therefore it grows up by degrees. We see in nature that a mighty oak rises out of an acorn. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2518.) Grace is compared to a grain of mustard seed, which, though it be very small, yet by degrees it groweth very great. The inclinations and new dispositions which the Spirit of God beginneth to work in the soul, they are then but very weak and slender, scarce (it may be) to be perceived, but afterwards they are more sensible ; it is as corn sowed in the field (our Saviour holds it forth by that similitude) which bringeth forth, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Corn (we know) springs up at first very small and slender, and scarcely to be distinguished from grass ; so the first springings of grace in some are so small, that they are scarce to be perceived, nor are they easily distinguished from moral virtues.

—*Austen.*

(2519.) Our conversion is by soft and scarce sensible beginnings, albeit not part after part, yet degree after degree ; in every part by gentle soakings in of goodness, in every degree by maturity and growing up to ripeness. As we cannot see the growing of a tree, yet know that it doth grow by the magnitude of bulk, and branches, and fruits ; so we may perceive our conversion to God, which walking on must confirm. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2520.) The progress of holiness is sometimes like the lengthening of daylight, after the days are past the shortest. The difference is for some time

imperceptible, but still it is real; and, in due season, becomes undeniably visible.
—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2521.) Christian experiences usually rise from the smallest beginnings. Great and glowing fires proceed from the merest spark. By the spark the match is set on fire. Soon the blaze of the match is so much more than the spark, that the spark seems almost like nothing. But now the match is touched to the shavings, and the blaze which flashes up from them is so much larger than the blaze of the match, that the match is thrown into the ashes. In a short time the kindling has taken fire, and it burns with so much more power than the shavings, that their little blaze is lost in its greater fire. At length the wood sends up a brilliant flame with which the blaze of the kindling bears no comparison. And by and by large coals fall down upon the hearth, and the whole fireplace glows, and the room is warmed and ruddily lighted.

And so, when men begin their Christian life, it is but a spark. Soon there is kindled in the soul some joy, which is no more than the blaze of a match. This is gradually developed into greater experience; and, at length, the whole being begins to burn and glow with a heavenly fire. Oftentimes men, looking back upon their first Christian experience, and seeing how small it was, say, "I do not believe I was a Christian when I first believed myself converted."

Imagine a tree two hundred years old to look back upon the stages of growth through which it has passed, and to say, "I remember that when I was twenty years old I was only so big. I then thought I was an oak; but when I compare what I am now with what I was then, I see that I was not an oak at all!" What were you then?—moss? a vine? a weed?

Do you not know that the seed-form and the full disclosive form are the same in their nature? Do you not know that one is the legitimate result of the other? —*Beecher.*

(2.) *In its progress.*

(2522.) Growth in grace may be like the growth of your trees, or corn, or flowers, or the shadow on your dial. You do not see these grow or move; but if you come after a sufficient time, you may see that they are grown. We are bigger at age than in childhood, and yet we never saw ourselves grow, it is by insensible degrees. Strong Christians have more knowledge than they had, and a more fixed resolution for God and heaven, and a greater contempt of worldly vanity, and victory over fleshly desires and wilful sin, though they perceive not how these grow. *Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2523.) This constant progress is not always discernible; saints themselves may have their winter-withering, as well as their summer fruit; and we are not to judge of the growth of a tree by looking to it this day from what it was yesterday; for there may be no sensible alteration; but stay till the spring comes, and then you will discern the flourish and the fruit; yea, let some years pass, and then you may see some sensible growth of the whole tree; so, the children of God are not always to judge of their continued growth, by comparing what they are this day with what they were the former day; or what they are this month with what they were the former month, lest there be no discernible advance; but let them (at least, if they be of any standing in Christ) judge by what they are now from what they were at their first engraftment into Christ, and they will find that they have attained more knowledge of Christ than at first, more experience of His favour, more outlettings of His grace, than they understood before; more insight into the Gospel, more strokes that their corruptions have got, and so more fruit and growth.
—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(2524.) If the husbandman, disappointed at the delay which ensues before the blade breaks the soil, were to rake away the earth to examine if germination were going on, he would have a poor harvest. He must have "long patience, till he receive the early and the latter rain." The winter frost must mellow the seed lying in the genial bosom of the earth; the rains of spring must swell it, and the suns of summer mature it. So with you. It is the work of a long life to become a Christian. Many, oh! many a time, are we tempted to say, "I make no progress at all. It is only failure after failure. Nothing grows." Now look at the sea when the flood is coming in. Go and stand by the sea-beach, and you will think that the ceaseless flux and reflux is but retrogression equal to the advance. But look again in an hour's time, and the whole ocean has advanced. Every advance has been beyond the last, and every retrograde movement has been an imperceptible trifle less than the last. This is progress; to be estimated at the end of hours, not minutes. And this is Christian progress. Many a fluctuation—many a backward motion with a rush at times so vehement that all seems lost;—but if the eternal work be real, every failure has been a real gain, and the next does not carry us so far back as we were before. Every advance is a real gain, and part of it is never lost. Both when we advance and when we fail, we gain. We are nearer to God than we were. The flood of spirit-life has carried us up higher on the everlasting shores, where the waves of life beat no more, and its fluctuations end, and all is safe at last. "This is the faith and patience of the saints."
—*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(2525.) All real growth is very slow, and its actual progress imperceptible. The seed sown on stony ground, which forthwith sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth, proved a failure. Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night, perished also in a night. We never see plants actually growing; we only take notice that they have grown. He who would form a sound judgment of his spiritual progress must throw his eye over long, not short, intervals of time. He must compare the self of this year with the self of last; not the self of to-day with the self of yesterday. Enough, if amid the divers and shifting experiences of the world, and the manifold internal self-communings arising thereupon, that delicate plant, spiritual life, has grappled its fibre a little deeper into the soil than it seemed to have done in an earlier stage of our pilgrimage now fairly past. —*Goulburn.*

(2526.) Progress in sanctification may, in fact, be going on when you do not see it; perhaps when it seems going back. Take comfort! "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." The river may appear flowing away from the sea, when,

but turning round the base of some opposing hill, it is pursuing an onward course. The ship may appear to be standing away from the harbour, when, beating up in the face of adverse winds, she is only stretching off on the other tack, and at every tack making progress shoreward, though to others than seamen she seems to lose it. God works in strange, mysterious, silent, unnoticed ways. Silently and slowly the water rises that shall one day on a sudden burst the dyke, and sweep away the obstacles that bar its onward path. Unseen and unnoticed the rains wash away the ground below the stone that shall one day, on a sudden, leap from its seat, and roll to the bottom of the hill. Quietly and slowly the root grows in the fissure that shall one day on a sudden split the rock, and reveal its long-continued, silent, secret, but mighty power. In a deep, growing sense of the evil of sin, produced perhaps by our very fall; in deeper humility, in a lower view of ourselves, in greater self-abasement; in a more entire dependence on Christ for righteousness, and on the Holy Spirit for the work of grace; in feelings that fill us with pain and regret and godly sorrow, making us eat our passover with bitter herbs, the work of sanctification may be going on. Like a patient who, through the power of returning life, begins to feel and complain of his pains, when we think we are growing worse we may actually be growing better, and making no little progress when we seem to be making none. Be not cast down! Progression is the ordinary law of God's government. It is star by star that the hosts of night march out; it is minute by minute that morn's grey dawn brightens up into perfect day; it is ring by ring that the oak grows into the monarch of the forest; it is inch by inch, and foot by foot, that the tide, which bears navies on its bosom, comes creeping in on the shore. And, not like justification an act, our sanctification being a work of God's free grace, is under the same law of progress. More or less rapid, it is a thing of steps and stages. Therefore, while praying earnestly and working diligently, live hopefully and wait patiently. He will perfect that which concerneth us; and one day bring forth the headstone with "shoutings of Grace, grace unto it." —*Guthrie.*

3. It is intermittent.

(2527.) There is no visible difference, as unto light, between the light of the morning and the sunlight of the evening; yea, this latter sometimes, from gleams of the setting sun, seems to be more glorious than the other. But herein they differ; the first goes on gradually unto more light until it comes to perfection; the other gradually gives place unto darkness until it comes to be midnight. So is it as unto the light of the just and of the hypocrite, and so is it as unto their paths. And, by the way, this comparing of the just unto the morning light reminds me of what I have seen more than once. That light has sometimes cheerfully appeared unto the world, when, after a little season, by reason of clouds, tempests, and storms, it has given place again to darkness, like that of the night; but it has not so been lost and buried like the evening light. After a while it has recovered itself unto greater lustre than before, manifesting that it increased in itself while it was eclipsed as to us. So has it been with not a few at their first conversion unto God; great darkness and trouble have, by the efficacy of temptation and injections of Satan, possessed their minds; but the grace which they have received, being as the morning light, has after a while disentangled itself and given evidence that it was so far from being extinguished; as that it grew and thrived under all those clouds and darkness; for the light of the just increases by temptations, as that of the hypocrite is constantly impaired by them. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(2528.) There may be progress as a whole, though there may not be continuous progress, stage by stage. On some days the plants grow rapidly; on other days they do not advance at all. But very often while the plant itself is not growing visibly as measured by a scale, it may be striking deeper its roots; it may be collecting and husbanding or sowing the elements of growth, and so preparing for mightier future efforts the secret sap that is its vitality and its power. The tide does not rush up to its accustomed mark at once. It advances so many yards one way; it retires a little; and seems as if it repented of its approach to the land, and wished to retreat again to the secret and silent depths of the sea. But if we wait a little, another wave comes with more majestic and onward sweep; and in the course of six hours we find there has been on the whole, though not at every minute of the six hours, progress towards the shore. Many a Christian who thinks he is not growing at all, may be growing in the most important sense of the word. He that is growing more acquainted with the weakness, and the sinfulness, and the waywardness of his own heart, is no doubt thinking that he is going back, but he may be really making preparation for going forward in the noblest sense of that word. We may be growing downwards in lowly humility, not less important in its place than growing upwards in conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

—*Cumming.*

(2529.) As an illustration of this law in the kingdom of grace, consider the movement of the tide when it is coming in. It is movement upon the whole. The water is sure to cover that dry beach in two or three hours' time, and to float that stranded sea-weed; but it is not a movement without relapses. Each wave, I suppose, gains a little ground, but each wave falls back as soon as it has plashed upon the shore. Even so in the Christian life, there may be a forward movement on the whole, consistently with many relapses, though this assertion requires to be guarded by the observation that the relapses must be such as proceed from infirmity, and not from *malice prepense*. Deliberate, habitual sin, cannot possibly consist with spiritual growth; but the shaking of a man's steadfastness by a sudden tornado of temptation (which was St. Peter's case) may do so. The great question is whether, after every such fall, the will recovers its spring and elasticity, and makes a fresh start with new and more fervent prayer and resolve. Indeed the making many fresh starts after relapses of infirmity is a hopeful sign of growth. In order to any great attainment in spiritual life, there must be an indomitable resolve to try and try again, and still to begin anew amidst much failure and discouragement. On warm dewy mornings in the spring, vegetation makes a shoot; and when we rise, and throw open the window, we mark that the May is blossoming in the hedgerows. And those periods when a man can say, "I lost myself sadly yesterday

in temper or in talk; but I know that my crucified Lord took upon Him those sins and answered for them, and to-day I will earnestly strive against them in the strength of His Spirit invoked into my soul by earnest prayer;" these are warm dewy mornings of the soul, when the spiritual life within us sprouts and blossoms apace. —*Goulburn.*

(2530.) But there is, over and above the law of rest and activity, a law of periodicity in Christian growth. It is not ordinarily given to men to make a steady and uniform development. Men grow as nature grows, by fits and starts.

I have around my little cabin in the country a dozen or so of rhododendrons. Broad-leaved fellows they are. I love them in blossom, and I love them out of blossom. They make me think of many Christians. They are like some that are in this church. Usually they come up in the spring and blossom the first thing, just as many persons come into Christian life. The whole growth of the plants is crowded into two or three weeks, and they develop with wonderful rapidity; but after that they will not grow another inch during the whole summer. What *do* they do? I do not know exactly; they never told me; but I suspect that they are organising inwardly, and rendering permanent that which they have gained. What they have added to growth in the spring they take the rest of the season to solidify, to consolidate, to perfect, by chemical evolutions; and when autumn comes, the year's increase is so tough that when the tender plants that laughed at these, and chided them, and accused them of being lazy, are laid low by the frost, there stand my rhododendrons, holding out their green leaves, and saying to November and December, "I am here as well as you." And they are as green to-day as they were before the winter set in.

Now, I like Christians that grow fast this spring, and hold on through the summer, and next spring grow again. I like Christians that, having grown for a time, stop and organise what they have gained, and then start again. I like periodicity in Christian growth. And that reproach which Christians so often heap upon themselves and each other, because they are not constant and steady in their development, frequently arises from a want of knowledge of the means by which God builds up human character. —*Beecher.*

4. It is sectional.

(2531.) The Spirit of God *appears not in all graces at once*, it appears sometime or other in some one grace. We see in plants, the virtue of them appears diversely. In winter the virtue of them lies in the root; in the spring-time, in the bud and the leaf; in the summer, in the fruit; it is not in all parts alike. So it is with the Spirit. As it is an "earnest," it appears not in all graces in a flourishing manner at the first. Sometimes it appears in the root, in humility, sometimes in faith, sometimes in love, sometimes in one grace, sometimes in another. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2532.) As the work advances, though the affections are not left out, yet it seems to be carried on principally in the understanding. The old Christian has more solid, judicious, and connected views of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glories of His person and redeeming love; hence his hope is more established, his dependence more simple, and his peace and strength, *cæteris paribus*, more abiding and uniform, than in the case of a young convert; but the latter has, for the most part, the advantage in point of sensible fervency. A tree is most valuable when laden with ripe fruit; but it has a peculiar beauty when in blossom.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

5. Yet it is continuous.

(2533.) We must not be like meteors, which soon after their first beginnings make the greatest show; nor like a fire of thorns, which as soon as it is kindled gives the fairest blaze, and makes the most noise and crackling; both which decrease by little and little, till they disappear and are wholly extinguished; but like the morning light, which shineth more and more unto perfect day. We must not be like mushrooms, which come to their perfection in one night's growth; but trees of righteousness of God's planting, which are still in growth, and bring forth most fruit in old age. We must not resemble summer fruits, which are soon ripe and soon rotten, and best of taste when first gathered; but winter fruits and long lasters, which are a great while in coming to their perfection, and relish best, and give wholesomest nourishment in their latter end.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(2534.) The growth of a believer is not like a mushroom, but like an oak, which increases slowly indeed, but surely. Many suns, showers, and frosts, pass upon it before it comes to perfection; and in winter, when it seems dead, *it is gathering strength at the root!* —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(2535.) Observe the daybreak. At first but a beam of light is seen to glimmer in the midst of the darkness, and the night still seems to hold its undisturbed sway. But the beam becomes slowly a streak of light shooting its ray in the path of heaven. It becomes more fixed and determinate in its character—it increases—it is a growing light. There is a mass of darkness yet around, and clouds still hang about it—but it contends successfully with the darkness, still it penetrates—still it breaks through the hideous mass—the contest is no longer doubtful, the clouds and shadows flee away. But this rising beam, at first so faintly seen and dimly visible, would have been soon lost and overwhelmed in the darkness which it invaded, if it had not been a beam from an exhaustless fountain of light, the sun, that continued to send fresh supplies of light by adding beam upon beam. And now it pours out its effulgent rays, and now this dawning beam is become a bright and glorious sun, ascending majestically the heavens, the mighty creative principle of fruitfulness, ripening, maturing, and enriching the earth, and in its brightness showing forth a faint image of its Maker's glory. Striking emblem of the believer's progress! At first spiritually dead, midnight rests upon his soul; but he awakes at the voice of Him who cries, "Awake, thou that sleepest," &c. And there is light in his soul! It is a beam from the Eternal Spirit, flashing conviction of his sinfulness, and only serving to make visible to him the darkness and misery of his benighted state. But it leads him on, through many perplexities, in his inquiry how he shall find peace with God. "His feet stumble on the dark mountains," and his little light appears often in danger of being totally eclipsed. But it is like the

smoking flax which shall not be quenched. And he has learned to distinguish it at last as the true light; and that which was but a beam becomes a light shining in darkness; and as he continues to follow it, it at last guides him to the cross, and he is enabled steadily to gaze upon Him who is *the Light of the world*. From Christ, who was raised from that cross with power, he receives "grace for grace." And now behold him; "looking unto Jesus, he runs the race that is set before him, casting off every weight," and "like the sun when he goeth forth in his strength." Now he causes his light to shine out, and men beholding his good works, God is glorified. He is the cause of fruitfulness to others, and reflects his Maker's image in the beauty of holiness. —*Salter.*

(2536.) The spiritual kingdom within you comes not "by observation." It is a growth; so that you must not look for violent or sudden changes in yourself. Remember that the waters of the stream, however slowly they may at times appear to move, yet, by never stopping on their journey, are sure to reach the great sea. Let your progress towards godliness be like that of the gentle stream which never murmurs nor chafes nor dashes against its banks, but keeps overflowing on and on, until it fulfils the task which God has set it, and loses its own littleness by mingling with the mighty waters.
—*A. Hare.*

(2537.) It is not by fits and starts that men become holy. It is not occasional, but continuous, prolonged, and life-long efforts that are required; to be daily at it; always at it; resting but to renew the work; falling but to rise again. It is not by a few, rough, spasmodic blows of the hammer, that a graceful statue is brought out of the marble block, but by the labour of continuous days, and many delicate touches of the sculptor's chisel. It is not a sudden gush of water, the roaring torrent of a summer flood, but a continuous flow, that wears the rock, and a constant dropping that hollows out the stone. It is not with a rush and a spring that we are to reach Christ's character, attain to perfect saintship; but step by step, foot by foot, hand over hand, we are slowly and often painfully to mount the ladder that rests on earth, and rises to heaven.
—*Guthrie.*

(2538.) We are to increase constantly. This idea is embodied in all those figures under which our spiritual life is set forth in the Word of God.

Is it a seed? So soon as the seed is quickened in the soil it grows; grows by night and by day; grows beneath the foot that tramples on it; piercing the rugged clod, turning and twining to round the corner of a stone, it shoots its way upward, till it emerges into the blessed light, and drinks the dews of heaven; and under their influences, on and ever on it grows, rises and ripens, till sickles flash, and reapers sing where winter howled over dead fields of snow.

Is it the day? From the first faint streak of light that our eye catches in the eastern horizon, how steadily it grows! hill and dale, town and hamlet, woods and winding river, shore and sea, becoming more and more distinct; one star disappearing after another in the grey sky; the fleecy clouds changing into opal, and amber, and purple, and burning gold, until the sun springs up, flaming from his ocean bed; and the daisies open their golden eyes, and the birds sing for joy, and the waves flash and dance in light, and the earth rejoices in perfect day.

Is it human life? Hanging on a mother's bosom; sleeping, and by and by with wakening intelligence smiling in her arms; on little feet balancing itself so beautifully; trying its first tottering steps; speaking its first stammering words; its affections and faculties opening like the petals of a flower, how does the infant develop itself with each successive year! Infancy growing into prattling childhood; childhood into blooming youth; youth into ripened manhood, till the hand that once played with coral and bells, yonder amid royal pageant, and the blare of trumpets, and the boom of cannon, waves the sceptre of empire over an acclaiming throng—or till the voice that was once but a feeble wail, commands on the reeling deck, or amid the roar of battle; here stirs the deepest passions, or there stills the tumults of the people.

Such is the way that we should grow; should pray, should labour, and should strive to grow. Slow and silent, growth is a thing which you neither see nor hear; yet mark in these cases what its steady, constant progress achieves in the natural world. Should it do less in the spiritual? Is God less omnipotent in grace than nature? By no means. "My grace," He says, "is sufficient for thee;" sufficient for that. Would we rise every morning both to get and to do some good; to cultivate some grace and mortify some sin; to live more holily than yesterday—not to say its bad words, nor indulge its bad wishes, nor repeat its bad deeds; to learn from the experience of the past where we should watch, which is our weak side, what are our besetting sins, taking such precautions as a man who strengthens the dyke where the last flood broke through, or doubles his sentries where the enemy last surprised him—what progress we should make! we should be a stage nearer heaven every day. If not every day, every year, at least, would present a palpable, sensible difference. It is not, but it should be, as easy to tell how long it is since we were born the second time, as the first; our spiritual as our natural age; the years of our new life as those of a tree which we count by the rings that every season adds to its circumference.
—*Guthrie.*

6. It is cumulative in its rate.

(2539.) Even the tired horse, when he comes near home, mends his pace: be good always, without weariness, but best at last; that the nearer thou comest to the end of thy days, the nearer thou mayest be to the end of thy hopes, the salvation of thy soul. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2540.) In natural motions the nearer anything comes to its end the swifter it moves. I have seen great rivers, which at their first rising might be covered with a bushel, which after many miles fill a very broad channel, and, drawing near to the sea do even make a little sea in their own banks. So the wind, at the first rising as a little vapour from the crannies of the earth, and passing forward about the earth, the further it goes the more blustering and violent it waxes. A Christian's motion, after he is regenerate, is made natural to God-ward; and, therefore, the nearer he comes to Heaven the more zealous he is. A good man must not be like Ezekiel's sun, that went backward;

nor like Joshua's sun, that stood still; but like David's sun, that, like a bridegroom, comes out of his chamber, and as a champion rejoices to run his race. Only herein is the difference, that when *he* comes to his high noon, he declineth not.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(2541.) Every living fruit-tree is in some measure fruitful; though some bring forth more fruit, some less, yet all bring forth some. All living Christians are thriving and bearing fruit; though some are more eminent for growth and proficiency in grace, yet all bring forth "fruits meet for repentance." The hypocrite, like a dead stake in a hedge, continues at a stay, is without good fruit, nay, grows more rotten every month; but the true saint, like the living tree, the longer he continues rooted in Christ the more abundant he is in the work of the Lord.
—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2542.) The more grace thou hast, the easier it will be to add to it; as a little learning is got with more difficulty by a young scholar than a great deal afterward. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2543.) As rivers, the nearer they come to the ocean whither they tend, the more they increase their waters and speed their streams; so will grace flow more fully and freely in its near approaches to the ocean of glory. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(2544.) It is with the believer under the influences of the Spirit as with fruit ripening beneath the genial influence of heaven's dews and sunbeams. Hard at first, it grows soft; sour at first, its juices become sweet; green at first, it assumes in time a rich and mellow colour; at first adhering tenaciously to the tree, when it becomes ripe, it is ready to drop at the slightest touch. So with the man who is ripening for heaven. His affections and temper grows sweet, soft, mellow, loose from earth and earthly things. He comes away readily to the hand of death, and leaves the world without a wrench. —*Guthrie.*

VII. *SHOULD BE SYMMETRICAL.*

(2545.) To grow in grace is to grow not only in one grace but in all graces. It is the harmonious development of an entire Christian character; as in the healthful growth of a tree, there will be not only growth of roots, but of stock, branches, leaves, and fruit. —*John M'Leod.*

(2546.) Some saints are remarkable for having one grace in peculiar prominence—faith, for instance; or resignation; or courage; or zeal; or benevolence. Yet though this peculiarity may draw most eyes upon them, and win them most praise, if not "in all the churches," in their neighbourhood, or even in their nation, these are not the most perfect specimens of Christianity. For it is with men as with trees, amongst which the least symmetrical may be the most noticeable. The more perfect the shape of the tree, the more symmetrical the proportion between its trunk and branches, between its height and width, it strikes the eye the less; and it is only on a near approach and closer scrutiny that we take in its size, and gaze with wonder on its towering form and enormous girth.

The finest specimen of a Christian is he in whom all the graces, like the strings of an angel's harp, are in the most perfect harmony. Therefore, we are to beware of cultivating one grace or attending to any one duty at the expense of others. The head, the heart, and the hand, doctrine, devotion, and work, should each have their due share of our time and attention; we working on our life like the ancient sculptor on the dead marble, when he produced forms where each feature was not only beautiful in itself, but in perfect proportion also to every other. On this account these statues of his divinities are the admiration of all ages, being the perfect models of men and women. Even so, it is by growing equally in the knowledge, and the love, and the life of Christ, that we are to reach the true model of a Christian; and, to use Paul's words, "grow into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." —*Guthrie.*

VIII. *HINDRANCES TO IT.*

(2547.) As we see the sun when it is weak in the rising in the morning: there gather a great many vapours to besiege the sun, as it were, as if they would put out the light of it, till it comes to fuller strength, and then it spends them all, and shines gloriously in heaven. So it is with the work of the Spirit of grace. When it first arises in the soul, there gathers about it a great many doubts and discomforts. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2548.) It is made a matter of surprise that many professors are so unfruitful amidst so much seeming diligence in spiritual things. You go into a garden and behold a stately fruit-tree spreading its branches, and covered with abundant blossom, and conclude that in the fall of the year it will be loaded with fruit. Some months after, you again see the tree, expecting fruit on it, and you are surprised to find none. On looking closer into it, you see the remains of a blight, which explains the matter. It is so with many a professor in the Church. He stands as a tree in the vineyard, and he is diligent in the use of all the public ordinances; he bears the blossoms of an abundant promise, but months and years roll away, and yet there is no real fruitfulness; he is a barren tree, though covered thickly with the leaves and blossoms of profession. How is this? Look narrowly, and you will find a blight has come upon the man, and destroyed all chance of fruit. One is blighted with impenitence, another with pride or uncharitableness, a third with worldliness or covetousness: it is this which mars the growth of grace, and this explains the seeming mystery.
—*Salter*, 1840.

(2549.) It is more than likely, if we are hanging back in the Christian course, either that we are not surrendering our wills honestly and unreservedly to God, to be and to do as He bids us, and virtually saying, "I will not work at all, because it is God that worketh in me;" or, secondly, that, from a mistake as to the nature of sanctification, we are really looking to our own miserable efforts to sanctify us—putting a round of ordinances, and duties, and performances, into the place of the Lord Jesus, and virtually saying, "It is I who work in myself, both to will and to do of God's good pleasure."

By way of illustrating these contrary errors more clearly, let us imagine the case of a patient placed under a physician of most eminent skill, who has closely studied similar cases, and heretofore infal-

libly restored them by his treatment—making no progress. Recovery seems to be, on the whole, as far off as when he first consulted the physician. and even if one day there seems to be a little improvement, the next day the hopes to which that improvement gave rise, are thrown back; if symptoms are somewhat repressed, there is every reason to believe that the malady is still there. Now, supposing the physician's skill to be abundantly competent to a radical cure, it is evident that the non-recovery must spring from the patient's never having fairly surrendered himself into the physician's hands. And this want of an entire surrender may take one of two forms. Either the patient may not implicitly follow the physician's orders; or, not having a full trust in him, and being persuaded of the efficacy of certain other systems of medicine, he may be giving those systems a trial side by side with the course which physicians prescribe, and thereby nullifying the efficacy of that course. The not following the physician's prescriptions, or the following his own theories as well, both may equally defeat his recovery. —*Goulburn.*

(2550.) What are the conditions, which alone could frustrate the progress upon a river of a strong man and an expert rower, placed in a good and swift boat, and furnished with oars? Such an one might either not use the oars at all, or use only one of them; and the result in each case would be practically much the same. In both cases the boat would drift with the stream; and the only difference would be, that when one oar was vigorously applied, the boat, in addition to drifting, would move round and round in a circle, and might perhaps for a while mock the rower by the semblance of progress. In spiritual things there are those who are utterly careless and godless—dead alike to the claims of religion, and to its hopes. These are they who, launched upon the stream of life, quietly drift down it, giving no thought to the life which is to come after, and seeking only to gather the few perishable flowers which grow upon the brink. And, among persons of more serious mind, there are those who are willing indeed that Christ should do all for them, but have never surrendered themselves to Him to be and do all that He requires. And there are those, on the other hand, who have surrendered the will to Christ, and are making efforts to obey Him; but because they perceive not this simple truth, that they cannot sanctify themselves, that sanctification from first to last, like justification, must be wrought for us by Him—are constantly met by failures and disappointments, which a simple trust in Him to do all for them can alone remedy. Both these last are they who are rowing with one oar, moving indeed, but moving in a circle, and coming round always to the same point from which they started—deluding themselves for a while by the very fact of their motion, with the idea that they are progressing, and often bitterly complaining, as soon as they are undeceived, that they are making no way. And finally, there are those who are equally well contented to give all to Christ which they have to give (that is, their will), and to take all from Him which He has to give, sanctification, and wisdom, as well as righteousness—who in one and the same act of faith have renounced both self-will and self-trust. These are they who are rowing with two oars, and so realising a true progress towards that haven where they would be. Show me a man who is both giving to Christ all he has to give, that is, his will, and at the same time taking from Christ all Christ has to give, which is a perfect salvation from sin's guilt, power, and consequences; or, as the Apostle expresses it, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and I will show you a man who is growing in grace, and advancing daily in meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. And if we find ourselves not thus growing and advancing, and yet are certainly well-disposed persons of some seriousness of mind, it is, no doubt, that we are endeavouring to push the boat forward with only one of the oars, to reach that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, with trust in Christ alone, or with self-surrender alone. Apply the other oar simultaneously, and the bark shall at once begin to cleave the water, as an arrow cleaves the air, straight forward. —*Goulburn.*

IX. *PROOFS OF ITS REALITY.*

1. Increasing spiritual discernment.

(2551.) The first sign of our growing, is when we are got beyond our former measures of grace: a sign a child thrives, when he hath outgrown his clothes, his clothes are too little for him. That knowledge which would serve us before, will not serve us now; we have a deeper insight into religion, our light is clearer, our spark of love is increased into a flame; there is a sign of growth. That competency of grace we once had, is too scanty for us; we have outgrown ourselves.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(2552.) Growth in grace, moreover, is accompanied by *increasing spiritual discernment.* Thus the advancing Christian grows more and more alive to the requirements of the Divine law, and the sole ability of Jesus Christ to meet those requirements. Just as the chamber which, through the deceptive twilight, while the shadows were clinging and hovering dimly in every corner, appeared to be swept, and cleaned, and garnished, no sooner grows pervaded by the strengthening and honest beam of day, than the choking dust, lying thick upon each article, is visible, and the unsightly cobweb is seen weaved over every crevice;—so do the chambers of the Christian's imagery, which seemed to be pure and comely by a merely moral light, look polluted and defiled under the searching glare of the candle of spiritual heart-searching, until all other images, like shattered Dagons, are expelled, and the image of Christ crucified is shrined there alone.

—*Mursell.*

2. More successful resistance to temptation.

(2553.) Another sign of this spiritual progress will be apparent in *increasing steadiness and success in the resistance of temptation.*

In most instances resistance is the measure of force. The sea-wall which will not shake or shatter before the interminable squadrons of plumed waves which are marshalled against it, but which hurls them back all scattered into spume, and proudly waits another billowy charge, gives proof of its strength, and shows that it was a cunning mason who knit the work together. The phalanx which sustains the rush of legion after legion, led on by martial generals, but which will not draw back its foot, and fills up with more proud breast the gaps

which the sword has thinned; such a band shows strength, and testifies to the moral discipline of its generalship. And so, the more steady the Christian's resistance to the attacks of temptation and the assaults of sin the greater is the power of Divine grace in the soul. The natural man makes no stand. He rather goes over to the enemy. There is affinity in sin, not repugnance. Neither does the converted man, *all at once*, attain the full power of resistance, because he cannot, all at once, learn to look entirely TO, and lean entirely ON Jesus. The young conscript will often show more apparent zeal against sin than the advanced Christian; but it is often the mere novelty of the position which inspires him—it is *passion* rather than *principle* which governs him. But it is the force of deep-seated principle which causes the hands of the veteran to war, and his fingers to fight. The old soldier does not battle the less valiantly when the enemy is before him, because he does not brandish his sword so swaggeringly on parade. It is *purpose*, and not impulse, by which the old soldier is guided. And it is the veteran, not the recruit, who makes the fewest relapses, is most seldom disgraced by a repulse, and who gains the more frequent and most signal victories. —*Mursell.*

3. Greater patience under affliction.

(2554.) Growth of faith is judged by strength. We can do that now which we could not do before. When one is man-grown, he can do that which he could not do when he was a child; he can carry a heavier burden: so thou canst bear crosses with more patience. —*Watson*, 1696.

4. A more exact performance of duty.

(2555.) The more exact and accurate a man is in duty the more he grows in grace; and the more he grows in grace the more exact and accurate he grows in his duty. He that writes better than he did before does not write more paper or make more letters, only he writes more exactly and accurately. So the Christian does not perform more duties than he did before, but the same more exactly.
—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

5. Increased delight in duty.

(2556.) Growth of faith is seen by doing duties in a more spiritual manner, viz., with fervency; we put coals to the incense, from a principle of love to God. When an apple hath done growing in bigness, it grows in sweetness; thou dost duties in love, and now art sweeter, and come off with a better relish. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2557.) It ought to grow more and more easy to Christians to do right, until at last the acts that *were* sore self-denial become a pleasure.

When this has come to pass do not be frightened, and begin to doubt your piety. Be glad and grateful, for your graces are growing ripe.

What was once sour and bitter has become sweet and agreeable.

When you first entered the Christian path, you found it hard to do those things as conscience commanded, and you were often tempted to cry out, "Thy paths are *not* the paths of peace, O God!"

You were as children who, hearing their father discourse of the rare and luscious apples that his orchard yielded, straightway ran thither, expecting, though it was in the early summer, to be able to judge of the flavour of the fruit. Biting into it, they cry with wry features, spitting and casting the apples to the ground, "Is *this* the perfumed, saccharine flavour our father talks of? We want no more of it."

The miser, when converted, finds that he must be a miser no more. He sees, perhaps, that duty requires him to give fifty dollars to a poor man. He wishes that twenty-five would do; but it *won't* do. He knows that. He puts his hand into his pocket and—considers. He tries to go away without giving the sum.

"Do it—do it," growls conscience from within.

The man casts down the money hastily and runs away.

That was a victory, but a hard and painful one; and the miser finds himself put through years of just such discipline, until at last he is a miser no more.

Giving has become a blessing and a *pleasure* to his heart. Shall he now say, dolefully, "I *fear* I am not a true Christian. I cannot see that I carry any cross, or deny myself any, as once I did. Why, I remember when it was like crucifixion to give away five dollars. But I overcame nature and gave it, and then I had sure evidence that the root of the matter was in me. But now—oh! I'm so much at ease now, something must certainly be wrong—nothing seems to try me."

Why, man, your graces are growing fully ripe.
—*Beecher.*

6. A diminishing aversion from death.

(2558.) Maturity in grace makes us willing to part with worldly goods; the green apple needs a sharp twist to separate it from the bough, but the ripe fruit parts readily from the wood. Maturity in grace makes it easier to part with life itself; the unripe pear is scarcely beaten down with much labour, while its mellow companion drops readily into the hand with the slightest shake. Rest assured that love to the things of this life, and cleaving to this present state, are sure indications of immaturity in the divine life. —*Spurgeon.*

(2559.) The sixth and last sign of this growth which we notice, is a *deepened composure in anticipating death and eternity.* The unregenerate man *may*, and perhaps *does*, sometimes think of death without misgiving. He may so persuade himself that it is the common lot, and that what every one has to submit to cannot, after all, be such a fearful and formidable thing, that he actually encounters it without dismay; but this is the anticipation of a stolid and unrealising apathy; it is the braggart confidence of self-complacency or self-sufficiency.

But the Christian anticipates death and eternity with a complacency which he derives from Him who hath abolished death and illumed eternity. He does not sullenly, though quietly, *submit* to death as an inexorable intruder who will not be denied, simply because he has no alternative except submission; but he hails the monster as a liberator who comes to disenchain a captive thirsting to be free. He has a *welcome* for the last enemy—a welcome which springs right from his heart. Talk to him of death, and you talk to him of liberty; you tell him of one who strikes off the dungeon bars, and unclasps the detaining gyves. He knows that what is sown cannot be quickened except it die; and with the anticipation pulses of that quickening

already throbbing in his soul, he cries, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" He fraternises with death because it manumits him, and gives him freedom to go to Christ, which is far better. He knows that if he would be with Jesus he must follow Him even through the tomb; and with the pleasure of eternal union with Him in view, he is not only "*ready* to be offered," but he "has a *desire* to depart." —*Mursell.*

X. *ITS REWARDS.*

(2560.) The growth of grace will hinder the growth of corruption. The more health grows, the more the distempers of the body abate: so it is in spirituals; the more humility grows, the more the swelling of pride is assuaged; the more purity of heart grows, the more the fire of lust is abated. The growth of flowers in the garden doth not hinder the growing of weeds; but the growing of this flower of grace hinders the sprouting of corruption. As some plants have an antipathy, and will not thrive if they grow near together, as the vine and the bay-tree; so, where grace grows, sin will not thrive so fast.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(2561.) The more we grow in grace, the more will God love us. Is it not that we pray for? the more growth, the more will God love us. The husbandman loves his thriving plants; the thriving Christian is God's *Hephzibah*, or chief delight. Christ loves to see the vine flourishing, and the pomegranates budding (Cant. vi. 11). Christ accepts the truth of grace, but commends the growth of grace: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Would you be as the beloved disciple that lay in Christ's bosom? would you have much love from Christ? labour for much growth, let faith flourish with good works, and love increase into zeal. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2562.) The more we grow in grace, the more we shall flourish in glory. Though every vessel of glory shall be full, yet some vessels hold more: he whose pound gained ten was made ruler over ten cities (Luke xix. 17). —*Watson*, 1696.

XI. *SHOULD INSPIRE US WITH THANKFULNESS.*

(2563.) Let Christians be thankful for the least growth; if you do not grow so much in assurance, bless God if you grow in sincerity; if you do not grow so much in knowledge, bless God if you grow in humility. If a tree grows in the root, it is a true growth; if you grow in the root-grace of humility, it is as needful for you as any other growth.
—*Watson*, 1696.

XII. *CANNOT BE TOO GREAT.*

(2564.) We cannot grow too much in grace; there is no *nimium*, no excess there. The body may grow too great, as in the dropsy; but faith cannot grow too great: "Your faith groweth exceedingly;" here was exceeding, yet not excess. As a man cannot have too much health, so not too much grace. Grace is the beauty of holiness (Ps. cx. 3). We cannot have too much spiritual beauty; it will be the only trouble at death, that we have grown no more in grace. —*Watson*, 1696.

XIII. *IT SHOULD GO ON UNTIL THE END OF LIFE.*

(2565.) A Christian has no solstice, no highest point, where he may stand still, and go no further. Much less has he any equator, where days and nights are equal, that is, a liberty to spend as much time ill as well, as many hours in sinful pleasures as in religious exercises. —*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(2566.) As a traveller passeth from town to town till he come to his inn; so the Christian from virtue to virtue till he come to heaven.
—*Adams*, 1653.

(2567.) Progress in piety is not unfitly compared to a building, to a race, to the morning light, and to the moon that waxes. Houses are raised from the foundation to the walls, from the walls to the roof; in a race, men run on to the goal; the morning light is brighter and brighter till the noonday; and the moon increases more and more till it comes to the full. —*Du Moulin*, 1600–1684.

(2568.) What was suitable to us once, should not satisfy us now. The man outgrows the dress of childhood. Down among the rocky hollows of the sea there are creatures that cast their shell year by year; and up among the storm-beaten cliffs of the mountain, year by year also, the moulting eagle casts her feathers—these, that they may walk in larger, stronger mail; the other, that she may soar on broader pinions, and to higher flights. At such increase should we aim; to grow more busy in God's work; to spend more time and money in His service; to perform greater acts of self-denial; to increase both in the heavenliness of our temper, and in the generosity of our gifts. Not content with being only what once we were, and doing only what once we did, let us "covet earnestly the best gifts;" attempt the loftiest heights of grace; saying, with the holy ambition of an apostle, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." —*Guthrie.*

XIV. *IT SHALL GO ON FOR EVER.*

(2569.) The nearer we reach the summit of a hill, the climb is harder; and the higher the eagle soars, ever mounting into thinner air, its flight grows more arduous. Now, both in the case of the foot that has climbed the highest Alp, and of the wing that cleaves the sky above its snowy summit, there is a point where progress ceases—this foot cannot climb, that wing can fly no higher. It is quite otherwise with spiritual progress. While the higher a believer rises in grace his ascent becomes not more difficult but more easy, he never reaches a point where progress ceases. Begun on earth, it is continued in heaven; the field that lies before us stretching beyond the grave and above the stars—illimitable as space and endless as eternity.

Man, physically considered, grows into maturity, stops, and then returns on his course. The descent on the other side of the hill corresponding with the ascent on this, he goes down much as he went up. The hair drops from his head; the teeth fall from his jaws; the light fades in his eye; he enters on the stage of a second childhood; and at length, naked as he came from his mother's womb, naked he returns thither. The emblem of his life is the

day: first the gray dawn; then sunrise, then the sun flaming in the zenith; then sinking lower and lower, he wheels his course down the western sky; then he sets; then fading twilight; and then the depth of night. But how unlike this to the progress of the immortal spirit! With a course ever onward, upward, Godward, it presents a case somewhat analogous to the mathematical paradox of two bodies that are ever approaching, and yet, though moving through infinite space and for eternal ages, never meet; and never can meet. Even so, though they shall never reach the infinite height and perfection of divinity, the saints in glory, constantly ascending, shall be ever approaching it; so that death which, in a sense, makes us perfect, and introduces us into a state of rest, shall not arrest our progress. Our life, in fact, is like a ship working its way down a river, where the water grows deeper, and the banks grow wider, and the view expands as we move on, till at death, as there, where the waves roar upon the bar, we shall pass out on a great, broad, shoreless ocean, on which, with no limits bounding our progress, we shall advance evermore; growing in the knowledge, and love, and likeness of Christ with the ages of eternity, increasing yet "more and more." —*Guthrie.*

HEARERS.

1. Various kinds of hearers:—

(1.) *Drowsy hearers.*

(2570.) If you would sanctify the Sabbath by diligent, attentive hearing, take heed of drowsiness in hearing; drowsiness shows much irreverence. How lively are many when they are about the world, but in the worship of God how drowsy, as if the devil had given them some opium to make them sleep! A drowsy temper is very absurd and sinful. Are not you in prayer asking pardon of sin? Will the prisoner fall asleep when he is begging his pardon? In the preaching of the Word, is not the bread of life broken to you: and will a man fall asleep at his food? Which is worse, to stay from a sermon, or sleep at a sermon? While you sleep, perhaps the truth was delivered which might have converted your soul.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(2571.) Can men be regardless of the Word, or drowsy when the weighty matters of eternity are set before them? We preach of faith, and holiness of life, and the day of judgment, and the eternal recompenses; here is life and death set before you; and doth not all this call for serious attention? If a letter were read to one of special business, wherein his life and estate were concerned, would not he be very serious in listening to that letter? In the preaching of the Word, your salvation is concerned; and if ever you would attend, it should be now. "It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." —*Watson*, 1696.

(2572.) I deny not but that a child of God may sometimes through weakness and indisposition of body drop asleep at a sermon, but it is not voluntary or ordinary. The sun may be in an eclipse, but not often; if sleeping be customary and allowed, it is a very bad sign and a profaning of the ordinance. A good remedy against drowsiness is to use a spare diet upon this day. Such as indulge their appetite too much on a Sabbath, are fitter to sleep on a couch than pray in the temple. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2.) *Inattentive hearers.*

(2573.) Thou must be an attentive hearer; he that is awake, but wanders with his eye or heart, what doth he but sleep with his eyes open? It were as good the servant should be asleep in his bed, as when up not to mind his master's business.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2574.) Vain thoughts in hearing anger God. If the king were speaking to one of his subjects, and he should not give heed to what the king saith, but be thinking on another business, or playing with a feather, would not this provoke the king? So, when we are in God's presence, and God is speaking to us in His Word, and we minding not much what He saith, but our hearts go after covetousness. (Ezek. xxxiii. 31.) —*Watson*, 1696.

(2575.) One would say, that if you went and began to talk to a man about something of great importance to him, and which he knew was of great importance to him, as, for instance, about how his life was to be saved when he was sick,—or how his family was to be kept from want after he was dead,—or how his house was to be saved from destruction when it was on fire—one would say that if you went and began to talk to a man about such matters as these, he would at least listen very attentively to what you had to say to him. Well, then, in every sermon we hear, the preacher is just a friend who has come to talk to us about something far more important than anything of that kind can be. He has come to tell us how we may be saved from a disease a thousand times worse than consumption, or fever, or apoplexy; he has come to tell us how every poor man may provide for his family so completely, that he may be sure they shall never want for anything; he has come to tell us how we may save our houses and ourselves from fires far more destructive than ever destroyed in an hour the work of laborious years. Well, we all know that too; and yet, strange to say, there is nothing whatsoever to which many people listen so carelessly as a sermon. —*Boyd.*

(3.) *Careless hearers.*

(2576.) We crossed and recrossed the river several times by the ferry-boat at Basle. We had no object in the world but merely amusement and curiosity, to watch the simple machinery by which the same current is made to drift the boat in opposite directions from side to side. To other passengers it was a business, to us a sport. Our hearers use our ministry in much the same manner when they come to it out of the idlest curiosity, and listen to us as a means of spending a pleasant hour. That which should ferry them across to a better state of soul they use as a mere pleasure-boat, to sail up and down in, making no progress after years of hearing. Alas! it may be sport to them, but it is death to us, because we know it will ere long be death to them. —*Spurgeon.*

(4.) *Curious hearers.*

(2577.) Some come to the Word preached, not so much to get grace, as to enrich themselves with notions; "Itching ears" (2 Tim. iv. 3). Austin confesseth that, before his conversion, he went to

hear St. Ambrose, rather for his eloquence than for the spirituality of the matter. "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." Many come to the Word only to feast their ears; they like the melody of the voice, the mellifluous sweetness of the expression, the newness of the notion (Acts xvii. 21). This is to love the garnishing of the dish more than the food; this is to desire to be pleased rather than edified. Like a woman that paints her face, but neglects her health: so they paint and adorn themselves with curious speculations, but neglect their souls' health. This hearing doth neither sanctify the heart, nor the Sabbath.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(5.) *Discontented, querulous hearers.*

(2578.) Such as have weak and sickly stomachs are always finding fault with the carter, cook, or carver, and think they could feed a great deal better if there were better provision. And thus there are some queasy, wanton hearers of God's Word, such as find fault with their pastor, and think they could be edified much better by such or such another, wherein they say they know not what; for it is neither Paul nor Apollos that can edify—that is, give increase, make the Word effectual. God hath reserved that work to Himself, that so His ordinance, not the gifts, His blessing, not the commendations of the preacher, might be regarded; that the treasure might not be esteemed for the vessel, but the vessel for the treasure, and so neither Paul magnified nor Apollos despised, nor either or both relied upon and God Himself neglected; nor hearing severed from prayer, for that makes hearing unprofitable, but that, both being joined together, our obedience in hearing may make our prayers accepted, and our fervency in praying may procure our hearing to be blessed.
—*Croke*, 1574–1649.

(2579.) As those that go in a ship upon the sea, it is not the tossing, but the stomach, that causes a sickness, the choler within, and not the waves without: so the disquiet of querulous hearers, that nothing will go down with them, is from their own distemper. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2580.) Some peevish, childish persons are like sick stomachs, that no meat can please; you cannot dress it so curiously, but they complain that it is naught, or this aileth it, when the fault is in themselves; or like children, or sick persons that can scarce be touched but they are hurt: do you think that this sickliness or curiosity in religion is a credit to you? This is not the tenderness of conscience which God requireth, to be easily hurt by other men's differences and faults. As it is the shame of many gentlewomen to be so troublesomely neat, that no servant knoweth how to please them: so is it in religion, a sign of your childish folly, and worse, to be guilty of such proud curiosity that none can please you who are not exactly of your mind and way. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2581.) Wherever there is a Paul to preach, there will be a Tertullus to find fault.
—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2582.) Of the two handles which attach to everything, what must we think of that mind which is ever choosing the wrong? Jesus Christ, for instance, shows how much the farm, the oxen, and the wife became impediments in the way of those who refused His invitation. But a perverse conclusion would infer that He was, therefore, an enemy to lawful engagements. Candour, however, sees at a glance that this was not His design in speaking the parable. His drift was evidently to mark the state and spirit of the recusants, and not to discountenance their lawful occupations. He meant to show that even lawful pursuits may be unlawfully pursued, when they become sole objects, and thus preferred to His inestimable proposal. It is thus the well-disposed hearer will mark the design of his minister, and draw wholesome nourishment from that discourse which another will turn to poison, by stopping to cavil at the letter.
—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(6.) *Forgetful hearers.*

(2583.) As an hour-glass or conduit, through which in an hour the sand runneth in and through the same, in another hour runneth out again: so, likewise, some hearers forget in one hour that which they heard and learned in the hour before.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(7.) *Injudicious hearers.*

(2584.) As a vessel that receiveth liquor, which being poured out, the dregs remain; or as a sieve that casteth out the good corn, and retaineth only the chaff: even so some hearers of the Word preached do reject and neglect the wholesome and profitable doctrine, and keep in mind only that which is not so necessary and profitable. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(8.) *Hardened hearers.*

(2585.) As the anvil, the more it is hammered, the harder it is: so most hearers of the Word now-a-days have their hearts so hardened in sin, and their consciences so seared as with a hot iron, that the hammer of God's Word cannot break them in pieces, nor zealous preaching approach to the quick, as it did before by the apostles, &c.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

2. Need spiritual ears to appreciate the Gospel.

(2586.) Alphonse Karr heard a gardener ask his master's permission to sleep for the future in the stable; "For," said he, "there is no possibility of sleeping in the chamber behind the greenhouse, sir; there are nightingales there which do nothing but guggle, and keep up a noise all the night." The sweetest sounds are but an annoyance to those who have no musical ear; doubtless the music of heaven would have no charms to carnal minds, certainly the joyful sound of the Gospel is unappreciated so long as men's ears remain uncircumcised.
—*Spurgeon.*

(2587.) Jedediah Buxton, the famous peasant, who could multiply nine figures by nine in his head, was once taken to see Garrick act. When he went back to his own village, he was asked what he thought of the great actor and his doings. "Oh!" he said, "he did not know, he had only seen a little man strut about the stage, and repeat 7956 words." Here was a want of the ability to appreciate what he saw, and the exercise of the reigning faculty to the exclusion of every other. Similarly our hearers, if destitute of the spiritual powers by which the Gospel is discerned, fix their thoughts on our words, tones, gestures, or countenance, and

make remarks upon us which from a spiritual point of view are utterly absurd. How futile are our endeavours without the Holy Spirit! —*Spurgeon.*

3. Should seek to be profited rather than pleased.

(2588.) Seek not so much to have thy ear tickled as thy understanding enlightened. The painful bee passeth by roses and violets, and sits upon thyme; so shouldest thou rather choose to feed on plain and wholesome doctrine, though hot and biting, than on the quirks and flowers of man's invention. In a word, learn evermore to judge that sermon best, though plain, whereby thou understandest.

—*N. Rogers*, 1594–1660.

(2589.) *Grace is contented with the simplicity of the Gospel; gifts are not contented therewithal.* And therefore you shall observe that the Corinthians, who excelled in gifts, adulterated the gospel with their swelling words. The Galatians adulterated the doctrine of the Gospel, and mingled the doctrine of the Gospel with justification by works. The Corinthians mingled the words of the Gospel with their own swelling language. They had gifts, and they were not contented with the simplicity of the Gospel. Ay, but grace is. You see how it is with a child that comes into a corn-field; he is mightily taken with the blue or red weeds, or the daisies that grow there; but now, when the husbandman comes, he looks at the corn, and is not so much taken with the blue and red weeds, or the company of daisies, but is taken with the corn itself. So now take a man that hath gifts only, and bring him to a sermon or a prayer; and if there be any fine expressions, any daisies, he is much taken with them; he prizeth, and magnifieth them, and he hangs on them. But now bring a man that hath grace to a prayer, or to a sermon, and he looks at the corn; he doth not look at the daisies so much, but at the spirituality and power of those things that are there delivered. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. Are not to be weary of familiar truths.

(2590.) All is not well when a man is weary of his ordinary food, and nothing will go down but rarities; the stomach is sickly when a man delights rather to pick some salad than eat of solid meat: and how far this dainty age is gone in this spiritual disease, I think few are so far come to themselves as yet to consider and lament. Oh, sirs, be not weary as in doing, so not in hearing those savoury truths preached you have daily use of, because you know them, and have heard them often: faith and repentance will be good doctrine to preach and hear to the end of the world. You may as well quarrel with God because He hath made but one heaven, and one way to it, as be offended with the preacher for preaching these over and over. If thy heart were humble, and thy palate spiritual, old truths would be new to thee every time thou hearest them. In heaven the saints draw all their wine of joy (as I may so say) at one tap, and shall to all eternity; and yet it never tastes flat. God is that one object their souls are filled with, and never weary of; and can anything of God and His love be wearisome to thee in the hearing here? —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

5. Their craving for novelty unhealthy and absurd.

(2591.) It is a graceless, wicked soul, in a state of damnation, that conceits he knows so much of God and Jesus Christ, and the essentials of Christianity, that he cares not for hearing these things any more, but had rather have novelties, and let these alone; and feeleth not need of knowing much more, and more of the same truths; and of using and living upon these vital principles which he knows. You have eaten bread a hundred times; but perhaps you never did eat of sturgeon or whale, of a bear or a leopard, of chestnuts or pignuts, or many strange and dangerous fruits, in all your life; and yet I hope you will never seek after these, because they are novelties, and give over eating bread because you have eaten of it already. Nor will you churlishly refuse to go to a feast, because there is no meat but what you have eaten of before.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2592.) Take away a toy from a child, and give him another and he is satisfied; but if he be hungry no toy will do. Thus as new-born babes, true believers desire the sincere milk of the word; and the desire of grace, in this way, is grace.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(2593.) Love, joy, humility, heavenly-mindedness, godly sorrow for sin, and holy resolutions against it, are not promoted so much by novel speculations, as by placing in a just and affecting light the acknowledged truths of the Gospel, and thereby stirring up the mind by way of remembrance. "Whilst I am in this tabernacle," said Peter, "I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth." We appeal to the experience of every real Christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed have not been those in which he is conscious of having learned no new truth, strictly speaking, but was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable discoveries of the Gospel. As the Word of God is the food of souls, so it corresponds to that character in this respect among others—that the strength and refreshment it imparts depend not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety.

—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(2594.) On a Sabbath-day, years ago, a young minister appeared in a church in Edinburgh as a candidate for the vacant charge. He preached; the people were all attention. The discourse was worthy of one whose ministrations since then have been elsewhere much blessed to bring many souls to Christ. That did not save it, however, from the adverse judgment of a critic. So soon as the sermon was concluded, this modern Athenian turned round to him who related the circumstance, and said, with a shrug of his shoulders, and a tone bordering on contempt, "Ha! there is nothing new there!" Fancy a man to whom I offer a rose fresh plucked from the parterre, dyed in the richest hues, breathing the most fragrant odour, with the dew-drops still shining like diamonds on its pure bosom, tossing it from him with an air of contempt, to say, "Ha! there is nothing new there!" This were not more absurd than that. New? Anything in religion that professes to be new, beyond the light which modern researches into the geography and natural history, the manners, customs, and

languages of the East, may throw on the contents of the Bible, is to be regarded with grave suspicion.
—*Guthrie.*

6. Should regard the message, not the messenger.

(2595.) Let not Satan persuade us to think the worse of the pure word of God because of his corruption who delivers it. For what were this but to refuse a comfortable embassage from a gracious prince, because we dislike the qualities of the ambassadors? What were this but to scorn to receive a kind letter from a loving father, because the carrier displeases us? What is this but to refuse a rich treasure, because it is brought unto us in an earthen vessel which is frail and brittle? What is it but like proud beggars to refuse the bountiful alms of a merciful prince, because it is delivered unto us by an almoner who is covetous and hard-hearted? Yea, what is it but to cross our Saviour Christ's express commandment, who commanded all to hear even the Scribes and Pharisees who sat on Moses's chair, and to do after their words, though not after their works?
—*Downame*, 1644.

(2596.) All true ministers are the Lord's ambassadors, who in Christ's stead beseech their hearers that they will be reconciled unto God. We must not therefore look upon the man, but on God who sends him; not on the earthen vessel, but on the heavenly treasure which it brings; not on the simplicity of the cabinet, but on the precious pearl which is contained in it; not upon the meanness of the ambassador, but on the glorious royalty of the prince who sends him, and on his embassage, which is the glad tidings of the Gospel; the word of salvation and life, which is able to save souls: and then his feet will seem beautiful, and none shall be better welcome; then shall we not contemn or neglect his ministry, but receive joyfully, reverently, and attentively the word preached by him, remembering what our Saviour Christ has said: "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me."
—*Downame*, 1644.

(2597.) The clergy is a copy-book, their life is the paper, whereof some is purer, some coarser: their doctrine is the copies, some written in plain hand, others in a flourishing hand, some in a text hand, some in a Roman hand, others in a court hand, others in a bastard Roman. If the choice be in thy power, choose a book that has the finest paper; let it not be too straight nor too loosely bound, but easy to lie open to every eye. Follow not every copy, lest thou be good at none: among them all choose one that shall be most legible and useful, and fullest of instructions. But if the paper chance to have a blot, remember, the blot is no part of the copy. —*Quarles*, 1644.

(2598.) The agent that must work with this leaven (Matt. xiii. 33) is a woman, weak in her sex; yet the leaven works nevertheless for her imbecility. The minister that must put this leaven to our souls is a man, a weak, sinful, despised man; yet doth not his weakness derogate from the powerful operation of the word in the hearts of God's chosen. It is the word of a mighty and majestic God, who speaks, and the mountains tremble; threatens, and the foundations of the earth are moved. I appeal to your consciences,—who have a testimony from them, and they from the Spirit, that you are God's,—hath not His word, spoken by a silly man, made your hearts bleed within you for your sins? Yea, hath not Felix himself trembled like an aspen leaf, when Paul, even his prisoner, preached? What power hath stirred you, human or divine? Tertullus could not do it, whilst authority and credit with men seconded his eloquence. Peter, taken from his nets, shall catch a thousand and a thousand souls at a draught. What presumptuous folly in some is it, then, to loathe the word of eternal truth because such a man speaks it! God must not only give them meat, but such a cook as may dress it to their own fancies. Our weakness makes way for God's brighter glory: "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God," Oftentimes the pillars of the Church move not him whom a weak leavener hath converted. It is a reason convincing the wicked, confirming the faithful, that Paul gives: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things to confound the mighty; that no flesh should glory in His presence." —*Adams*, 1653.

(2599.) Mind the word as the word of truth. Take it not upon the account of persons; value it for its own sake, as it is a word of truth. It is neither Paul nor Apollos, but God that gives the increase. Value it not by men; it is no matter what the pipe is, whether gold or lead, so the water be the water of life. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2600.) When men refuse to hear the Gospel from the lips of a gracious but uneducated preacher, they remind us of the Spaniard in South America, who suffered severely from the gout, but refused to be cured by an Indian. "I know," said he, "that he is a famous man, and would certainly cure me, but he is an Indian, and would expect to be treated with attentions which I cannot pay to a man of colour, and therefore I prefer remaining as I am."
—*Spurgeon.*

7. Necessity of effort on their part.

(2601.) Let us remember that we do not go to church to be amused, but to be instructed and edified. Instruction is rarely a pleasing thing. To get instruction is almost always hard work. All learning implies an effort: God has made the universe in such a fashion that to do anything good and profitable, it is needful to make a push and an effort; whereas to do what is idle and useless takes no effort at all. A schoolboy must work to learn his lessons; but it needs no effort, and no labour, to play at balls or marbles. It needs no self-denial to do that. To take amusement is almost the only thing we can do that needs no effort. Religious instruction cannot be made so interesting,—cannot be made so as to be listened to without an effort,—in the same way as some amusing or romantic story, or some lively disquisition upon worldly matters. It is right and proper for the preacher to do all he can to make his sermons interesting; to make them such that they will keep up people's attention whether they are trying to attend or not; but in the nature of things, there is a limit to what he can do. In the nature of things, it is impossible to

make serious instruction as attractive as light amusement. —*Boyd.*

8. Should apply to themselves what they hear.

(2602.) In a feast we are glad to have the best morsels carved to us, and let the coarser dishes pass by; but in hearing of the word, when the best counsel is offered us, we are so mannerly as to commend it to our neighbours. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2603.) Look upon yourselves as really concerned in the word you hear, otherwise it will no more affect you than if you should tell an ambitious man, gaping after preferment in England, of a wealthy place fallen in Spain, which will not engage his thoughts, as being out of his sphere, and at too great a distance. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2604.) "Make it your work with diligence to apply the word as you are hearing it, and to work your own hearts to those suitable resolutions and affections which it bespeaketh." Cast not all upon the minister, as those that will go no further than they are carried as by force; this is fitter for the dead than for the living. You have work to do as well as the preacher, and should all the while be as busy as he; as helpless as the infant is, he must suck when the mother offereth him the breast. If you must be fed, yet you must open your mouths and digest it, for another cannot digest it for you; nor can the holiest, wisest, most powerful minister, convert or save you without yourselves, nor deliver a people from sin and hell that will not stir for their own deliverance. Therefore, be all the while at work; abhor an idle heart in hearing, as well as an idle minister. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2605.) What a mistake to imagine that, by hearing first one preacher and then another, we can derive benefit to our souls! More is wanted than such hearing. A raven may fly from cage to cage, but it is not thereby changed into a dove. Go from room to room of the royal feast, and the sight of the tables will never stay thy hunger. Reader, the main thing is to have and hold the truth personally and inwardly; if this be not seen to, thou wilt die in thy sins, though ten thousand voices should direct thee to the way of salvation. Pity indeed it is that the bulk of hearers are hearers only, and are no more likely to go to heaven than the seats they sit on in the assembly of the saints. —*Spurgeon.*

9. The folly of resenting faithful preaching.

(2606.) The faithful hearer accuses not his minister for particularising him. It does not follow that he aimed, because the arrow hit. Rather, our parishioner reasons thus: "If my sin be notorious, how could the minister miss it? if secret, how could he hit without God's direction?" But foolish hearers make even the bells of Aaron's garments to clink, as they think. And a guilty conscience is like a whirlpool, drawing in all to itself which otherwise would pass by. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(2607.) Whence is it but from selfishness, that plain and close application in our sermons is taken to be an injury to those that think themselves concerned in it? If a minister will speak alike to all, and take heed of meddling with their sores, they will patiently hear him; but if he make them know that he meaneth them in particular, and deal closely with them about their miserable state, or against any special, disgraceful sin, they fall a-railing at him and reproaching him behind his back; and perhaps they will say they will hear him no more. "Oh," saith the selfish, ungodly wretch, "I know he meant me to-day; had he nobody but me to speak against?" As if a sick man should be angry with the physician for giving directions and medicines to him in particular, and say, "Had he nobody to give physic to but me? Were there not sick men enough in the town besides me?"

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2608.) Verily, sirs, a sinner under the curse of the law, unsanctified and unpardoned, is not in a state to be jested and dallied with, unless you can play in the flames of hell; it is plain dealing that he needs. A quibbling, toyish, flashy sermon is not the proper medicine for a lethargic, miserable soul, nor fit to break a stony heart, nor to bind up a heart that is kindly broken. Heaven and hell should not be talked of in a canting, jingling, pedantic strain. A Seneca can tell you that it is a physician that is skilful, and not one that is eloquent, that we need. If he have also fine and neat expressions, we will not despise them, nor overmuch value them. It is a cure that we need; and the means are best, be they never so sharp, that will accomplish it. Serious, reverent gravity best suiteth with matters of such incomprehensible concernment. You set not a schoolboy to make an oration, to give an assaulted city an alarm, or to call men out to quench a common fire. You may play with words when the case will bear it; but as dropping of beads is too ludicrous for one that is praying to be saved from the flames of hell, so a sleepy, or a histrionical starched speech, is too light and unlikely a means to call back a sinner that is posting to perdition, and must be humbled and renewed by the Spirit, or be for ever damned. This is your case, sirs: and do you think the playing of a part upon a stage doth fit your case? Oh no! So great business requireth all the serious earnestness in the speaker that he can see. I am sure you will think so ere long yourselves; and you will then think well of the preachers that faithfully acquainted you with your case; and (if they succeed to your perdition) you will curse those that smoothed you up in your presumption, and hid your danger, by false doctrine, or misapplication, or, seeming to discover it, indeed did hide it, by an hypocritical light, or not serious mention of it. God can make use of clay and spittle to open the eyes of men born blind, and of rams' horns to bring down the walls of Jericho; but usually He fitteth the means unto the end, and works on man agreeably to his nature: and, therefore, if a blind understanding must be enlightened, you cannot expect that it should be done by squibs and glowworms, but by bringing into your souls the powerful celestial truth, which shall show you the hidden corners of your hearts, and the hidden mysteries of the Gospel, and the unseen things of the other world. If a hardened heart be to be broken, it is not stroking but striking that must do it. It is not the sounding brass, the tinkling cymbal, the carnal mind puffed up with superficial knowledge that is the instrument fitted to the renewing of men's souls; but it is he that can acquaint you with what he himself hath been savingly acquainted; the heart is not melted into godly sorrow, nor raised to the life of faith and love by the bubbles of a frothy wit, or by a game at words, or useless notions, but by

the illuminating beams of sacred truth, and the attraction of Divine-displayed goodness, communicated from a mind that by faith hath seen the glory of God, and by experience found that He is good, and liveth in the love of God; such an one is fitted to assist you first in the knowledge of yourselves, and then in the knowledge of God in Christ.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2609.) Its folly is apparent from the consideration that no concealment of the sinner can alter his condition in the sight of God, or change the relation in which he stands to eternity. This, whatever pains he may take to delude himself, or whatever solicitude he may feel that others should join him in the delusion, remains the same. Like the ostrich, which is said when closely pursued to put her head beneath her wing, as if to blind herself to impending destruction, he may refuse to see or hear his true situation unfolded, but the case is unaltered. Is it wise in the man who has nearly ruined his constitution by intemperance, to ask the physician to tell him that he is in good health; and is carrying on a harmless course of indulgence? Is it wise in the man who is wasting his property by neglect or extravagance, to persuade his friends to hush their reproving voice, and flatter him that his prosperity is secure? Would the deceit in the former case change the condition of the patient? or the falsehood in the latter repair the fortunes of the spendthrift? How much greater is the folly of the sinner, who, instead of turning from sin to God, through faith in Christ, and thus getting rid of his alarms by abandoning his course of sin, refuses to change his conduct, and asks for a false representation of his condition. He is walking to the edge of a precipice, and solicits those who see danger to tell him that he is safe. —*James.*

10. Folly of their craving for "comforting" preaching.

(2610.) It is a doleful case, to see how light many make of all the rest of their distempers, when once they think that they have so much grace and mortification as is absolutely necessary to save their souls; and expect that preachers should say little to weak Christians but words of comfort, setting forth their happiness. And yet if one of them, when he hath the gout, or stone, or colic, or dropsy, doth send for a physician, he would think himself derided or abused if his physician, instead of curing his disease, should only comfort him, by telling him that he is not dead.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2611.) Plain truth is unwelcome to them because it is rough, and grates upon the quick, and tells them of that which is troublesome to know, though they must know their sin, and danger, and misery, or else they can never escape it; yet they had rather venture on hell than hear the danger. And, as a sottish patient, they love that physician better that will tell them there is no danger, and let them die, than he that will tell them, "Your disease is dangerous; you must bleed, or vomit, or purge, or you will die!" Oh, what a wrong they take it to be told thus! If a minister tell one of them that hath the death-marks of ungodliness in the face of his conversation, "Neighbour, I must deal plainly with you; your state is sad; you are unsanctified, and unjustified, and in the slavery of the devil, and will be lost for ever; if you die before you are converted and made a new creature; and therefore, turn presently, as you love your soul," it is ten to one but he should have a reproachful answer instead of thanks and obedience. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2612.) Are there not many who are dissatisfied with everything but words of comfort and statements of privilege? They object to everything of a searching and practical tendency. Their incessant demand is for doctrine and consolation. Everything besides this is legality. This disposition is, though in a modified sense of the text, a demanding of smooth things, and is, in a measure, asking for deceit, and requesting that the Holy One of Israel may cease from before His people. Such persons value themselves as being believers of greater eminence, children in the family of God, of taller stature and greater strength than others; but reasoning from analogy, one should be led to suppose that the oldest and best children would be most anxious to hear their Father's command, and do their duty by fulfilling His will; for in the families of men, it is the younger and more ignorant and petulant that quarrel with commands, and cry after luscious sweets. The strongest mark of great grace is to delight more than others in knowing and doing the will of God, and yet to think least of what we do. Many who boast of their high attainments in religion, would have the ministers of God leave out more than half their message; and what is this but to do the work of the Lord deceitfully? Upon their principles, all parts of God's Word but the promises are unnecessary: they are useless to believers, for they are above them by privilege; useless to sinners, for they are below them in respect to obligation. —*James.*

(2613.) Instead of wishing to know the real state of the case, their only wish is to be deceived; instead of running to the physician, their aim is to persuade themselves that they do not need him; instead of anxiously inquiring, "What shall I do to be saved?" they do not see their danger of being lost; instead of fleeing from the wrath to come, they covet to be let alone. It is only by a faithful disclosure of their situation that they can escape, but they will not hear it. Like the man whose home is on fire over his head, and who is angry with neighbours who have disturbed his slumbers and alarmed his fears, they entreat that nothing may be said to them about the quenchless fire, although it is kindling around them. They take pains to be lost, and are offended with the persons who would save them.

—*James.*

11. Are not to regard as useless what is profitless to themselves personally.

(2614.) God directs the tongue of His ministers as He does His showers of rain: they fall upon the face of a large compass of earth, when all that earth did not need that rain. For the refreshing of one span of ground, God lets fall a whole shower of rain; for the rectifying of one soul, God pours out the meditations of the preacher into such a subject as, perchance, little concerns the rest of the congregation.

If thou remember not all that was presented to thy faith, all the citations of places of Scriptures: nor all that was presented to thy spiritual delight, all the sentences of ornament produced out of the

fathers; yet if thou remember that which concerned thy sin and thy soul, if thou meditate upon that, apply that, thou hast brought away all the sermon, all that was intended by the Holy Ghost to be preached to thee.

And if thou have done so, as at a donative, at a coronation, or other solemnity, when money is thrown among the people, though thou light but upon one shilling of that money, thou canst not think that all the rest is lost, but that some others are the richer for it, though thou beest not: so if thou remember, or apply, or understand, but one part of the sermon, do not think all the rest to have been idly, or unnecessarily, or impertinently spoken, for thou broughtest a fever, and hast had thy juleps, and another brought a fainting and a diffident spirit, and must have his cordials.

—*Donne*, 1573-1631.

12. Should discriminate between truth and error.

(2615.) As a sponge gathereth up all liquor, whether it be good or bad, even so some hearers of sermons receive all that is spoken, good and evil.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2616.) As a glass window receiveth in the light so soon as it shineth, and withstandeth every tempest or shower that beats at the same: so should every Christian hearer be ready to receive the light of the truth when he heareth it preached, and be likewise as careful to withstand and reject every error or false doctrine that doth slip from the preacher, and which, if received, will afterward move a tempest in his conscience by the sense of God's judgment.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

13. Must test what they are taught by the Word of God.

(2617.) Too much to blame, then, are our over-credulous multitude, who, hand over head, admit and receive for orthodox whatsoever is propounded unto them by their teachers; and think this is a sufficient warrant for any point they hold. Our minister said it, or such a preacher delivered it in a pulpit, as if there were not some who run before they are sent, and publish the visions of their own brain, prophesying that which God never spake. In matters civil we are more cautious and wary; no gold, almost, we take before we have tried it by the touch, or weighed it in the balance; and what is the reason? because there is much of it light and naught. yea, hardly we will take a groat without bowing, bending, rubbing it, and the like, being therein oftentimes over-curious; but in religious matters, which concern our faith and soul's salvation, we are over-careless, albeit we are forewarned of many false prophets that are gone into the world, and therefore willed not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God. This is a great yet common fault among us. Were he an angel from heaven that preaches to thee, yet art thou bound to look into his doctrine and examine it, and not to take it upon credit without he bring sufficient proof and warrant for it (Gal. i. 8). Like good Bereans, see you search the Scriptures whether these things be so. —*N. Rogers*, 1594-1660.

14. "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only."

(2618.) Idle auditors are like idle gods, which have members not for use but show; like glass windows upon stone walls, to give ornament, but not to receive light. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2619.) Many men are as those that travel by water, and see buildings ashore, and praise them as they pass by, but never enter into them, never look after them more. —*Manton*, 1620-1667.

(2620.) It is an aphorism in physic, that they who in the beginning of sickness eat much, and mend not, fall at last to a general loathing of food. The moral is true in divinity. He that has a sick conscience, and lives a hearer under a fruitful ministry, if he grows not sound, he will learn to despise the word.

Contemned blessings leave room for curses. He that neglects the good he may have, shall find the evil he would not have. Justly he sits in darkness, that would not light his candle when the fire burned clearly.

He that needs counsel, and will not hear it, destines himself to misery, and is the willing author of his own woe. Continue at a stay he cannot long: if he could, not to proceed is backward. And this is as dangerous to the soul as the other to the body. Pitiful is his estate that hates the thing that should help him; if ever you see a drowning man refuse help, conclude him a wilful murderer. When God affords me plentiful means, woe be to me if they prove not profitable! I had better have a deaf ear than hear to neglect or hate; to the burying of such treasures there belongs a curse; to their misspending, judgments.

—*Felltham*, 1668.

(2621.) Nothing can be more fatal than a habit of indolent hearing. Like one who glances into a mirror, and sees disorder in his attire, or dust on his face, and says, "I must attend to this," but forthwith forgets it, and hurries out on his journey; or who, in the time of plague, sees the livid marks on his countenance, and says, I must take advice for this, and thinks no more about it till he drops death-stricken on the pavement; so there are languid or luxurious listeners to the word of God. At the moment, they say Very true, or Very good, and they resolve to take some action; but just as the mirror is not medicine,—as even the glassy pool does not remove from the countenance the specks which it reveals, if merely looked into, so a self-survey in the clearest sermon will neither erase the blemishes from your character, nor expel the sin-plague from your soul. (James i. 19-25.)

—*Hamilton*, 1814-1867.

15. Should exemplify the Gospel.

(2622.) As it is the minister's task to make known the mystery of the Gospel in his pulpit. so it is your duty to do the same in your lives. The Christian's life should put his minister's sermon in print; he should preach that mystery every day to the eyes of his neighbours, which the minister preacheth once or twice a week to their ears. As a true-made dial agrees with the sun in its motion, and as a well-drawn picture resembles the face from which it is taken, so should thy conversation resemble that Gospel which thou professest.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(2623.) The pulpit should be like the key-board of an organ, and the church like the pipes. It is my business to press down the keys here, and it is

yours to respond out there. Christian life ought to be so exhibitory that when you look at a Christian you will know what God's truth is. If one comes to me and asks the meaning of faith, and humility, and charity, I ought to be able to point to one man and say, "There is faith," and to another, "There is humility," and so on through all the church and all the graces. Christ's kingdom will not come until His disciples are such "living epistles, known and read of all men." —*Beecher.*

16. Should endeavour to retain what they hear.

(2624.) Thou must be a retentive hearer; without this the work will ever be to begin again. Truths to a forgetful hearer are as a seal set on water, the impression lasts no longer than the seal is on; the sermon once done, all is undone.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2625.) Be not only attentive in hearing, but retentive after hearing. "We ought to give the more diligent heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip"—lest we should let them run out, as water out of a sieve. If the ground doth not retain the seed sown into it, there can be no good crop. Some have memories like leaking vessels, the sermons they hear are presently gone, and then there is no good done.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(2626.) "Let these sayings (saith Christ) sink down into your ears." In the original it is, Put these sayings into your ears, as a man that would hide a jewel from being stolen locks it up safe in his chest. Let them sink; the word must not only fall as dew that wets the leaf, but as rain which soaks to the root of the tree, and makes it fructify.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(2627.) If you would hear the word aright, be not only attentive, but retentive. Lay the word up in your memories and hearts. "The seed on the ground are they, who, having heard the word, keep it." The Greek word for "to keep," signifies "to hold the word fast, that it do not run from us." If the seed be not kept in the ground, but is presently washed away, it is sown to little purpose: so if the word preached be not kept in your memories and hearts, it is preached in vain. Many people have memories like leaky vessels, the word goes out as fast as it comes in, how can it profit? If a treasure be put into a chest and the chest not locked, it may easily be taken out: a bad memory is like a chest without a lock, the devil can easily take out all the treasure. "Then comes the devil and takes away the word out of their hearts." Labour to keep in memory the truths you hear: the things we esteem we are not so apt to forget. "Will a bride forget her jewels?" "Can a maid forget her ornaments?" Did we prize the word more, we should not soon forget it. —*Watson*, 1696.

17. Consolations for discouraged hearers.

(1.) *In hearing the word, however imperfectly, we at least obey God's command.*

(2628.) Afflicted consciences object, that they find so many corruptions in their hearing of God's word, and perform these duties with so manifold and gross imperfections, having their minds wholly distracted with wandering and wicked thoughts, yea sometimes with impious imaginations and rebellious blasphemies; and when they are at the best, receiving these glad tidings with such drowsy dulness and spiritual deadness, such hardness of heart, and loathing weariness, that they are so far from profiting by these holy exercises, as that they are fully persuaded all they do is turned into sin; and therefore it were much better for them utterly to neglect and omit these religious duties, than by performing them to increase the number of their sins, and the fearful measure of their just condemnation. To which I answer,—

To hear the word of God is not a thing arbitrary and indifferent, but a part of that service which God necessarily requires to be performed by us. And, therefore, though we grievously sin in the doing of it, yet we must do it still, seeing we cannot so heinously sin in the hearing of the word, if we endeavour to hear it as reverently and profitably as we can, as we shall if we neglect it altogether. For it is a less sin to fail in the manner of doing, than to omit the main duty itself; to sin of infirmity because we can do no better; than of wilfulness and negligence by not doing what we can. For what father would not take it better at his child's hand, if he perform the duty which he has enjoined, though it be never so ill and imperfectly done, if he knows that he has used his best endeavour, than that he should utterly neglect it, and excuse his negligence by his inability to do it in such perfection as his father required? —*Downame*, 1644.

(2.) *Our imperfect hearing prepares us for a more perfect service of God.*

(2629.) We know that the cunning scribe requires his scholar should exercise his hand, though for the present he do but blot paper and spoil pens, because this small loss is recompensed by a greater gain, and by practice he is brought from bungling to perfect skill. And so the Lord will have His young novices to exercise themselves in the art of hearing, though at first their loss seems to exceed their gain, because in time it will turn to their greater advantage, as being the means to bring them to more perfection, and is content that they should by showing their infirmities and corruptions displease Him for a while, that they may learn the way to please Him for ever.

The sick man who has lost his appetite and loathes the sight of meat, if he eat thereof is made more sick and weak in his present sense and feeling, but yet afterwards he finds by experience that it was the means whereby he recovered his health and strength. And so being sick in sin, we have no desire to feed on this spiritual food, but through the hardness of our hearts loathe this heavenly manna, and if we taste thereof (judging according to our present sense and feeling) we are ready to cry out that our sickness of sin and gross corruptions are rather increased than abated; and yet this is the food whereby presently we live, and for the time to come wax healthy and strong in virtue and godliness. —*Downame*, 1644.

(3.) *In hearing, our sinfulness is not created, but revealed.*

(2630.) Some complain that the more they hear the greater are their sins and rebellion against God. In this they much deceive themselves. For the word of God does not make them more sinful; but whereas heretofore they lived in carnal security and hardness of heart, having their understandings darkened, and their consciences seared so that they

could neither see nor feel their sins, though they were manifold and grievous; now the word of God made effectual by the inward operation of His Holy Spirit, like a glorious light having dispelled the dark foggy mists of ignorance, and illuminated their understandings with the knowledge of God's law, they better discern their sins and miserable estate than in former times. And this the Apostle Paul shows unto us in his own example (Rom. vii. 9, 10, 13). The preaching of the law does not make us more sinful, but reveals those sins unto us which before we discerned not; as the sun shining upon some filthy place does not make it so filthy, but only makes it manifest which was not seen in the dark. —*Downame*, 1644.

(4.) *Our sense of imperfection should make us more constant in hearing.*

(2631.) When Satan objects our unfitness to hear, because our ears are dull, our eyes blind, our hearts hard, and our wills, affections, and all the powers and faculties of our bodies and souls wholly corrupted and disordered, this must not move us to neglect the hearing of God's word, but to become hearers thereof with more care and diligence. For it is the two-edged sword of the Spirit, which will pierce and make way for itself to enter, and will build a lodging for itself to dwell in. It is not only a guide to those that see, but a precious eye-salve to give sight unto those born blind. It is not only the heavenly dew which makes God's graces to spring in us, but also that divine seed which gives them being and rooting in our hearts. It is not only the food of our souls to preserve and increase that strength which we already have, but also that immortal seed by which we are first begotten unto God and born again, who before were dead in our sins; and that excellent physic of our souls by which they are purged from their corruptions and restored to health, who before were deadly sick in sin. It makes us first to will that which is good, and then further to desire it. It gives us life who before were dead in our sins, and then preserves this life. It begets and begins faith and sanctification and all other graces in us; and being begotten and begun it strengthens and increases them. And therefore, let not Satan dissuade us from the hearing of God's word because of our sins, unworthiness, and unfitness. For as it is a notable means ordained of God for the increasing of grace where it already is, so it is no less effectual for the begetting of graces where it never was. —*Downame*, 1644.

(2632.) There is no wise man that will neglect his trade because he is poor, but rather this will move him to be more painful therein, as being the means whereby he may become rich. Neither do men refuse all nourishment, because they have empty and hungry stomachs, but do more earnestly desire meats that they may be filled and satisfied. Yea, even those whose stomachs are weak do not altogether refuse their food, but eat something to sharpen their appetite, and so by little and little in using their stomachs they get stomachs. Let us follow the like practice, and when we perceive our beggarliness in God's graces, let us more earnestly labour after this heavenly treasure and precious pearl, that we may be made rich. When we feel our emptiness of all virtue and goodness, let us more eagerly hunger after this spiritual manna that we may be filled and satisfied. When we find our appetite weak and our stomachs indisposed to eat of this heavenly food, let us a little force ourselves against the appetite, or use all good means to strength it: and so we shall find that the oftener we eat, the oftener we shall desire, the more we hear the word of God, the more we shall desire to hear, and the greater benefit we shall receive by it. Whereas neglect of hearing will make us every day more unfit to hear, even as long abstinence doth quite spoil the stomach. —*Downame*, 1644.

(5.) *Our very weakness may render our service more acceptable to God.*

(2633.) If a soldier being strong and valiant do in all encounters go away with victory and triumph, it is no great wonder if at his captain's command he hazard the combat, because his success whets his courage and heartens him to any attempt. But if another, who being weak and feeble, has continually in every fight received wounds and foils, doth willingly as often as his captain appoints him enter the field, and stand to it in all encounters, having no confidence in his own strength or hope of good success, only in obedience to his captain's command, surely such an one is no less to be admired for his love and duty in attempting, than to be pitied for his weakness and inability in performing; and exceeding the other as much in submissive obedience, as he is exceeded by him in strength and power, his weak endeavours must needs please his commander. And so it is no great wonder if those who are strong in God's graces do willingly perform unto Him that service He requires, and resist Satan after they have often put him to flight. But if one who is by reason of his weakness continually foiled, and overcome of sin in all his services wherein he is employed, be, notwithstanding, still ready at God's command to attempt the performance of any duty, and, as it were, wounded and maimed, doth endure the conflict only in love and obedience to the Lord of hosts, surely this service must needs be acceptable to God, and in the end He will so rescue him with the power of His Spirit, that he shall obtain the victory, and make him as commendable in the time to come for his strength and abilities, as he was before for his obedience and duty. —*Downame*, 1644.

18. Where all seems lost, much really may be gained.

(2634.) We know that the seed does not presently bring forth fruit when it is cast into the ground, but first it seems to rot and perish, and then it sprouts up in a green blade, and then it bears an ear, and a great increase and much fruit. And so it fares sometimes in hearing the word of God. For at first it seems quite lost and perished, being sown in some grounds, and yet afterwards it brings forth not only a fair green blade of an outward profession, but also a great increase of the ripe fruits of true godliness.

So also the sick patient, taking sovereign physic, is not presently cured, nay, instead of feeling any ease thereby he is made much more sick in his own sense and feeling; and yet after the physic has a little while wrought with him, and purged him of some superfluous and hurtful humours, he finds some amendment, and so, by little and little, he is restored to his former health. And so it is also with the spiritually sick patient. He does not always presently find ease and quiet peace of conscience; nay, many times he is tormented and vexed after

the has received the spiritual physic of the soul—the word of God, more than ever in former times. But yet, notwithstanding, in process of time, when this physic has effectually wrought with him, it purges him from his filthy corruptions, and strengthens him in all grace and godliness.

And, therefore, though we presently feel no profitable fruits of hearing, let not this discourage us from hearing; nay, rather let it serve as a sharp spur to prick us forward with more diligence, and let us join therewith hearty prayer, desiring the Lord to water the seed of His word sown in our hearts with the dew of His Holy Spirit; and then undoubtedly in the end the Lord will hear us, and to our exceeding comfort show unto us the plentiful fruits of all our labours. —*Downame*, 1644.

(2635.) Even when the Christian through weakness of memory cannot remember the very words he hears, to repeat them; yet then he keeps the power and savour of them in his spirit, as when sugar is dissolved in wine, you cannot see it, but you may taste it. What meat is eaten and digested, it is not to be found as it was received, but the man is cheered and strengthened by it, more able to walk and work than before, by which you may know it is not lost; so you may taste the truths the Christian heard, in his spirit, see them in his life. Perhaps if you ask him what the particulars were the minister had about faith, mortification, repentance, and the like, he cannot tell you; yet this you may find, his heart is more broken for sin, more enabled to rely on the promises, and now weaned from the world. As that good woman answered one that, coming from sermon, asked her what she remembered of the sermon? said, She could not at present recall much, but she heard that which should make her reform some things as soon as she came home. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2636.) "I should be most thankful were I like you," said the Funnel to the Bottle; "you keep all that is poured into you; but, as for me, I can hold nothing! All goes out again as fast as it comes in."

"And, what of it?" said the Bottle.

"Therefore, of course, all is lost on me!" answered the Funnel.

"That cannot be, assuredly, my dear friend, whatever you suppose," replied the Bottle, "for, whilst you are moistened by what you receive—which also refreshes you at the time, and the savour is left behind on you afterwards—you gain the benefit of what is conveyed, although the fulness cannot possibly be retained, as you desire."

"Oh, that I could retain the sermon I heard! but it always goes from my memory as fast as the words enter my ears!" is often the lamentation of a desiring soul; who therefore argues most unfavourably by itself spiritually. But, as the water passing through the wool cleanses it, while the wool retains not the water, so the spiritual mind may be refreshed and purified when the memory cannot bring home the recollection of the word.

—*Bowden.*

(2637.) Bishop Hoskyns of old time thus encourages those readers and hearers of the word who, though earnest in their desires, yet sometimes fail in their efforts to keep in memory the lively oracles: "I have heard of one who, returning from an affecting sermon, highly commended it to some; and being demanded what he remembered of it, answered: "Truly I remember nothing at all; but only while I heard it, it made me resolve to live better; and so, by God's grace, I will."

There is a story to the same purpose of one who complained to a holy, aged man, that he was discouraged from reading the Scriptures, because he could fasten nothing upon his memory. The old hermit bade him take an earthen pitcher and fill it with water. He then bade him empty it again and wipe it clean, that nothing should remain in it. This being done, "Now," said he, "though there being nothing of the water remaining in it, yet the pitcher is cleaner than it was before; so though thy memory retain nothing of the word thou readest, yet thy heart is cleaner for its very passage through."

HEARING.

1. Is a natural instinct of the new life.

(2638.) The hearts of believers are carried out to desire the word of communion with God from *instinct*, and not from any outward inducement. The cause of the natural appetite is not persuasion and discourse, but inclination; not argument, but nature. Appetite is an effect of life. As new-born babes desire the milk, not by instruction but instinct, without a teacher; as all creatures desire to preserve that life which they have, and therefore run by a natural propension to the teats of their dams; as trees that receive life from the earth and sun stretch out their branches to receive the sun, and strike deep their roots into the earth which brought them forth; and as the chicken is no sooner out of the shell, but it shrouds itself under the feathers of the hen; and the little lamb runs to its dam though there may be a thousand sheep of the same wool and colour, as if it said, Here I received what I have, and here I'll seek what I want—so by such a native, inbred desire do the saints run to God's word, and seek a supply of strength and nourishment; and the desire is very strong and vehement—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after," &c. What is the reason of this? You may as well ask what teacheth the young lambs to suck, and what teacheth the chicken to run under the wing of the hen, as who taught the regenerate to long for the word. It is the instinct of a spiritual nature. And it shows that all who do not "desire the sincere milk of the word," and have no such kindly appetite for the ordinances, who can relish nothing but meats and drinks, business, wealth, vanities—were never acquainted with the new nature. —*Salter*, 1840.

2. Its importance.

(2639.) There is more hope of the worst professor that hears the word, and attends unto it, than of the best of civil [moral] men that in profaneness of heart refuse it. . . . If thou seest two men most dangerously sick of divers diseases, and all mortal except they be cured, and one of them putting himself under the physician's hand, the other rejecting both physic and the physician; whether of these is more likely to be restored and live? Is not he that takes the receipt and medicine that is ministered? So is it in the sickness of the soul. If we hearken to the word, which is a spiritual medicine to heal every malady, we may be reclaimed.

—*Attersol*, 1618.

(2640.) "Despise not prophecy, quench not the Spirit." The coupling of these things together shows that if we despise prophecy, we quench the Spirit; as fire goes out not only by pouring on water, but by neglecting to stir and blow it up. To expect help from God when we are sluggish, is to tempt Christ, and put Him still upon a miraculous way to heal and cure our distempers. Who will bring bread and meat to a sluggard's bed who will not arise to labour for it, or will not rise at least to fetch it? Therefore, if we will not attend upon God in the means of grace, He will not bring us that help, comfort, and support that otherwise we might have. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2641.) Some have indeed been converted by reading, as Luther, Augustine, Junius, and others confess they were; but most commonly it is by hearing that men's souls come to live (Rom. x. 14). There is a blessing for readers; and there may be a fish or two caught in the net that is let down in a heap, but that is rare; it is not the net lapped up together, but haled out at length and spread all abroad, that bringeth in the draught: so it is the spreading out the word, the dilating on the matter in hand, which usually catcheth souls.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2642.) If thou wouldst attain to divine knowledge, wait on the ministry of the word. As for those who neglect this, and come not where the word is preached, they do like one that should turn his back on the sun, that he may see it; if thou wouldst know God, come where He hath appointed thee to learn. Indeed, where the means are not, God hath extraordinary ways; as a father, if no school in town, will teach his child at home; but if there be a public school, thither he sends him. "*God makes manifest*, saith Paul, *the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.*" Let men talk of the Spirit what they please: he will at last be found a quencher of the Spirit that is a despiser of prophecy; they both stand close together. "*Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesying.*"

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2643.) *Objection.* "I can profit as much by staying at home and reading the Scripture or some good book; it is the word of God which they preach, and it is that which I read at home. The books that are written by learned men are better than the sermons that are preached by our ministers."

Answer. What foolish pretences are these against the plain command of God and our own necessary duty! When God hath appointed you your duty, will He allow you to forsake it upon your own reason, as if you were wiser than God, and knew what will profit you better than He? If your physician give you a medicine, and bid you take it for the cure of your disease, will you be wiser than he, and say, Why may not such and such a thing serve my turn as well, or better? If you will needs be your own physician, and forsake God's direction, and cure yourselves, do it as well as you can, and what will become of it? It is a strange thing that a sottish sinner should think himself wiser than God, and take upon him to mend His word, and find out a better way to heaven than He hath prescribed him. . . .

Is it not horrible pride in you to think that you are able to understand the word of God as well without a teacher as with one? The eunuch said to Philip, when he asked him whether he understood what he read, "How can I except some man should guide me?" And yet you think you can read the word at home as profitably without a guide; as if your children that go to school should say, "We have the same books at home, and therefore we will not go to school; our master doth but teach us grammar, and other books, and these we can read at home." You are wise men, that know no more of your own ignorance; and humble men, that think you have no need of teaching; as if God had appointed His ministers and ordinances in vain. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. Should be practised constantly.

(2644.) The apostle exhorts, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you," because it must not take up a night's lodging and so be gone, but it must have a continual residence and abode in our hearts. Though the ground be good, yet it must have the former and the latter rain to make it fertile: and yet many of us think to grow green with one shower, and to go unto heaven with one sermon.

—*Henry Smith*, 1593.

(2645.) It is the glory of God's word, not that it is come, but that it shall remain for ever: it is the glory of a Christian, not that he has heard, but that he desires to hear still. Are the angels weary of looking on that face of God which they looked on yesterday? Or are the saints wearying of singing that song which they sung to God's glory yesterday? And is not that Hallelujah, that song which is their morning and evening sacrifice, and which shall be their song world without end, called still "a new song"?

Do not you be weary of hearing those things which you have heard from others before.

—*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(2646.) A bucket may, for want of use and by standing dry, be so full of slits and rifts that all the water you take up with it runneth out; yet the often dipping it into the well, and filling it with water, will make it moister than otherwise it would have been, and more retentive. Thus it is with our memories in the things concerning God and the good of our souls, being very brittle and pertuse, they will hold very little or nothing at all; this must, therefore, be matter of great necessity to hear often, that the frequent inculcation of the same things may imprint that in our mind by often hearing, which others of more happy memories have got at the first. —*Gouge*, 1575–1653.

(2647.) Children cannot suck long at a time, nor digest much; and therefore they need the more frequent returns of their meals. Such children are as believers in this world. "Precept must be upon precept, line upon line." The breast of the word must be often drawn, or else they cannot be nourished. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2648.) We should take the present opportunities of our souls, to hear and learn as Mary did. She stands not cavilling like our full-stomach hearers that ask, How can you prove that I am bound to hear such a lecture, or to come to church and hear a sermon twice on the Lord's day, or to come to the minister to ask advice, or be instructed by him? No more than a hungry man will ask, How prove

you that it is my duty to eat every day? Or than a sick man will say, How prove you that I am bound to seek to the physician, to go or send to his house, and to look after him? As there is much in the very new nature, and health, and relish of a gracious soul, to decide such controversies as these without any subtlety of argument, so a Christian's prudence and care of his salvation will tell him, that when Christ hath a voice to speak to him, it beseemeth him to have an ear to hear; and that the sermon telleth the hearer the season of his duty, and the offer of a mercy telleth when it is our duty to accept it, without any other more particular obligation; unless when we can truly say as before God, that some duty that at that time is greater hindereth us. These are easy questions to those that savour the things of the Spirit. When Christ is speaking, Mary will be hearing; and lesser things shall not call her off.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. Should be preceded by appropriate preparation.

(2649.) A man will not keep the Sabbath in his working apparel, but will put on his richest jewels, and array himself in his best attire; and yet we make no scruple at all to come unto the Sabbath's exercise with a profane, and a wicked, and our working-day heart. —*Henry Smith*, 1593.

(2650.) If we preach to hard hearts, it is like shooting against a brazen wall, the word doth not enter; it is like setting a gold seal upon marble which takes no impression. Oh, come to the word preached with a melting frame of heart! it is the melting wax receives the stamp of the seal; when the heart is in a melting frame, it will better receive the stamp of the word preached. When Paul's heart was melted and broken for sin, then "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Come not hither with hard hearts; who can expect a crop when the seed is sown upon stony ground?

—*Watson*, 1696.

(2651.) Be acquainted with the failings of your hearts and lives, and come on purpose to get directions and helps against those particular failings. You will not know what medicine you need, much less how to use it, if you know not what aileth you. Know what duties you omit or carelessly perform, and know what sins you are most guilty of, and say when you go out of doors, I go to Christ for physic for my own disease. I hope to hear something before I come back which may help me more against this sin, and fit me better for my duty, or provoke me more effectually. Are those men like to practise Christ's direction that either know not their disease, or love it and would not have it cured?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2652.) There is a great difference between a person who comes to church on Sunday morning with his heart hard from the world, and full of worldly cares, and running on his business or his pleasure all the time of service, and another who comes from his sacred devotion, from his reading of the Bible, from his solemn meditation on its truths, from his earnest prayer that God would bless the worship of His house. Now, how differently will these two engage in the worship of our Lord! The one comes with his soul ready warmed (as it were) to offer sacrifice; the fire is already burning on the altar. The other comes with his soul cold and hard; and, instead of beginning at once to worship, he needs first to try and begin to get ready to do so. What wonder, then, if the very same words which seem weary and heartless to the unprepared worshipper, should be full of interest and life to the prepared one? I wish heartily, my friends, that we were all more earnestly set to prepare before coming to God's house! It is curious, that with the needfulness of preparation so plain and so pressing, it should be so much neglected. Really the thing is too plain.

You know it would never do to bring out a locomotive engine without any fire in its furnace, and without any steam in its boiler, and fasten it to a train, and expect it to draw it away. No; the engine can draw the train when it has been prepared to do so; it cannot when it is not. And in like manner, unless a man gets up the fire, as it were, in his heart, before going to God's house, he cannot start off at once, so to speak, in God's worship. Would that we could always be sure, when we take our accustomed places here on the morning of each Lord's day, that hundreds of earnest prayers have gone up that morning already for a blessing in our worship; and that when we blend our supplications in one, and send them up in the sanctuary with a single voice, we are only continuing a pleasant work of communion with our God and Saviour, begun already in our own chambers and by our own firesides! —*Boyd.*

(2653.) If privileged and professing hearers of the Gospel come short of the kingdom, the fault lies not in the seed—the fault lies not often or to a great extent even in the sower, although his work may have been feebly and unskilfully done. If the seed is good, and the ground well prepared, a very poor and awkward kind of sowing will suffice. Seed flung in any fashion into the soft ground will grow; whereas, if it fall on the wayside, it will bear no fruit, however artfully it may have been spread. My father was a practical and skilful agriculturist. I was wont, when very young, to follow his footsteps into the field, further and oftener than was convenient for him, or comfortable for myself. Knowing well how much a child is gratified by being permitted to imitate a man's work, he sometimes hung the seed-bag, with a few handfuls in it, upon my shoulder, and sent me into the field to sow. I contrived in some way to throw the grain away, and it fell among the clods. But the seed that fell from an infant's hands, when it fell in the right place, grew as well and ripened as fully as that which had been scattered by a strong and skilful man. In like manner, in the spiritual department, the skill of the sower, although important in its own place, is, in view of the final result, a subordinate thing. The cardinal points are the seed and the soil. In point of fact, throughout the history of the Church, while the Lord abundantly honoured His own ordinance of a standing ministry, He has never ceased to show, by granting signal success to feeble instruments, that results in His work are not necessarily proportionate to the number of talents employed.

Nor does that of failure, in the last resort, lie in the soil. The man who receives the Gospel only on the hard surface of a careless life, is of the same flesh and blood, endued with the same understanding mind and immortal spirit, with his neighbour who has already become a new creature in

Christ. Believers and unbelievers are possessed of the same nature and faculties. As the ground which has been trodden into the footpath is in all its essential qualities the same as that which has been broken small by the plough and harrow: so the human constitution and faculties of one who lives without God in the world, are substantially the same as those which belong to the redeemed of the Lord. It was the breaking of the ground which caused the difference between the fruitful field and the barren wayside. So those minds and hearts that now bear the fruits of faith were barren till they were broken; and those on which the good seed has often been thrown, only to be thrown away, may yet yield an increase of a hundredfold to their owner, when conviction and repentance shall have rent them open to admit the word of life.

—*Arnot.*

5. Should have for its end personal profit.

(2654.) As the little birds perk up their heads when their dam comes with meat, and prepare their beaks to take it, striving who shall catch most—now this looks to be served, and now that looks for a bit, and every mouth is open till it be filled: so you are here like birds, and we the dam, and the word the food. Therefore, you must prepare a mouth to take it. They who are hungry will strive for the bread which is cast among them, and think, "This is spoken to me," "This is spoken to me," "I have need of this," "And I have need of this." "*Comfort*, go thou to my fear!" "*Promise*, go thou to my distrust!" "*Threatening*, go thou to my security!" And the word shall be like a perfume, which has an odour for every one.

—*Henry Smith*, 1593.

(2655.) Many men take no pleasure in flowers, or care any further for them than to look upon them, to smell them, and have them in their hands; but the bees draw from them both honey and wax, and the skilful apothecary maketh many medicines of them against divers and sundry diseases. Thus, many hear sermons only for their pleasure, for the elegancy of the style, delicacy of the words, smoothness of the language, and gracefulness of the delivery; this is but to make a nosegay to smell for a while, and cast it anon after into a corner—to hear the word gladly, but in time of temptation to fall away. —*Fonseca.*

(2656.) In waiting on the ministry, attend to the doctrine as well as the precept; the former is required to make thee a *solid* Christian, as the latter to make thee a *warm* and obedient one. Planting goes before watering, and so should teaching before exhorting. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1619.

(2657.) If any of you are troubled with the itch of curiosity, and love to be wise above what is written, and delight to scan the choice mysteries of religion by carnal reason, and affect elegant expressions and seraphical notions, and the flowers of rhetoric, more than sound and wholesome truths, then you may ease yourselves, if you please, of the trouble of reading this following treatise; only remember this, that the prudent husbandman looks more and delights more in the ripeness and soundness and goodness of the corn that is in his field, than he does at the beauty of the cockle; and remember that no man can live more miserably than he that lives altogether upon sauces; and he that looks more at the handsomeness than he does at the wholesomeness of the dishes of meat that are set before him, may well pass for a fool.

—*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(2658.) It is a strange folly in multitudes of us to set ourselves no mark, to propound no end in the hearing of the Gospel.

The merchant sails not only that he may sail, but for traffic, and traffics that he may be rich.

The husbandman ploughs not only to keep himself busy with no further end, but ploughs that he may sow, and sows that he may reap with advantage.

And shall we do the most excellent and fruitful work fruitlessly? hear only to hear and look no further? —*Leighton*, 1611–1684.

6. Wandering thoughts.

(2659.) Wandering thoughts in hearing rise out of the heart. These sparks come out of our own furnace. Vain thoughts are the mud which the heart, as a troubled sea, casts up. "For, from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." —*Watson*, 1696.

7. Profitless hearing injurious.

(2660.) As meat, the more a man receiveth, the more it distempereth, if it be not digested; so the more a man learneth, and the more he heareth, the greater is his sin if he grow not by it.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

8. Should be followed by meditation.

(2661.) Bare hearing begets but transient thoughts, and leaves but a weak impression on the soul; like a flash of lightning, as soon gone as come; or the glance of a sunbeam upon a wave. A man never discerns the scope, the beauty, the order of the truths delivered, till he comes to meditate on them, and to go over them again and again in his thoughts. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2662.) Meditate often of it. "Mary kept all these things;" how did she keep them? She "pondered them in her heart." Musing makes the fire to burn, and deep and constant thoughts are operative, not a glance or a slight view. The hen which straggles from her nest when she sits abrooding produces nothing; it is a constant incubation which hatches the young. So when we have only a few straggling thoughts, and do not set abrooding upon a truth, when we have flashes only, like a little glance of a sunbeam upon a wall, it does nothing; but serious and inculcative thoughts (through the Lord's blessing) will do the work.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2663.) When you have heard the word, remember what you hear, and apply it to yourselves by serious inculcative thoughts. So when you read the word, do not only understand it, but think of it again and again. "Set your hearts to all the words which I testify among you this day," says Moses to the Israelites. So Christ says, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." Truths never go to the quick of the affections but by their serious and ponderous thoughts. You will not lift up your hands till the truth sink into the heart. You read chapters, hear sermon after sermon; they do not stir you, or it is but a little, for a fit, like a man

that has been a little warming himself by the fire, and goes away, and is colder than he was before. O Christian, this means is not to be neglected, no more than reading and hearing. because of its great use, both for first conversion and for continual quickening. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2664.) Meditation to the sermon is what the harrow is to the seed, it covers those truths which else might have been picked or washed away. I am afraid there are many proofs turned down at a sermon that are hardly turned up, and looked on any more when the sermon is done; and if so, you make others believe you are greater traders for your soul than you are indeed; as if one should come to a shop and lay by a great deal of rich ware, and when he hath done, goes away and never calls for it. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2665.) Press the word much upon your hearts after hearing. How great is the neglect of this application of the word of truth! Men will spend hours in hearing and not one minute in serious reflections; as if the word in their ears, or a receipt in their pockets, could cure the disease in the heart. This is the worm at the root of all our spiritual advantages. What is only dashed upon the fancy or lightly coloured, may be soon washed off. The soil must be made tenacious of the seed by the harrow of meditation, which hides it in the heart and covers it with earth; for want of being laid deep, and banded by serious meditation, the seed takes no root, because there is not much earth about it (Mark iv. 5, 6, 16). How can food nourish your body, unless it be concocted by natural heat? or spiritual food enliven you, unless concocted by meditation? —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

9. How the impressions produced by it are to be retained.

(2666.) The only cause why you forget so fast as you hear, and of all the sermons which you have heard, have scarce the substance of one in your hearts to comfort or counsel you when you have need, is because you went from sermon to dinner, and never thought any more of the matter; as though it were enough to hear; like sieves, which hold water no longer than they are in a river. What a shame is this, to remember every clause in your lease, and every point in your father's will; nay, to remember an old tale as long as you live, though it be long since you heard it, and the lessons which you hear now will be gone within this hour, that you may ask, What hath stolen my sermon from me? —*Henry Smith*, 1593.

(2667.) As market-folk returning from the market, will be talking of their markets as they go by the way, and be casting up of their pennyworths when they come home, reckon what they have taken and what they have laid out, and how much they have gotten; so should we, after we have heard the word publicly, confer privately of it with others, at least meditate on it by ourselves, and be sure to take an account of ourselves, how we have profited that day by the word that hath been spoken to us, and also by other religious exercises that have been used of us. And as the marketman counteth that but an ill market-day that he hath not gained somewhat more or less, so may we well account it an ill Sabbath day to us wherein we have not profited somewhat, wherein we have not increased our knowledge or been bettered in our affection, wherein we have not been either informed in judgment or reformed in practice, wherein we have added nothing to our talent. —*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

(2668.) If ever you should be converted, use to consider frequently and seriously of those truths of God that must do the work. The word of God is pure and powerful to convert the soul, but can you look it should convert you, if you will not so much as soberly look upon it? How can that work upon your hearts which is out of your minds? It is you that must join with us for your own conversion, and do the rest of the work, when you come home; and not think that a sermon can do it; when you forget it and never mind it more. If you seek to the ablest physician for your body, he can but give you physic; it is you that must take it and keep it, and observe directions till it work. If you will presently cast it up again, how can it do you good? We tell you of those truths that are most useful to your conversion, and if you will take them home, and keep them and ponder of them when you are alone till they sink into your hearts, you may be happy men; but if you will cast them all up again, and will not be persuaded to bestow now and then a few of your deepest serious thoughts for the further entertainment of them, how should they do you saving good? If I could prevail with this congregation to be but considerate, and now and then to bestow some time to get the truth to their hearts, I should have great hopes of the conversion of you all; for light is stronger than darkness: if you would but open the window by consideration, and let it in, you should find the darkness presently dispelled, and it would be day with you that have sat in the shadow of death. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

HEART, THE.

1. Is naturally corrupt.

(2669.) Because we see not this corruption work out in the strength of it, therefore we can hardly be persuaded of it; but all poisoned bodies die not presently. As wood-worms eat the heart of a board, when no hole appears in the top, so it is with lust, all outwardly seems well when corruption has taken deep hold of us. —*Bayne*, 1616.

(2670.) That which Æsop said to his master, when he came into his garden and saw so many weeds in it, is applicable to the heart. His master asked him what was the reason that the weeds grew up so fast and the herbs thrived not? He answered, The ground is natural mother to the weeds, but a stepmother to the herbs. So the heart of man is natural mother to sin and corruption, but a stepmother to grace and goodness; and further than it is watered from heaven, and followed with a great deal of care and pains, it grows not. —*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(2671.) Sometimes, indeed, there appears a scuffle between Satan and a carnal heart; but it is a mere cheat, like the fighting of two fencers on a stage. You would think at first they were in earnest; but observing how wary they are where they hit one another, you may soon know they do not mean to kill: and that which puts all out of doubt when the guise is done, you shall see them making merry together with what they have got of

their spectators, which was all they fought for. When a carnal heart makes the greatest bustle against sin, by complaining of it, or praying against it, follow him but off the stage of duty (where he had gained the reputation of a saint, the prize he fights for), and you shall see them sit as friendly in a corner as ever. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2672.) Actions are a greater discovery of a principle than words. The testimony of works is louder and clearer than that of words, and the frame of men's hearts must be measured rather by what they do than by what they say. There may be a mighty distance between the tongue and the heart, but a course of action is as little guilty of lying as interest is, according to our common saying. All outward impieties are the branches of an atheism at the root of our nature, as all pestilential sores are expressions of the contagion in the blood. Sin is therefore frequently called ungodliness in our English dialect. Men's practices are the best indexes of their principles. The current of a man's life is the counterpart of the frame of his heart; who can deny an error in the spring or wheels when he perceives an error in the hand of the dial? Who can deny atheism in the heart when so much is visible in the life? The taste of the water discovers what mineral it is strained through.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2673.) Our corrupted hearts are the factories of the devil, which may be at work without his presence; for when that circumventing spirit has drawn malice, envy, and all unrighteousness unto well-rooted habits in his disciples, iniquity then goes upon its own legs; and if the gates of hell were shut up for a time, vice would still be fertile and produce the fruits of hell. Thus, when God forsakes us, Satan also leaves us: for such offenders he looks upon as sure and sealed up, and his temptations then needless unto them.

—*Sir Thomas Browne*, 1605–1682.

(2674.) The heart is deceitful, and who can know it? but as we need not taste all the water of the sea, or every drop thereof, to know that it is salt and brackish; nor taste every apple of the tree, to know the tree: so, the tasting of some evils of our heart may make us know what we are; so as to make us flee out of ourselves to Christ.

—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(2675.) It is a mere fallacy to talk of the sins of a short life. The sinner is always a sinner. Put a pump into a river, you may throw out some water, but the river remains. *Newton*, 1725–1807.

(2676.) Here is a piece of iron laid upon the anvil. The hammers are plied upon it lustily. A thousand sparks are scattered on every side. Suppose it possible to count each spark as it falls from the anvil; yet who could guess the number of the unborn sparks that still lie latent and hidden in the mass of iron? Now, brethren, your sinful nature may be compared to that heated bar of iron. Temptations are the hammers; your sins are the sparks. If you could count them (which you cannot do), yet who could tell the multitude of unborn iniquities—eggs of sin that lie slumbering in your souls? You must know this before you know the sinfulness of your nature. Our open sins are like the farmer's little sample which he brings to market. There are granaries full at home. The iniquities that we see are like the weeds upon the surface soil; but I have been told, and indeed have seen the truth of it, that if you dig six feet into the earth and turn up fresh soil, there will be found in that soil six feet deep the seeds of the weeds indigenous to the land. And so we are not to think merely of the sins that grow on the surface, but if we could turn our heart up to its core and centre, we should find it is fully permeated with sin as every piece of putridity is with worms and rottenness.

—*Spurgeon.*

2. The carnal mind is enmity against God.

(2677.) The carnal mind is enmity against God. For was there ever a man who underwent a saving change that did not feel when he was converted that he was conquered, when he is sanctified that he is subdued? This enmity does not lie, as some fancy, in bad habits, education, or other such accidental and extraneous circumstances. It has its source in the mind itself. Regarded as a disease, it is not like a cold which any one may take, but a consumption which is constitutional and hereditary: and what are all these sins and crimes which the apostle describes as works of the flesh, but, like the flushed cheek, and languid eye, and throbbing temples, and bounding pulse of fever, the symptoms of an enmity that lies lurking in every heart? The temptations and circumstances that call out the enmity in so many different ways, and to so many different degrees, no more create it than the showers and sunshine create the deadly hemlock which has its seed in the soil.

Nor is this all the truth. Consumption, fell and deadly as it is, usually threatens and attacks but one organ. The constitution may be otherwise hale and sound. The best things, it may indeed be said, have their defects—there are spots in the sun, for instance; there is more or less of alloy in all gold; and weeds spring up to deform the fairest gardens. But, as is proved, whenever circumstances occur to call it out, this enmity affects the whole man; so that he is as much under its influence as every sail, yard, mast, and timber of a ship, are under the government of her helm. True, that does not always appear; but no more does the fire that sleeps in the cold flint, until there be a collision with steel; ah, see how it flashes out then—fire in every chip of the flint, in the whole texture and fabric of the stone. The carnal mind, according to Paul, not only *has*, but *is*, enmity against God. Enmity is of its very nature, as it is of the nature of grass to be green, or sugar to be sweet, or vinegar to be sour. If it were not so, man would not need to be born again, to get a new heart; like a watch that had but started a jewel, or lost the tooth of a wheel, it were enough to be repaired without being renewed. —*Guthrie.*

(2678.) What a plain and affecting proof of this have we in that history of our blessed Lord, which is not more a beautiful exhibition of love on God's part, than a hateful one of hatred on man's. Here is the thing so put to the proof that there is no occasion for speculation, nor any room for dispute. Here is God incarnate; here is God in Christ; in the most favourable of all circumstances for man—God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, coming not to condemn the world, but that the world by Him might be saved. And

did He find in men friends or foes? I once saw the poor, pale, cold corpse of a beautiful little girl taken out of the roaring flood in which her father—he was a drunkard—when drowning himself, drowned her; monster, and slave of vice, he was seen to raise his hand in the black swirling pool, and lay it on her young head, pressing it down till he and she both sank together. But fancy a drowning man raising himself before he sank, and putting forth his dying strength to wound a hand stretched out to save him—to plunge a knife into the heart of a kind man who had perilled his own life to save his. What hatred were that, which could prompt to so black a deed! Yet, when they dragged Him to the rock of Nazareth to cast Him over, when the kiss of Judas was on His cheek, when the cry of "Crucify Him" was in His ear, when the thorns pierced His brows, and the iron nailed Him to the cross, did not God in Christ feel that He had come not to save His friends, but to save His enemies? I would hold any man my enemy that would kill my son; and if men by nature were not God's enemies, why did they kill His Son? why do they still reject Him? The letters did not burn so bright on the plaster of Belshazzar's wall, nor does the sun shine brighter in the heavens, than these words on the cross—he that runneth may read them—"Herein is love, indeed, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." —*Guthrie.*

(2679.) Men say, "It is impossible that I should have an emotion of hatred towards God, and never know it. Do you suppose I should not know fire if it touched me? Do you suppose that if a man were to put caustic on me I should not know it? And do you suppose I could have a feeling of hatred towards God and never be conscious of it?" There is such a thing as latent hatred, that must be inflamed before it will manifest itself. Men say, "Do you suppose I could carry fire in my bosom and not know it? I have felt myself a hundred times, and I am not hot." But there may be fire raked up as well as fire in full glow. There may be a susceptibility of heart that stands prepared, like powder in magazines, to be ignited. A man may be like a military fortification, with implements of war of every kind, ready to be brought into requisition the moment the signal gun is fired. But it is a military fortification, though the signal gun may never have been fired, and though not one of these implements have ever been brought into requisition. It is a military fortification, though a particle of powder may never have been exploded in it. It was built for war from foundation to turret, and all the implements it contains were made for war, and they are in readiness to be applied to the purposes of war when the proper time shall come.

Now look at the soul—castellated, fortified, provisioned, armed. Though the day may not have come when its mighty implements have been used, yet they are ready to be used at any moment when the proper circumstances arise. A man may have qualities of mind which do not manifest themselves in his life, because the circumstances necessary to bring them into action do not exist.

It is charged, not that every man has come to a flagrant outbreak in opposition to the Divine Being, but that every man has elements that are opposed to the Divine Being, which, the moment he is brought to a realisation of God's authority, will develop their real character. You are not obliged, in order to be at enmity with God, to say to Him in so many words, "I will not have Thee to reign over me." Whether spoken or not, that is the natural language of the unconverted human heart. —*Beecher.*

3. The difficulty of knowing it.

(2680.) The heart is deep, and, like Ezekiel's vision, presents so many chambers of imagery, one within another, that it requires time to get a considerable acquaintance with it, and we shall never know it thoroughly. It is now more than twenty-eight years since the Lord began to open mine to my own view; and from that time to this almost every day has discovered to me something which till then was unobserved; and the farther I go, the more I seem convinced that I have entered but a little way. A person that travels in some parts of Derbyshire may easily be satisfied that the country is cavernous; but how large, how deep, how numerous the caverns may be, which are hidden from us by the surface of the ground, and what is contained in them, are questions which our nicest inquiries cannot fully answer. Thus I judge of my heart, that it is very deep and dark, and full of evil; but as to particulars, I know not one of a thousand. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

4. It is known to God.

(2681.) He who makes a watch or engine, knows all the workmanship in it. God, that made the heart, knows all the motions and fallacies of it. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2682.) God sees hearts as we see faces. —*George Herbert.*

(2683.) Before men we stand as opaque bee-hives. They can see the thoughts go in and out of us, but what work they do inside of a man they cannot tell. Before God we are as *glass* bee-hives, and all that our thoughts are doing within us He perfectly sees and understands. —*Beecher.*

5. It is tested by temptation.

(2684.) The force of gunpowder is not known until some spark light on it; and oftentimes the stillest natures, if crossed, discover the deepest corruptions. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2685.) As dust settles, and lies as quietly as if it had no existence, but is stirred and raised by the slightest breath of wind, so it sometimes seems as if sin no longer dwelt within us, but was vanquished and annihilated, and we freed from all restraint to serve God in a pure and blameless life; and yet no sooner does opportunity occur, than sin makes its appearance, and we discover that we have much more of the world in our hearts than we had ever supposed. —*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(2686.) In a vessel filled with muddy water, the thickness visibly subsides to the bottom, and leaves the water purer and clearer, until at last it seems perfectly limpid. The slightest motion, however, brings the sediment again to the top, and makes the water thick and turbid as before. Here we have an emblem of the human heart. The heart is full of the mud of sinful lusts and carnal desires; and the consequence is, that no pure water—that is, good and holy thoughts—can flow from it. It is, in truth, a miry pit and slough of sin, in which all sorts of ugly reptiles are bred and crawl. Many a

one, however, is deceived by it, and never imagines his heart half so wicked as it really is, because at times its lusts are at rest, and sink, as it were, to the bottom. On such occasions his thoughts appear to be holy and devout, his desires pure and temperate, his words charitable and edifying, and his works useful and Christian. But this lasts only so long as he is not moved; I mean so long as he is without opportunity or incitement to sin. Let that occur, and worldly lusts rise so thick that his whole thoughts, words, and works show no trace of anything but slime and impurity. This man is meek as long as he is not thwarted; but cross him, and he is like powder, ignited by the smallest spark, and blazing up with a loud report and destructive force. Another is temperate so long as he has no social companions; a third chaste while the eyes of men are upon him. —*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(2687.) Temptation is the fire that brings up the scum of the heart. The corrupt heart resembles an ant's nest, on which, while the stone lies, none of them appear. But take off that, and stir them with only the point of a straw, what a swarm is there, and how lively they are! Just such a sight, O man, would thy heart afford thee, did the Lord but withdraw the restraint He has laid upon it, and suffer Satan to stir it up by temptation.

—*Boston*, 1676–1732.

6. Its suitors.

(2688.) Man, as soon as he was made, had two great suitors for his life and soul: Virtue, Vice. They both travelled the world with trains, harbingers, and large attendance.

Virtue had before her Truth running naked, valiant, but inelegant; then Labour, Cold, Hunger, Thirst, Care, Vigilance, and these but poorly arrayed, and she in plain though clean attire. But looking near, she was of such a self-perfection, that she might very well emblem whatsoever Omnipotency could make most rare. Modest she was; and so lovely that whosoever looked but steadfastly upon her could not but insoul himself in her. After her followed Content, full of jewels, coin, perfumes, and all the massy riches of the world. Then Joy, with maskers, mirth, revelling, and all essential pleasures. Next Honour, with all the ancient orders of nobility, sceptres, thrones, and crowns imperial. Lastly, Glory, shaking such a brightness from her many tresses, that, I have heard, no man could ever come so near as to describe her truly. And behind all these came Eternity, casting a ring about them, which, like a strong enchantment, made them for ever the same. Thus Virtue.

Vice thus: Before her, first went Lying, a smooth painted housewife, clad in all in changeable, but, under her garments, full of scabs and ugly ulcers; she spoke pleasingly, and promised whatsoever could be wished for, in behalf of her mistress, Vice. Upon her Wit waited, a conceited fellow, and one that much took man with his pretty tricks and gambols. Next, Sloth and Luxury, so full that they were after choked with their own fat. Then (because she could not have the true ones, for they follow Virtue) she gets impostors to personate Content, Joy, Honour, in all their wealth and royalties. After these she comes herself, sumptuously apparelled, but a nasty surfeited slut; whereby, if any kissed her, they were sure by her breath to perish. After her, followed on a sudden, like enemies in ambush, Guilt, Horror, Shame, Loss, Want, Sorrow, Torment; these charmed with Eternity's ring as the other.

And thus they wooed fond man.

—*Felltham*, 1668.

7. The determining power of the life.

(2689.) As the sun rises first, and then the beasts arise from their dens, the fowls from their nests, and men from their beds; so when the heart sets forward to God, all the members will follow after it—the tongue will praise Him, the foot will follow Him, the ear will attend Him, the eye will watch Him, the hand will serve Him, nothing will stay after the heart, but every one goes like handmaids after their mistress.

Therefore Solomon, picking out the heart for God (Prov. xxiii. 26), spake as though he would set out the pleasantest, and fairest, and easiest way to serve Him, without any grudging, or toil, or weariness. Touch but the first link, and all the rest will follow. So set the heart agoing, and it is like the poise of a clock, which turns all the wheels one way. Such an oil is upon the heart which makes all nimble and current about it. Therefore it is almost as easy to speak well and do well, as to think well. If the heart indite a good matter, no marvel though the tongue be the pen of a ready writer. But if the heart be dull, all is like a left hand so inapt and untoward that it cannot turn itself to any good. —*Henry Smith*, 1593.

(2690.) When the citadel of the heart is won, the turret of the understanding will not long hold out.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(2691.) When men grow once regardless of their consciences, good affections will soon languish, and then will noisome lusts gather strength, and cast up mud into the soul, that the judgment cannot run clear. Seldom is the head right when the heart is amiss. A rotten heart will be ever and anon sending up evil thoughts into the mind, as marshy and fenny grounds do foggy mists into the air, that both darken and corrupt it. As a man's taste, when some malignant humour affects the organ, savoureth nothing aright, but deems sweet things bitter and sour things pleasant, so where any domineering lust has made itself master of the heart, it will so blind and corrupt the judgment, that it shall not be able to discern (at any certainty) good from evil, or truth from falsehood.

—*Sanderson*, 1587–1662.

(2692.) The bowl runs as the bias inclines it; the ship moves as the rudder steers it; and the mind thinks according to the predominancy of vice or virtue in it.

The heart of man is like the spring of the clock, which causes the wheels to move right or wrong, well or ill. If the heart once set forward for God, all the members will follow after; all the parts, like dutiful handmaids, in their places, will wait on their mistress.

The heart is the great workhouse where all sin is wrought before it is exposed to open view. It is the mint where evil thoughts are coined, before they are current in our words or actions. It is the forge where all our evil works as well as words are hammered out. There is no sin but is dressed in the withdrawing room of the heart, before it appears on the stage of life.

It is vain to go about an holy life, till the heart

be made holy. The pulse of the hand beats well or ill, according to the state of the heart. If the chinks of the ship are unstopped, it will be to no purpose to labour at the pump. When the water is foul at the bottom, no wonder that scum and filth appear at the top. There is no way to stop the issue of sin, but by drying up the matter that feeds it.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2693.) If we desire a true reformation, let us begin on reforming our hearts and lives, in keeping Christ's commandments. All outward forms and models of reformation, though they be never so good in their kind, yet they are of little worth to us without this inward reformation of the heart. Tin, or lead, or any baser metal, if it be cast into never so good a mould and made up into never so elegant a figure, yet it is but tin or lead still; it is the same metal that it was before. If adulterate silver, that has much alloy or dross in it, have never so current a stamp put upon it, yet it will not pass when the touchstone tries it. We must be reformed within, with a spirit of fire and a spirit of burning, to purge us from the dross and corruption of our hearts, and refine us as gold and silver, and then we shall be reformed truly, and not before.

—*Cudworth*, 1617–1688.

8. Its strength for evil.

(2694.) This weak heart is strong in passions, violent in desires, irresistible in its appetites, impatient in its lusts, furious in anger: here are strengths enough, one should think. But so have I seen a man in a fever, sick and distempered, unable to walk, less able to speak sense, or to do an act of counsel; and yet, when his fever had boiled up to a delirium, he was strong enough to beat his nursekeeper and his doctor too, and to resist the loving violence of all his friends, who would fain bind him down to reason and his bed; and yet we still say, he is weak, and sick unto death. For these strengths of madness are not health, but furiousness and disease; it is weakness another way. And so are the strengths of a man's heart; they are fetters and manacles; strong, but they are the cordage of imprisonment; so strong, that the heart is not able to stir. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

9. Must be kept with all diligence.

(2695.) Our heart is like a mill, ever grinding, which a certain lord gave in charge to his servant, enjoining that he should only grind in it his master's grain, whether wheat, barley, or oats, and telling him that he must subsist on the produce. But that servant has an enemy who is always playing tricks on the mill. If any moment he finds it unwatched, he throws in gravel to keep the stones from acting, or pitch to clog them, or dirt and chaff to mix with the meal. If the servant is careful in tending his mill, there flows forth a beautiful flour, which is at once a service to his master and a subsistence to himself; but if he plays the truant, and allows his enemy to tamper with the machinery, the bad outcome tells the tale, his lord is angry, and he himself is starved.

This mill ever grinding is the heart ever thinking. God has given one to each man to guard and tend, and bids him grind in it only those thoughts which He Himself supplies. Some of these thoughts are fine wheat—meditations concerning God Himself. Others are like barley—for instance, when the soul strives to ascend from one virtue to another. And others still are like oats—desires, for example, to break off bad habits, which desires are good thoughts, although not of the highest order. These thoughts God would have us keep continually revolving in our minds. But the devil is man's adversary, and if at any moment he finds the heart empty of good thoughts, he instantly throws in some bad ones. Some of these bad thoughts—such as wrath and envy—dissipate the mind; others—such as sensuality and luxury—clog its action; and others—such as vain imaginations—fill up the place of better thoughts. But if a man carefully watch over his heart, and keep holy thoughts revolving in it, then through the aperture of the mill—the mouth—come wholesome and profitable words, and his very seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting, take the complexion of his inward thoughts, and become pure and holy also (Matt. xv. 18–20; xii. 34, 35). By such meditations he fulfils the will of God, and builds up his own everlasting life. But if he allows the devil to tamper with his heart, and corrupt it, the vicious produce of his evil thoughts comes forth to view; and whilst the Most High is exceedingly displeased, the fruit to the man himself is not life but death.

—*Anselm*, 1093.

(2696.) Like as when our enemy invadeth us we seek to repulse and drive him back by all means possible, lest he should set footing in our territories and land, and nestle himself near us; and if he be entered, we are careful so to impeach and remove him, that he fortify not himself: even so, in like manner, we must make such bulwarks about our hearts, that anger may no way enter; but if it happen that it once entereth, and lieth secretly in the corners of our breasts, and that it surprise and set upon us on the sudden, or maketh way by force, we must forthwith devise all the ways we can to expel it as soon as we may. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2697.) Our hearts, like the plummets of a clock, draw us with the weight of their corruption downward, till they pitch themselves and rest upon earthly vanities, unless every day, yea, many times a day, we pull them up, and give spiritual motion to them by Christian exercises.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(2698.) This heart of ours is the best or the worst ground that lies between heaven and earth. The worst, if it be thorny, weedy, miry; but if fair, pleasant, fruitful, it is the best. There be two that lay claim to it; and howsoever the property be God's, for He made it, yet Satan will try His title, and sues to have it.

First, let us weed this ground, and that betimes, for old weeds will hardly be destroyed. Sins are weeds, the weeding-hook is repentance: let not a weed appear, but presently by contrition cut it down. God indeed said of another field, and in another sense, "Let both grow together until the harvest;" but it must not be so here, for then the weeds will eat out the corn.

Secondly, keep it in heart; for if the soul have not her cheerings, she will grow faint and barren. The way to keep thy heart in heart, is by devout prayers, meditation, hearing the word, and receiving that which is the food of the soul, the blessed sacrament.

Thirdly, look to the expiration of thy farm, and

be sure to leave it in good case; that when the great Landlord shall call the tenant out of the tenement, the soul from the body, it may be entertained into His own house, the glorious court of heaven.

Fourthly and lastly, be sure to pay thy rent always, and that is thankfulness.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(2699.) Keep a constant watch over your hearts. David desires God to "set a watch before the doors of his lips," much more should we desire that God would keep the door of our hearts. We should have grace stand there as sentinel especially, for words have an outward bridle: they may disgrace a man and impair his interest and credit, but thoughts are unknown if undiscovered by words. If a man know what time the thief would come to rob him, he would watch. We know we have thieves within us to steal away our hearts; therefore, when they are so near us, we should watch against a surprise, and the more carefully, because they are so extraordinarily sudden in their rise and quick in their motion. Our minds are like idle schoolboys that will be frisking from one place to another if the master's back be turned, and playing instead of learning. Let a strict hand be kept over our affections, those wild beasts within us, because they many times force the understanding to pass a judgment according to their pleasure, not its own sentiment. —*Charnock*, 1620–1680.

(2700.) He that will keep water in a sieve, must use more than ordinary diligence. Our heart is a leaky vessel; and therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

—*Bunyan*, 1628–1688.

(2701.) Gotthold ordered a pasture in his garden to be dressed afresh, and planted with all varieties of bulbs. The work, when finished, suggested to him the following reflections. Although the gardener has exercised his skill upon this plot of ground, and given it a form, which adds greatly to its beauty, nevertheless like other earth, it still retains the wilderness of its nature, and unless carefully kept, would, ere long, be overgrown with weeds. It is the same with the hearts of God's children. No doubt they have experienced a blessed regeneration, have become other men, and by the grace, word, and Spirit of their heavenly Father, have had their hearts transformed and renewed. Still innate sinfulness continues lurking within them, and must daily be kept under, by repentance and prayer, struggles and holy resolutions. They who are sincerely pious, do indeed forsake sin, but sin does not forsake them. —*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(2702.) A lute is made of common and soft timber, and has not itself, but the hand of the workman, to thank for fashioning it into what it is. In like manner a Christian has no distinction above other men, save that the hand of a merciful God has made him a vessel of grace. As a lute requires to be strung and skilfully tuned and touched, so must the finger of God furnish the heart with good thoughts, and then adjust them to the honour of His Name. However beautiful a lute may be, it is easily put out of tune, and therefore needs continual care. And so does our Christianity. Disattuned by the devil, the wicked world, and our own perverse will, it would sound harshly, did not the gracious hand of the Most High daily regulate and correct it.

At the same time, let us remember what duties are ours. If we labour to tune a lute, that its sound may not grate upon human ears, why do we not take equal pains to harmonise and regulate our thoughts, words, and works, that they may not offend the sharp eyes and ears of the Most High! We hear at once if but a single string is out of tune; and yet we often neither mark nor care for the discord between our life and walk and God's holy commandments. Men instantly tell us of the false note in our music; and let us also, my friend, admonish each other, when we perceive a flaw or discord in our Christianity.

Lord Jesus! tune, regulate, and mould my life, to make it consonant with Thine. It is true that my strings are weak, and cannot sustain so high a pitch as Thy perfection. I console myself, however, with the thought, that as in this lute there are higher and lower clefs, so among Christians there are both the strong and the weak; and Thou art satisfied with both, provided only they are not false.

—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(2703.) We must shut our heart against pride, against sensuality, and all the other passions, as one shuts the doors and windows that nobody may be able to get in. —*Vianney*.

(2704.) It is in the motions of a tempted soul to sin, as in the motions of a stone falling from the brow of a hill; it is easily stopped at first, but when once it is set a going, who shall stay it? And therefore, it is the greatest wisdom in the world to observe the first motions of the heart, to check and stop sin there. The motions of sin are weakest at first: a little care and watchfulness may prevent much mischief now, which the careless heart, not heeding, is presently brought within the power of temptation, as the Syrians were brought blindfold into the midst of Samaria before they knew where they were. —*Salter*, 1840.

(2705.) "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Keep it in the daily, hourly tempers, habits, musings, and imaginations. I sometimes think that we Protestants are under some heavy disadvantages here. We make so much of sin in the gross, and confess in general terms so abjectly, that we pass over the minor faults, defects, slips of temper, or conduct, which make so much of the present pain or pleasure of life, and are busily building beneath the surface, like the coral insects, the edifice of the future, shaping thereby the destinies of eternity. The confessional is a mighty instrument for dealing with these little sins. We have abolished it in stern indignation, and justly. But we can only afford to dispense with it, when we confess ourselves more humbly and examine ourselves more rigidly before God than before the priest. Watch the little sins narrowly, and handle them sternly; it will spare you trouble with the great ones. Meet the tempter on the threshold and beat him back, you will escape a death struggle in the very citadel of your life.

—*J. B. Brown*.

10. Importance of keeping it well employed.

(2706.) The heart is like a mill: if the wind or water be violent, the mill will go whether the miller

will or not; yet he may choose what kind of grain it shall grind, wheat or darnel. If the affections be strong and passionate, the heart may be working; yet the Christian, by grace, may keep out lusts, and supply it with good thoughts. —*Adams*, 1654.

(2707.) Man's heart is like a millstone: pour in corn, and round it goes, bruising and grinding, and converting it into flour; whereas give it no corn, and then indeed the stone goes round, but only grinds itself away, and becomes ever thinner and smaller and narrower. Even so the heart of man requires to have always something to do; and happy is he who continually occupies it with good and holy thoughts, otherwise it may soon consume and waste itself by useless anxieties or wicked and carnal suggestions. When the millstones are not nicely adjusted, grain may indeed be poured in, but comes away only half ground or not ground at all. The same often happens with our heart, when our devotion is not sufficiently earnest. On such occasions we read the finest texts without knowing what we have read, and pray without hearing our own prayers. The eye flits over the sacred page, the mouth pours forth the words and clappers like a mill, but the heart meanwhile turns from one strange thought to another; and such reading and such prayer are more a useless form than a devotion acceptable to God. —*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(2708.) Our minds are restless, and will be employed either upon what is good, or upon what is evil. The mind of man is as a mill-wheel, continually turning about, and drenching in the waters. Our hearts are as a stirring child, that cannot endure to sit still. No virgin has so many suitors for her love, as our minds for their thoughts. The sun may as soon be stopped from his race, as the heart from its thinking. We are all in this respect like the sea, which cannot rest, but is ever in motion. Is not he a foolish miller, that turns the water, which should grind his corn, into the highway, where it does no good? And is not he a foolish Christian, that employs those thoughts about needless toys, which should help to provide him spiritual food? As the natural heat will be ever working,—if it have not food to digest, it will prey upon the spirits, and destroy itself,—so the mind of man will be always busy; if not in thinking of the excellencies of God, or the love of Christ, or the beauty and necessity of holiness, then in speculative wantonness, or contemplative wickedness, in ambitious fancies, or revengeful desires. We are like a boat swimming against the tide: there is no standing still; if the oar be left that we go not forward, the tide will carry us strongly backward. If the ground be not sown with good seed, it will of itself bring forth evil seeds.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

11. When pure is a dwelling-place for God.

(2709.) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." A pure heart is more precious in the sight of God than aught else on earth. A pure heart is a fair, fitly adorned chamber, the dwelling of the Holy Ghost, a golden temple of the Godhead; a sanctuary of the only-begotten Son, in which He worships the Heavenly Father; an altar of the grand, Divine sacrifice, on which the Son is daily offered to the Heavenly Father. A pure heart is the throne of the Supreme Judge; the seat and secret chamber of the Holy Trinity; a lamp bearing the Eternal Light; a secret council-chamber of the Divine Persons; a treasury of divine riches; a storehouse of divine sweetness; a panoply of eternal wisdom; a cell of divine solitude; the reward of all the life and sufferings of Christ. A pure heart is a tabernacle of the Holy Father; a bride of Christ; a friend of the Holy Ghost; a delight to the eyes of all saints; a sister of the angels; a cause of joy to the heavenly hosts; a brother of all good men; a terror to the devil; a victory and conquest over all temptation; a weapon against all assaults; a reservoir of divine benefits; a treasury of all virtue; an example to all men; a restoration of all that has ever been lost. Now, what is a pure heart? It is, as we have said before, a heart which finds its whole and only satisfaction in God, which relishes and desires nothing but God, whose thoughts and intents are ever occupied with God, to which all that is not of God is strange and jarring, which keeps itself as far as possible apart from all unworthy images, and joys, and griefs, and all outward cares and anxieties, and makes all these work together for good; for to the pure all things are pure, and to the gentle is nothing bitter. *Tauler*, 1340.

(2710.) Thy alms to the poor, thy counsel to the simple, thy inheritance to thy children, thy tribute to Cæsar, but thy heart to God. He who is a spirit, requires the spirit, and delights to dwell in the hearts of men. Here God plants Himself as in a castle, which is always besieged with the world, the flesh, and the devil. If the enemy get a thought, or a word, or a work, yet he has but razed the walls. But if he take the heart, then the fortress is lost. For that time all our thoughts, words, and works are captive unto him: he bids them go, and they go; do, and they do it. —*Henry Smith*, 1593.

(2711.) My heart, when it is whole and at the best, is but a strait and unworthy lodging for God. If it were bigger and better, I would reserve it all for Him. Satan may look in at my doors by a temptation, but he shall not have so much as one chamber room set apart for him to sojourn in.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

12. A picture of what the heart should be.

(2712.) Like those fair New England lakes, greened around with meadows, of translucent depth and silver sand, on whose surface armies of white lilies, golden-crowned, unfold to the sun, so the Christian's heart should be. All its feelings and affections should open into life like those white lilies, and deep amid the blossom petals should be seen the golden crown of love. —*Beecher*.

HEAVEN.

1. A place as well as a state of being.

(2713.) Each man has a separate and individual, though, perhaps, an indistinct idea of his own of what heaven may be. To some it is merely *a state*. It is all within. We may carry it about with us wherever we go, in the perfect rest of a conscience washed in blood, a soul fully conscious of its acquittal from condemnation, the joy of spiritual fellowship with Christ and the Father, the love which ever gushes forth in the sublime language of praise, as we sing, "Whom having not seen we love; in whom though now we see Him not, yet

believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." To others it is all associated with *a place*. There must be trees, rivers, golden pavements, jasper walls, harps of gold, bejewelled crowns, companies of angelic beings, all the insignia of a royal life, a grand tableau, in which they shall share, majestic spectacles in which they shall bear their part. Probably a combination of both ideas will furnish us with the most appropriate representation of those heavenly delights which we hope soon to share. Take two men of kindred purity of spirit. Let one dwell amid the gloom of dark ravines, where the chill atmosphere is never warmed by the genial rays of the sun, where overhanging rocks make perpetual gloom, where no music save that of the hoarse cataract is ever heard, where the song birds never come, the dew-drops never glint, flowers never shed perfume on the breeze, and the only vegetation is the loathsome fungi that finds its congenial home amid the darkness. Let another dwell in a sweet sylvan nook, a quiet cottage in the bosom of the laughing valley, whence he can see the heather bells, and smell the brier rose, or go forth and sit at the lake-side amid the shade of birch and pine and aspen, while the rich breezes from the mountains on either hand pour torrents of life through his veins. Can you doubt which will be the happier of the two? Surely he who possesses the purity within, and enjoys the heaven without. The state and the place combine together to make the happiness so far complete. —*G. D. Evans.*

2. Imperfectness of our knowledge concerning it.

(2714.) If one should come from a strange country, never known and discovered before, and should only tell us, in general, that it was a most pleasant and delightful place, and the inhabitants, a brave, and generous, and wealthy people, under the government of a wise and great king, ruling by excellent laws; and that the particular delights and advantages of it were not to be imagined by anything he knew in our own country, and should say no more of it: if we gave credit to the person that brought this relation, it would create in us a great admiration of the country described to us, and a mighty concern to see it, and live in it. But it would be a vain curiosity to reason and conjecture about the particular conveniences of it; because it would be impossible, by any discourse, to arrive at the certain knowledge of any more than he who only knew it was pleased to tell us.

This is the case as to our heavenly country. Our blessed Saviour, who "came down from heaven," from "the bosom of His Father," hath revealed to us a state of happiness and glory in general, that there is such "a kingdom prepared for us;" and when He was leaving the world, He told us, that He was going thither by the way of the grave; and when He was risen again from the dead, and was ascended into heaven, He promised to come again at the end of the world, and to raise us out of the grave, and to carry us into those celestial mansions, "where we shall be for ever with the Lord." And beyond this He hath made no particular discovery to us of the felicity of that place; He hath given us no punctual representation of the glory of it; He hath not declared to us, in a special manner, what our work and employment shall be, in what way God will communicate Himself to us, nor what kind of conversation we shall have with the blessed angels, and with one another, and how far we shall know, or be known, to one another; or whether we shall stand affected in any particular manner to those who were our friends, and relations, and acquaintance in this world. These and perhaps a thousand things more, which may concern the glories of that state, and the happiness and employment of the "spirits of just men made perfect," our Saviour hath told us nothing of, but only in general; and it is impossible for us with any certainty to make out the rest, any more than children can make a conjecture of the designs and reasonings of a wise man; not only because it would be of no great use to us, but because the imperfection of human nature, and of our faculties in this state of mortality, is not able to bear a full and clear representation of so great glory. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(2715.) Reflect, how little of the future and the unseen can be known by mere description; how faint and imperfect a view you can get of anything by a mere statement; how little you know of a landscape, a waterfall, a picture, by any description that can be given. Especially must this be so of objects which have no resemblance to anything that we have seen. Who ever obtained any idea of Niagara by a description? Who, say to the most polished Greek and Roman mind, could have conveyed by mere description any idea of the printing-press, of a locomotive engine, of the magnetic telegraph? Who could convey to one born blind an idea of the prismatic colours; or to the deaf an idea of sounds? And when you think how meagre in the Bible is the description of heaven; when you think how easy it would have been to furnish a more minute description; are you certain that human language could have communicated to you the great and bright conception; or that, if words could have been found, they would have conveyed to you an exact idea of a state so different from what is our condition here?

—*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

(2716.) Of mankind in glory, thus perfected, what shall be the employ? For I need hardly press it on you that it is impossible to conceive of man in a high and happy estate, without an employment worthy of that estate, and in fact constituting its dignity and happiness.

Now some light is thrown on this inquiry by Holy Scripture, but it must be confessed that it is very scanty. It is true that all our meditations on, and descriptions of, heaven want balance, and are, so to speak, pictures ill composed. We first build up our glorified human nature by such hints as are furnished us in Scripture; we place it in an abode worthy of it; and then after all we give it an unending existence with nothing to do. It was not ill said by a great preacher, that most people's idea of heaven was that it is to sit on a cloud and sing psalms. And others again strive to fill this out with the bliss of recognising and holding intercourse with those from whom we have been severed on earth. And beyond all doubt such recognition and intercourse shall be, and shall constitute, one of the most blessed accessories of the heavenly employment; but it can no more be that employment itself than similar intercourse on earth was the employment of life itself here. To read some descriptions of heaven, one would imagine that it were only an endless prolongation of some social meeting; walk-

ing and talking in some blessed country with those whom we love. It is clear that we have not thus provided the renewed energies and enlarged powers of perfected man with food for eternity. Nor if we look in another direction, that of the absence of sickness and care and sorrow, shall we find any more satisfactory answer to our question. Nay, rather shall we find it made more difficult and beset with more complication. For let us think how much of employment for our present energies is occasioned by, and finds its very field of action in, the anxieties and vicissitudes of life. They are, so to speak, the winds which fill the sail and carry us onward. By their action, hope and enthusiasm are excited. But suppose a state where they are not, and life would become a dead calm; the sail would flap idly, and the spirit would cease to look onward at all. So that unless we can supply something over and above the mere absence of anxiety and pain, we have not attained to, nay, we are farther than ever from, a sufficient employment for the life eternal. Now, before we seek for it in another direction, let us think for a moment in this way. Are we likely to know much of it? We have before in these sermons adopted St. Paul's comparison by analogy, and have likened ourselves here to children and that blessed state to our full development as men. Now ask yourselves, what does the child at its play know of the employments of the man? Such portions of them as are merely external and material he may take in, and represent in his sport; but the work and anxiety of the student at his book, or the man of business at his desk, these are of necessity entirely hidden from the child. And so it is onward through the advancing stages of life. Of each of them it may be said, "We know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither."

So that we need not be utterly disappointed, if our picture of heaven be at present ill composed: if it seem to be little else than a gorgeous mist after all. We cannot fill in the members of the landscape at present. If we could, we should be in heaven.

—*Alford*, 1810–1871.

(2717.) Does it not sometimes seem strange to you, that we know so very little of the country beyond the grave? Sometimes this is borne in upon us with a startling clearness; how little distinct idea we have of what kind of place it is; its scenery, its homes, its occupations. The veil between this world and that is so thick; so impossible for us to see through. And yet we ourselves in a little, perhaps a very little, must go there; that is certain. If it were only a distant place in this world we were going to; if we knew that in a little something would come that would make it necessary that we should leave our present homes, our children and friends, and these scenes we know, and go away, all alone, to a distant and unknown land,—how anxious we should be to learn all we could about it,—the place, the people, the occupations, the kind of life? Surely we should not be less anxious now, because in a little we are going, not to another place in this world, where we could be sure that many things would be much as they are here;—where a sun would rise and a sun would set,—where we should live in some kind of dwelling, on some kind of food,—see human faces,—work, grow weary, rest, sleep, wake again,—but into a new and unknown world, where everything may be strange, where many things must be so! We, ourselves, will some day go away from this place, we know not how, passing away from human sight and knowledge,—and enter into another world; we shall waken up from death, and find ourselves there. Strange, to know so little of a place which we shall see so surely; which we may see so soon!

But there is something even stranger to think of. It is future, our going to that unknown place; and we are able to put away from us, more than is good for us, the thought of things in what we think the far future. But think that at this very time, in this very moment, some who were the dearest to us in this world are in that distant land; have been for time longer or shorter. The father and mother are there, of most who have reached middle age; brothers and sisters, once so united: little children, whom Jesus, as of old, called to Himself. We went with them to the furthest edge of this life; but as they crossed the threshold of the other world they became unseen by us; there was no further trace of them: there is no communication from them, no word of what they are doing there. You know how anxious you are when your child has gone out from your home to some distant place, to know all about the way in which he arranges his life; every little thing, nothing to a stranger, is so precious to you. Tell us everything, you write; whom you see, what you do; every little homely detail of life; where you take your walk; everything! But when the child goes to the other world, the parent is in blank ignorance of all details of his life; when the father goes, whose ways we knew so thoroughly, we are in utter darkness as to his life there. What is he thinking about? We knew so well what he used to think about here! We knew the chair in which he sat; the table at which he wrote; how he divided out his day. How about these things there? What scenes do they live among that left us; what are they like: what change has passed upon their affections, likings, ways; what are they doing just this afternoon; what were they doing when we sunk into sleep last night, when we awoke this morning? Are they thinking there of those they loved so much here? It is strange, when we think of it, very strange, that we know so little of the new heavens and the new earth for which we look; of the country which strangers and pilgrims on earth have sought through all past ages; of the Golden City, the New Jerusalem, which gives this life its great motive, which is the central fact in all our religious faith!

Now it is plain that it is God's purpose we should know little of the future life and the unseen world; nothing about the details of these. —*Boyd.*

3. How curious questions concerning it are to be answered.

(2718.) John Bunyan was once asked a question about heaven which he could not answer, because the matter was not revealed in the Scriptures; and he thereupon advised the inquirer to live a holy life and go and see.

4. The references of Scripture to it.

(2719.) These scattered and brief allusions acquire, sometimes, even from their indefiniteness, a peculiar and surpassing interest. We gaze upon them as on the uprooted sea-weed, or the shivered pine, wafted by storms across the waste of waters, revealing the

existence and the productions of a yet unknown world. —*M'All.*

5. Its supreme glory, the Presence of Christ.

(2720.) When Cyrus took the king of Armenia and his son Tigranes and their wives and children prisoners, and upon their humble submission, beyond all hope, gave them their liberty and their lives, in their return home, as they all fell a-commending Cyrus, some for his personage, some for his puissance, some for his clemency, Tigranes asked his wife, "What thinkest thou of Cyrus? is he not a comely and a proper man, of a majestic presence?" "Truly," said she, "I know not what manner of man he is; I never looked on him." "Why," quoth he, "where were thy eyes all the while? Upon whom didst thou look?" "I fixed my eyes," saith she, "all the while upon him (meaning her husband) who, in my hearing, offered to Cyrus to lay down his life for my ransom." And thus, if any question the devout soul, whether she be not enamoured with the beauty of cherubim, seraphim, angels, and saints, with the pomp and splendour of that heavenly court, her answer will be that of Tigranes' wife, that she never did so much as cast a look upon them, because her eyes were never off Him who not only offered to lay, but did lay down His life for her, and ransomed her with His own blood. Whom should she have in heaven but Him who hath none on earth but her? —*Featly*, 1582–1644.

6. Its delights are inexhaustible, and its joys eternal.

(2721.) Eternity makes heaven to be heaven; 'tis the diamond in the ring: O blessed day, that shall have no night! the sunlight of glory shall rise upon the soul and never set! O blessed spring, that shall have no autumn, or fall of the leaf!

—*Watson*, 1696.

(2722.) The enjoyments above, and the treasures proposed to us by our Saviour, are indefectible in their nature, and endless in their duration. They are still full, fresh, and entire, like the stars and orbs above, which shine with the same undiminished lustre, and move with the same unwearied motion, with which they did from the first date of their creation. Nay, the joys of heaven will abide when these lights of heaven shall be put out; and when sun and moon, and nature itself, shall be discharged their stations, and be employed by Providence no more, the righteous shall then appear in their full glory; and, being fixed in the Divine presence, enjoy one perpetual and everlasting day; a day commensurate to the unlimited eternity of God Himself, the great Sun of righteousness, who is always rising, and never sets. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(2723.) Think how completely all the griefs of this mortal life will be compensated by one age, for instance, of the felicities beyond the grave, and then think that one age multiplied ten thousand times is not so much to eternity as one grain of sand is to the whole material universe. Think what a state it will be to be growing happier and happier still as ages pass away, and yet leave something still happier to come! —*John Foster*, 1770–1843.

(2724.) The declaration that "there shall be no night there" is doubtless true even in its literal sense; and is to be understood as teaching that in the material economy of heaven there is nothing which corresponds to the interchange of light and darkness existing on earth. In that supernal clime reigns one eternal day. Its skies are never shadowed; its sun never goes down. By what law of celestial physics, by what constitution and action of the elements, a condition of being so unlike our own is created and maintained, Inspiration has not informed us; nor would our present faculties be equal to the knowledge. Dismissing all such unfruitful speculations, we rest in the Divine announcement, that the gloom of night never visits the realms above.

The absence of night from heaven is, however, to be regarded chiefly in its moral significations. Though a real fact, it has the intent and import of a symbol, adumbrating the spiritual features of the city of God, and embracing the whole range of its blessedness. Night is associated with the idea of *weariness*, and is the symbol of *ignorance*, *sin*, *danger*, *want*, and *death:* but in heaven none of these things is known. —*Ide.*

(2725.) Many good people suppose that we shall see heaven the first day we get there. No! you cannot see London in two weeks. You cannot see Rome in six weeks. You cannot see Venice in a month. You cannot see the great city of the New Jerusalem in a day. No: it will take all eternity to see heaven, to count the towers, to examine the trophies, to gaze upon the thrones, to see the hierarchies. Ages on ages roll, and yet heaven is new. The streets new! The temple new! The joy new! The song new!

I stayed a week at Niagara Falls, hoping thoroughly to understand and appreciate them. But, on the last day, they seemed newer and more incomprehensible than on the first day. Gazing on the infinite rush of celestial splendours, where the oceans of delight meet, and pour themselves into the great heart of God—how soon will we exhaust the song? "*Never! never!*" —*Talmage.*

(2726.) Almost nothing remains in this world. Nations do not remain; they have been ground up again and again. Cities do not; they have been overturned till their very sites are questionable. The most triumphant monuments of art have been crumbled and wasted. Things that once were centres of the world's admiration and worship are gone. Who can tell where Minerva is, that took the sun first and took the sun last on the Acropolis? Who can tell what became of it, or who destroyed it? Who can tell where the stateliest temples are? The pomp of those days in which these things existed is gone, and only rude fragments and heaps of stone remain to tell the story of their greatness. Castles are wasted. Even the mountains are gradually wearing away. The earth itself seems to be changing, changing all the time. But there is a rest that remaineth—a rest that time only fortifies, and preserves undiminished, unmarred, unremoved, anchored in the eternal sphere firmer than the island in the ocean that the waves beat upon—a rest that remaineth for the people of God.

—*Beecher.*

(2727.) You will observe that this is not the whole statement, that we are to have glory in heaven. As applied to a heavenly state, we should, of course, construe glory according to the scale of excellence which is supposed to belong to heaven. If you go

into an Indian's wigwam, a few eagles' feathers, some wampum, and two or three strings of glittering beads, are about all that you will see. But these are glorious for an Indian. Now, take them into the cottage of a poor shepherd or a farmer. He smiles at them, and calls them silly trinkets. They are not glorious there. But there are other things that the husbandman thinks to be glorious. But that which is glorious in a plain cottage ceases to be glorious when you carry it into the mansion, where there is wealth, and culture, and refinement. The rich man has things that are glorious, according to his standard. His furniture of the table, his furniture of the room, his pictures, and the very apartments themselves, for size and dignity, are glorious in their way. But if you take those things up into a king's palace, where are gathered the treasures of an empire, and where the art of successive ages has done what it could to add grace and beauty to these treasures, then they cease to be glorious. But a king's palace lifted up and placed in the centre of God's heavenly realm would be a dark spot. It is nothing as compared with the glory of the highest point of creative intelligence, taste, and skill. When heavenly glory is spoken of, we are to have a sense of what must be the exaltation of a man's thinking power, of his sentiments, of his motives, of his whole active state, in that upper sphere ; we are to measure, not according to the pattern of the highest school on earth, but according to what a thing must be where God and His angels dwell. How transcendent is the idea when carried up thus !

But it is not enough to think of glory as applied to heaven. We are to add the thought of weight (2 Cor. iv. 17). It is *weight* of glory. Now, *weight* does not signify really the original meaning of the figure. The term in the apostle's time was used to signify magnitude ; and in the text it is employed in connection with glory to convey the impression of a glory comprehensive, widespread, vast. It was not a fugitive, filmy cloud of glory. It was a glory orbicular, eternal, and so illimitable that it must be spoken of in terms such as those that measure and characterise mountains or continents.

It is not weight alone. It is *exceeding* weight ; that is to say, surpassing weight—a weight that goes beyond bounds for excellence and eminence.

And that is not all. It is *eternal*. We see the compound blow-pipe concentrating its might for a moment on a single point. It glows ; it is intense ; but it very soon spends its force, and goes out. We see the caleium light. It glows while it burns, but it soon wastes itself. Now, in distinction from these quick made and quick perishing glories, which are the result of concentrated forces, and which are speedily wasted in the concentration, the apostle speaks of the glory of the other life as one that is past all measuring ; past all ordinary experience ; and past all thought. It is exceeding, excessive upon excessive, and eternal. —*Beecher.*

7. The rest that remaineth for the people of God,

(2728.) One night, years ago, a fire broke out in an American wilderness. A spark dropped on dry leaves, the lighted leaves flew before the wind, the flames raced along the grass, and glanced from tree to tree, till all the forest was ablaze, and night was turned into a terrible day. Certain Indians, driven out of their hunting grounds by the red storm, fled for their lives ; hour after hour they ran and ran on, until, half dead with fatigue, they reached a noble river : they forded it, and, after scaling the opposite bank, their chief struck his tent-pole into the ground, threw himself on the cool turf, and cried, *Alabama !* —"here we may rest."

But that chief was no prophet. The land was claimed by hostile tribes. The fugitives reached no resting-place there. They were soon beset by foes more relentless than the elements ; having escaped the fury of the fire, they perished from the cruelty of man, and where they looked for the still delight of a home, found but the quiet of a grave.

Let this tradition serve as a parable. Earth has no Alabama for the soul. In flight from year to year, chased from refuge to refuge in which they set their hearts, the fugitives from trouble often say, as they reach the shelter of wealth, or the shadow of domestic affection, or the shrine of some false worship, or the realisation of some cherished hope, "Here we may rest ;" but God says "No" to that, and again and again, when they are on the point of sinking into deceptive repose, does He send the stern angels of calamity to wake them up with the cry, "Arise, depart, for this is not your rest !"

It is true that even in this world there is rest for those who have gathered themselves to Shiloh ; rest through reconciliation with God, rest through union with reconciled men. Yet, in our relation to God, the joy of faith is often broken by unbelief, and in our relation to each other discordance of thought is often allowed to break the fellowship of love. When we have enjoyed an hour of the soul's calm sunshine, sin soon breaks our tranquillity ; infirmity breaks it, human unkindness breaks it, or it is broken by some storm of sorrow. On earth our rest is at least imperfect, but there is rest in heaven, for Shiloh is there ; there in full and visible manifestation, the brightness of its glory and the secret of its rest, and there at last to Him will the gathering of His people be. —*Stanford.*

(2729.) The rest of inaction is but the quiet of a stone, or the stillness of the grave, or the exhaustion of a spent and feeble nature. But there is a nobler rest than this. There is rest in health ; there is rest in the musical repose of exquisitely balanced powers ; there is rest to the desiring faculties when they find the thing desired ; there is rest in the rapture of congenial employment ; rest in the flow of joyful strength ; rest in the swift glide of the stream when it meets with no impediment. Such is the rest of the glorified. Perfect beings in a perfect world, rejoicing in their native element, having no weakness within, and no resisting force without, to check the outflow and expression of their loving natures ; their activity therefore being easy, natural, and necessary, as light is to the sun, and fragrance to the flowers of spring—activity to them is rest. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest, not from their works, but only from their labours. It would be a labour for them not to work. To hush their music, and to stop their action, would be to them intolerable toil ; they would be "weary with forbearing and could not stay." So they "rest," yet they rest not day nor night.

—*Stanford.*

8. Is strictly reserved for God's people.

(2730.) We often make narrow entrances, through which but *one at a time* can pass, that we may

examine his ticket, and see whether he has a right to pass. And, be sure, though we may look respectable on the fashionable broadway of World or Church, we cannot enter heaven as those who pass in a crowd. God deals with souls as men deal with sovereigns, which they examine and weigh one by one.

9. Necessity of preparation for it.

(2731.) Holiness does not only fit us for heaven, so that without it we can have no entrance or admittance there; but it also fits us, that if it were possible for us to enter into heaven void of it, heaven would be no place of happiness to us in that condition, but a place of trouble, torment, and vexation. As, for instance, it is impossible for a beggar in his rags to be admitted to the society and converse of princes and noblemen; but put the case that he were, yet his beggarly condition would never suffer him to enjoy himself in that company, in which he could be nothing but a mock and a derision. In like manner, heaven bears no suitableness to an impure, unsanctified person. For a sinful heart must have sinful delights and sinful company, and where it meets not with such, in the very midst of comforts and company, it finds a solitude and a dissatisfaction. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(2732.) The last use which I shall make of this remarkable property in human nature, of being delighted with those actions to which it is accustomed, is to show how absolutely necessary it is for us to gain habits of virtue in this life, if we would enjoy the pleasures of the next. The state of bliss we call heaven will not be capable of affecting those minds which are not thus qualified for it: we must in this world gain a relish of truth and virtue, if we would be able to taste that knowledge and perfection which are to make us happy in the next. The seeds of those spiritual joys and raptures, which are to rise up and flourish in the soul to all eternity, must be planted in her during this her present state of probation. In short, heaven is not to be looked upon only as the reward, but as the natural effect, of a religious life. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(2733.) If you ask me what the preparation is, I have two words for you which will describe it, common as household words, taking in the whole of preparation—justification, sanctification: that is all. Justification: you must get the robe on, the best robe, the robe of righteousness; you must be justified by grace through faith. You will not be allowed to go into heaven if you are a rebel, steeped in all the guilt of rebellion. The sovereign does not allow the criminal to go to court, and walk the royal galleries, and sit at the royal table, and look on the royal face. The man that goes there must, at least, have his character cleared. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that, through this man, Christ Jesus, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin." I have not time to open that; and as, I presume, it is the burden of much of the ministrations among you regularly, it is not necessary that I should trench upon your time now. But besides the meetness of justification for that great event of Christ's coming in the clouds, there is the meetness of sanctification. A man may in a fit of passion strike his fellow; he commits a crime by doing so; he is punishable, and may be thrown into prison for that breach of law. He has remained there a certain time, and the prison doors are opened before him; he walks out and there is no more in the law to detain him; he has satisfied the law; but when the man comes out from prison, he is not a whit better fitted for society than before he went in; he brings out all the bad passions with him that he took in; the man is justified, but he wants sanctifying. I can imagine some one going into hell itself, and putting out the flames of hell fire; but would that make the persons in hell happy? No; there is a fire within that must be put out; and, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." —*Beaumont.*

(2734.) Heaven must be begun below in all those who shall enjoy its perfection above. Heaven is a place of character; the full development of those principles and dispositions which are received and cherished upon earth, by the knowledge of Jesus, and the teaching of His Spirit. No child on its first introduction to a school is placed in the highest class, but in one or other of the lower, where the first elements of a future education are imparted, and the necessary ground-work is laid for the more matured instructions which successively follow: the one must precede the other; there is an unalterable connection between them: as much so, and as absolutely essential, as between the bud and blossom of a tree, and the fruit which is to follow; or between the state of infancy and that of full-grown manhood; the first of necessity goes before the other. As well, therefore, might we look for the state of manhood without the previous stages of infancy, childhood, and youth; as well might we expect to reach the fruit from any tree where no buds and blossoms were previously formed, as expect admission into heaven without being "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," and made to possess the tempers, learn the principles, and imbibe the dispositions, of its blessed inhabitants, while, like them, we seek our happiness from "that river of joy" which "waters the city of our God." —*Salter.*

(2735.) Even supposing a man of unholy life were suffered to enter heaven, he would not be happy there; so that it would be no mercy to permit him to enter. For heaven, it is plain from Scripture, is not a place where many different and discordant pursuits can be carried on at once, as is the case in this world. Here every man can do his own pleasure, but there he must do God's pleasure. It would be presumption to attempt to determine the employments of that eternal life which good men are to pass in God's presence, or to deny that that state which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived, may comprise an infinite variety of pursuits and occupations. Still so far we are distinctly told, that that future life will be spent in God's presence, in a sense which does not apply to our present life; so that it may be best described as an endless and uninterrupted worship.

Heaven, then, is not like this world; I will say what it is much more like,—a church. For in a place of public worship no language of this world is heard; there are no schemes brought forward for temporal objects, great or small; no information how to strengthen our worldly interests, extend our influence, or establish our credit. These things indeed, may be right in their way, so that we do not set our hearts upon them; still, I repeat, it is

certain that we hear nothing of them in a church. Here we hear solely and entirely of God. We praise Him, worship Him, sing to Him, thank Him, confess to Him, give ourselves up to Him, and ask His blessing. And, therefore, a church is like heaven; viz., because both in the one and the other, there is one single sovereign subject—religion—brought before us.

Supposing, then, instead of it being said that no irreligious man could serve and attend on God in heaven (or see Him, as the text expresses it), we were told that no irreligious man could worship, or spiritually see Him in church, should we not at once perceive the meaning of the doctrine? viz., that, were a man to come hither, who had suffered his mind to grow up in its own way, as nature or chance determined, without any deliberate habitual effort after truth and purity, he would find no real pleasure here, but would soon get weary of the place; because, in this house of God, he would hear only of that one subject which he cared little or nothing about, and nothing at all of those things which excited his hopes and fears, his sympathies and energies. If then a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. Before, indeed, he fancied that he could be happy there; but when he arrived there, he would find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth, no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised, nothing which bound him to aught else in the universe, and made him feel at home, nothing which he could enter into and rest upon. He would perceive himself to be an isolated being, cut away by Supreme Power from those objects which were still entwined around his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme Power, whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom now he regarded only as the destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. Ah! he could not bear the face of the Living God; the Holy God would be no object of joy to him. "Let us alone! What have we to do with Thee?" is the sole thought and desire of unclean souls, even while they acknowledge His majesty. None but the holy can look upon the Holy One; without holiness no man can endure to see the Lord. —*Newman.*

(2736.) When we think to take part in the joys of heaven without holiness, we are as inconsiderate as if we supposed we could take an interest in the worship of Christians here below without possessing it in our measure. A careless, a sensual, an unbelieving mind, a mind destitute of the love and fear of God, with narrow views and earthly aims, a low standard of duty, and a benighted conscience, a mind contented with itself, and unresigned to God's will, would feel as little pleasure, at the last day, at the words, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord," as it does now at the words, "Let us pray." Nay, much less, because, while we are in a church, we may turn our thoughts to other subjects, and contrive to forget that God is looking on us; but that will not be possible in heaven.

We see, then, that holiness, or inward separation from the world, is necessary to our admission into heaven, because heaven is not heaven, is not a place of happiness, except to the holy. There are bodily indispositions which affect the taste, so that the sweetest flavours become ungrateful to the palate; and indispositions which impair the sight, tinging the fair face of nature with some sickly hue. In like manner, there is a moral malady which disorders the inward sight and taste; and no man labouring under it is in a condition to enjoy what Scripture calls "the fulness of joy in God's presence, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore."

—*Newman*

(2737.) If we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to summon it to heaven. Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man. We know how unhappy we are apt to feel at present, when alone in the midst of strangers, or of men of different tastes and habits from ourselves. How miserable, for example, would it be to have to live in a foreign land, among a people whose faces we never saw before, and whose language we could not learn. And this is but a faint illustration of the loneliness of a man of earthly dispositions and tastes, thrust into the society of saints and angels. How forlorn would he wander through the courts of heaven! He would find no one like himself; he would see in every direction the marks of God's holiness, and these would make him shudder. He would feel himself always in His presence. He could no longer turn his thoughts another way, as he does now, when conscience reproaches him. He would know that the Eternal Eye was ever upon him; and that eye of holiness, which is joy and life to holy creatures, would seem to him an eye of wrath and punishment. God cannot change His nature. Holy He must ever be. But while He is holy, no unholy soul can be happy in heaven. Fire does not inflame iron, but it inflames straw. It would cease to be fire if it did not. And so heaven itself would be fire to those who would fain escape across the great gulf from the torments of hell. The finger of Lazarus would but increase their thirst. The very "heaven that is over their head" will be "brass" to them. *Newman.*

(2738.) The unfitness of unrenewed souls for heaven may be illustrated by the incapacity of certain uneducated and coarse-minded persons for elevated thoughts and intellectual pursuits. When a little child, I lived some years in my grandfather's house. In his garden there was a fine old hedge of yew of considerable length, which was clipped and trimmed till it made quite a wall of verdure. Behind it was a wide grass walk, which looked upon the fields, and afforded a quiet outlook. The grass was kept mown, so as to make pleasant walking. Here, ever since the old Puritanic chapel was built, godly divines had walked and prayed and meditated. My grandfather was wont to use it as his study. Up and down it he would walk when preparing his sermons, and always on Sabbath-days when it was fair, he had half-an-hour there before preaching. To me it seemed to be a perfect paradise, and being forbidden to stay there when grandfather was meditating, I viewed it with no small degree of awe. I love to think of the green and quiet walk at this moment, and could wish for just such a study. But I was once shocked and even horrified by hearing a farming man remark concerning this *sanctum sanctorum*, "It 'ud grow a many 'taturs if it wor ploughed up." What cared he for holy memories? What were meditation and contemplation to him? Is it not the chief end of man

to grow potatoes and eat them? Such, on a larger scale, would be an unconverted man's estimate of joys so elevated and refined as those of heaven, could he by any possibility be permitted to gaze upon them. —*Spurgeon.*

10. Familiarised to us by the death of our beloved ones.

(2739.) Our views of heaven, during the present life, are like those presented to us at the close of day, relating to the splendour of the nightly firmament. We look up where all was blank before, and see here and there a star casting a faint and feeble radiance amidst the gloom of deepening twilight; and from these, dimly discovered and spoiled of their glory by the remaining light of evening, we gather the existence of some far distant region, beyond that canopy that seems to encircle by day the whole visible creation; and we begin to judge more wisely of the magnitude of nature. But little could we learn, from such a spectacle, of the overwhelming majesty of the midnight sky;—of the constellations that beam so effulgently upon us, with increasing characters of greatness and of beauty, as the reign of darkness advances, and while night, invisible herself, draws aside the curtain which concealed the wondrous whole. Little could we know of those fields of light and glory, immeasurable and untrodden, which stretch beyond the boundaries of human vision;—those realms of varied life and intelligence which lie embosomed in the deep blue heavens, like islands floating in the ocean of immensity. Little could we guess, from that imperfect revelation, of the amplitude of space and being; of the order and arrangement beaming on the instructed eye of science, in the many systems of that starry sphere which glitters so silently above. Still less could we conjecture from the solitary glimmering of those fires, so pale and distant, what is the garniture, and what the boundless magnificence, with which the eternal Architect has adorned the temple of the universe. Now, it is one of the highest benefits derivable from the death of such men as we have here revered and loved, that it diminishes the sensible remoteness of that happier world to which we hope hereafter to ascend. The strangeness and impalpable spirituality of its whole being seems abated in equal measure with our familiarity with the names and character of its inhabitants. —*M'All.*

11. The realm where character is perfect.

(2740.) See here that which may make us long to be in heaven; *then* we shall do God's will perfectly, as the angels do. Alas! how defective are we in our obedience here! How far do we fall short! We cannot write a copy of holiness without blotting; our holy things are blemished, like the moon, which when it shines brightest hath a dark spot in it: but in heaven we shall do God's will perfectly, as the angels in glory. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2741.) There are many good men whom here on earth it is arduous to love. They are whimsical, they are taciturn, they are opinionative and dogmatical; they are imperious and self-indulgent; they are severe and satirical; they are beset with strong prejudices of evil tempers; and their excellence is as inaccessible as the fragrance of a thorny rose or the nectar inside an adamant shell. But in that genial region the spirits of the just are perfect. Jacob is not wily, Thomas is not obstinate, Peter is not precipitate; but, like those plants which grow tall enough to leave all their youthful spines behind them,—like those wines which grow old enough to outlive their original austerity,—the flaws, the failures of earthly piety, all have vanished in that perfect world. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

12. Varieties of character in heaven.

(2742.) God has given to each his talent and his temperament, and in the Church below He has made this diversity of gifts not a discord but a symphony—a source not of confusion and disorder, but of beauty and stable symmetry. And so, doubtless, will it continue on high. The lily, when you rescue it from among the thorns, or when from the windy storm and the tempest you take it into the sunny shelter, does not become a palm or a cedar, but only a fairer, sweeter lily than before. And a topaz or a sapphire of earth, if taken to build the walls of the New Jerusalem, does not become an emerald or an amethyst, but remains a topaz or a sapphire still. And translated from the tarnish and attrition of time, it is easy to understand how each glorified nature will retain in a higher sphere its original fitness and inherent affinities; and how for the many mansions there will not only be many occupants, but every occupant may have his own office even there. It is easy to imagine that Isaac still will meditate, and that the sweet singer of Israel shall neither be at a loss for a golden harp nor good matter in a song. It is easy to imagine that Paul will find some outlet for his eloquence, and Peter for his energy; and not easy to conceive that John the Divine will be the same as Philip or Matthew, or Martha the busy housekeeper the same as Mary the adoring listener. To every precious stone there remains its several tint; to every star its own glory; to every denizen of the Church above his own office; and to every member of the heavenly family his own mansion.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(2743.) The blessed God delights in variety. In all His works, along with perfect order, there is eternal change. There is no mountain exactly like another mountain; there are no two trees whose boughs bend into the same network of interlacing lines; no two leaves alike; no two clouds alike; no two waves alike; but the face of nature is infinitely diversified. So also is the Church. You see no two men with the like endowments; no two spheres marked by exact similarity. Each one has his own peculiar gift for his own peculiar station; some have to serve their Lord with the power of the pen, others with the power of the tongue; some by their poverty, others by their wealth; and each one has a distinct individuality of power and place and opportunity. We see Aaron with his eloquence, and Moses with his stammering speech. "There is a Jeremy to give the prophecy, and a Baruch to read it," a Paul to plant, and an Apollos to water. One man is a "son of consolation," another a "son of thunder." One servant has five talents, another two, and another one. As the Church in heaven is but the consummation of the Church on earth, we may infer that the law of variety, which shines in this earthly exhibition of Christianity, and which prevails all over this region of existence, sheds its fascinations over Paradise, and lends its zest to the services of heaven. —*Stanford.*

13. The vastness of its population.

(2744.) If, at six o'clock, when this church opened, you had taken the few people that were scattered through it as the main audience, you would not have made so great a mistake as if you supposed that the present population of heaven are to be its chief citizenship. Although ten million times ten million, the inhabitants are only a handful compared with the future populations. All China is yet to be saved. All India is yet to be saved. All Borneo is yet to be saved. All Switzerland is yet to be saved. All Italy is yet to be saved. All Spain is yet to be saved. All Russia is yet to be saved. All France is yet to be saved. All England is yet to be saved. All America is yet to be saved. All the world is yet to be saved. After that there may be other worlds to conquer. I do not know but that very star that glitters to-night is an inhabited world, and that from all those spheres, a mighty host are to march into our heaven. There will be no gate to keep them out. We will not want to keep them out. God will not want to keep them out. I have sometimes thought that all the millions of earth that go into glory are but a very small colony compared with the influx from the whole universe. God could build a heaven large enough, not only for the universe, but for ten thousand universes. I do not know just how it will be; but this I know, that heaven is to be constantly augmented, that the song is swelling by the intonation of more voices, that the song of glory is rising higher and higher, and the procession is being multiplied. —*Talmage.*

(2745.) Gather together all the pencils that were ever manufactured, and all the paper ever made, in some large place, and call together all the men who are fleet in calculations, and let them, for the rest of their lives, give themselves to estimating what shall be the number of the saved; and when the pencils are all worn out, and the paper is all filled with columns of figures, and the scribes and the mathematicians of all the earth give up the work from exhaustion, the numbers they have calculated, compared with the numbers of the glorified, will be as your five fingers compared with the stars of heaven.

On some parade-day you have taken your position at the corner of the street to see a procession pass. For hours you have watched them, and it seemed as if there would be no end to the passing regiments. But if you should take your position in a street of the Celestial City, and watch the passage of the hosts of the Redeemed, you might stand in that one place for a thousand years, and at the close of it know that there had not yet passed before you more than one regiment of the great army of banners. A general, expecting an attack from the enemy, stands on a hill and looks through a field-glass, and sees, in the great distance, multitudes approaching, but has no idea of their numbers. He says, "I cannot tell anything about them; I merely know that there are a great number." And so John, without attempting to count, says, "A great multitude, that no man can number." —*Talmage.*

14. Recognition of friends in heaven.

(2746.) If the mere conception of the reunion of good men in a future state infused a momentary rapture into the mind of Tully,—if an airy speculation, for there is reason to fear it had little hold on his convictions, could inspire him with such delight,—what may we be expected to feel who are assured of such an event by the *true sayings of God!* How should we rejoice in the prospect, the certainty rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth; of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, "with every tear wiped from their eyes," standing before the throne of God and the Lamb *in white robes and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to God that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever!* What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of combat and the labour of the way, and to approach, not the house, but the throne, of God in company, in order to join in the symphonies of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amid the splendour and fruitions of the beatific vision! —*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(2747.) What matters it if thou art not happy on earth provided thou art so in heaven? Heaven may have happiness as utterly unknown to us as the gift of vision would be to a man born blind. If we consider the inlets of pleasure from five senses only, we may be sure that the same Being who created us could have given us five hundred if He pleased. Mutual love, pure and exalted, founded on charms both mental and corporeal, as it constitutes the highest happiness on earth, may, for anything we know to the contrary, also form the lowest happiness of heaven. And it would appear consonant with the administration of Providence in other matters that there should be a link between heaven and earth; for in all cases a chasm seems to be purposely avoided; "*prudento Deo.*" Thus the material world has its links, by which it is made to shake hands, as it were, with the vegetable—the vegetable with the animal—the animal with the intellectual—and the intellectual with what we may be allowed to hope of the angelic.

—*Colton*, 1832.

(2748.) Some have doubted whether there will be recognition in heaven; there is no room for doubt, for it is called "my father's house;" and shall not the family be known to each other?

—*Spurgeon.*

(2749.) I look and wait and long for that day when all Christians shall recognise each other.

I think that people in the church are like persons riding in a stage at night. For hours they sit side by side and shoulder to shoulder, not being able, in the darkness, to distinguish one another; but at last, when day breaks, and they look at each other, behold, they discover that they are friends, and, it may be, near relations!

So we are riding, I think, in the chariot of salvation, and do not know that we are brethren, though we sit shoulder to shoulder; but as the millennial dawn comes on, we shall find it out. I have great comfort and consolation in this thought.

—*Beecher.*

15. The memories of heaven.

(2750.) The "new song" is a *commemorate* song. We are distinctly told that it makes reference to past deliverances. Oh! how much they have to sing about. They sing of the darkness through which, on earth, they passed, and it is a *night* song.

That one was killed in the seven days' fight before Richmond, and with him it is a *battle* song. That one was starved to death at Belle Isle, and with him it is a *prison* song. That was a Christian sailor-boy that had his back broken on the ship's halyards, and with him it is a *sailor's* song. That one was burned at Smithfield, and with him it is a *fire* song. Oh! how they will sing of floods waded, of fires endured, of persecution suffered, of grace extended. Song of hail! song of sword! song of hot lead! song of axe! As when the organ-pipes peal out some great harmony there comes occasionally the sound of the tremolante, weeping through the cadences, adding exquisiteness to the performance; so, amidst the stupendous acclaim of the heavenly worshippers, shall come tremulous remembrances of past endurance, adding a sweetness and glory to the triumphal strain. So the glorified mother will sing of the cradle that death robbed; and the enthroned spirit from the almshouse will sing of a life-time of want. God may wipe away all tears, but not the memory of the grief that started them. —*Talmage.*

16. Degrees of glory.

(2751.) Like as sundry vessels, whereof some are bigger and some less, if they all be cast into the sea, some will receive more water and some less, and yet all shall be full and no want in any: so likewise, among the saints of God in heaven, some shall have more glory, some less, and yet all, without exception, full of glory.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(2752.) In heaven we cannot suppose the condition of any one saint to be wanting in the measure of its happiness. Such a supposition is opposed to the idea of that perfection to which all shall attain. Nevertheless, as with two luminous bodies, each may shine in perfection, though with a different splendour and intensity; so the image of God will shine with fuller orbed splendour in some than in others. In like manner, the little stream and the river may both fill their channel, while the one glides in simple beauty, and the other rolls its majestic waves attracting the eyes of all beholders. And so the spirits of the just made perfect shall all be beautiful, but some shall delight with the perfection of beauty. *Salter.*

(2753.) "There is a great difference in our capacities," observed the small Jug to the large Flagon beside it.

"A good deal of difference in our measurement," answered the Flagon.

"I suppose that all I can contain, if poured into you, would appear very little," said the Jug.

"And what I am capable of holding would overwhelm you for certain," replied the other.

"Truly I could hold but a small measure of your fulness," said the Jug. "But I have this to satisfy me, that when I am full I have all I want; and you yourself when filled can hold no more."

God's spiritual temple contains vessels of various dimensions; but all are filled with the same Spirit from the communicable fulness of Christ; as the prophet describes, "Vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups even to all vessels of flagons." "To be filled with all the fulness of God," is all that saints desire; and the Lord blesses His people with the experience of His love, "both small and great." There will undoubtedly be degrees in glory; but all shall be full of joy; and he that possesses greatest capacity will not be more full of God than he that left the world a babe in Christ.

—*Bowden.*

17. Is despised by the ungodly.

(2754.) As a man that comes into America, and sees the natives regard more a piece of glass, or an old knife, than a piece of gold, may think, Surely these people never heard of the worth of gold, or else they would not exchange it for toys; so a man that looked only upon the lives of most men, and did not hear their contrary confessions, would think either these men never heard of heaven, or else they never heard of its excellency and glory: when, alas! they hear of it till they are weary of hearing; and it is offered to them so commonly, that they are tired with the tidings, and cry out as the Israelites, "Our soul is dried away, because there is nothing but this manna before our eyes," and as the Indians, who live among the golden mines, do little regard it, but are weary of the daily toil of getting it, when other nations will compass the world, and venture their lives, to get it; so we that live where the Gospel groweth, where heaven is urged upon us at our doors, and the manna falls upon our tents, do little regard it, and wish these mines of gold were farther from us, that we might not be put upon the toil of getting it, when some that want it would be glad of it upon harder terms. Surely, though the resurrection of the body and life everlasting be the last article in their creed, it is not the least, nor therefore put last, that it should be last in their desires and endeavours.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

18. Is forfeited voluntarily.

(2755.) A man may lose the good things of this life against his will; but if he loses eternal blessings, he does so with his own consent.

—*Augustine*, 354–430.

19. The difficulty with which God brings us to it.

(2756.) We are like little children strayed from home, and God is now fetching us home; and we are ready to turn into any house, stay and play with everything in our way, and sit down on every green bank, and much ado there is to get us home.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

20. It is not enough merely to desire to reach it.

(2757.) We have depending on us both sides of the alternative; both falling into hell and obtaining the kingdom. "*If ye be willing*, and will hearken unto Me, ye shall eat the good of the land." But perhaps one will say, "I am willing (and no one is so void of understanding as not to be willing); but to will is not sufficient for me." Nay, but it is sufficient, if thou be duly willing, and do the deeds of one that is willing. But as it is, thou art not greatly willing. And let us try this in other things, if it seem good. For tell me: He that would marry a wife, is he content with wishing? By no means; but he looks out for women to advance his suit, and requests friends to keep watch with him, and gets together money.

Again: The merchant is not content with sitting at home and wishing, but he first hires a vessel, then selects sailors and rowers, then takes up money on interest, and is inquisitive about a market and a place of merchandise.

Is it not, then, strange for men to show themselves so much in earnest about earthly things, but that when they are to make a venture for heaven, they should be content with wishing only? Rather, I should say, not even in this do they show themselves properly in earnest. For he that wills a thing properly as he ought, puts also his hand unto the means which lead to the object of his desire. Thus, because hunger compels thee to take nourishment, thou waitest not for the viands to come unto thee of their own accord, but omittest nothing to gather victuals together. So in thirst and cold, and all other such things, thou art industrious, and in thy station, to take care of the body. Now do this in respect of God's kingdom, and surely thou shalt obtain it.

—*Chrysostom*, 347-407.

(2758.) Think of heaven with hearty purposes and peremptory designs to get thither.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612-1667.

21. It should be the supreme object of our life to secure it.

(2759.) If a man were assured that there were made for him a great purchase in Spain, Turkey, or some other parts more remote, would he not adventure the dangers of the seas, and of his enemies also, if need were, that he might come to the enjoyment of his own? Well, behold Jesus Christ hath made a purchase for us in heaven, and there is nothing required on our parts, but that we will come and enjoy it. Why, then, should we refuse any pains, or fear anything in the way? Nay, we must strive to get in; it may be that we shall be pinched in the entrance, for the gate is straight and low, not like the gates of princes,—lofty, roofed, and arched, —so that we must be fain to leave our wealth behind us, and the pleasures of this life behind us; yet enter we must, though we leave our skins, nay, our very lives, behind us; for the purchase that is made is worth ten thousand worlds: not all the silks of Persia, not all the spices of Egypt, not all the gold of Ophir, not all the treasures of both Indies, are to be compared to it. Who, therefore, would not contend for such a bargain, though he sold all to have it? —*Adams*, 1653.

(2760.) Let HOLINESS TO THE LORD be written upon your hearts in all that you do. Do no work which you cannot entitle God to, and truly say He set you about; and do nothing in the world for any other ultimate end than to please and glorify and enjoy Him. And remember that whatever you do must be done as a means to these, and as by one that is that way going on to heaven. All your labour must be the labour of a traveller, which is all for his journey's end; and all your respect of affection to place or thing in your way, must be in respect to you attainment of the end; as a traveller loveth a good way, a good horse, a good inn, a dry cloak, or good company; but nothing must be loved here as your end or home.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(2761.) We may rest on earth, as the Ark is said to have rested in the midst of Jordan (Josh. iii. 13). A short and small rest, no question! or as the angels of heaven are desired to turn in and rest them on earth (Gen. xviii. 4). They would have been loth to have taken up their dwelling there. Should Israel have settled his rest in the wilderness among serpents and enemies and weariness and famine? Should Noah have made the ark his home, and have been loth to come forth when the waters were fallen? Should the mariner choose his dwelling on the sea, and settle his rest in the midst of rocks and sands and raging tempests? Though he may adventure through all these for a commodity of worth, yet I think he takes it not for his rest. Should a soldier rest in the midst of fight, when he is in the very thickest of his enemies and the instruments of death compass him about? I think he cares not how soon the battle is over. And though he may adventure upon war for the obtaining of peace, yet I hope he is not so mad as to take that instead of peace. And are not Christians such travellers, such mariners, such soldiers? Have you not fears within and troubles without? Are we not in the thickest of continual dangers? We cannot eat, drink, sleep, labour, pray, hear, confer, &c., but in the midst of snares and perils, and shall we sit down and rest here? O Christian, follow thy work, look to thy danger, hold on to the end; win the field and come off the ground, before thou think of a settling rest. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(2762.) Love puts a man upon the use of all means to enjoy the thing loved. He that loves the world, how active is he! He will break his peace and sleep for it. He that loves honour, what hazards will he run! He will swim to the throne in blood. Jacob loved Rachel, and what would not he do, though it were serving a long apprenticeship for obtaining her? Love is like wings to the bird, like sails to the ship; it carries a Christian full sail to heaven. Heaven is a place of rest and joy; it is a paradise, and will you not love it? Love heaven, and you cannot miss it; love breaks through all opposition,—it takes heaven by storm. Love, though it labour, is never weary.

—*Watson*, 1696.

22. This is not inconsistent with strict attention to the ordinary duties of life.

(2763.) A stranger has his prime intention home to his country, and what he does in the way is in virtue of his prime intention, though he does not, in every particular action, think of it. A traveller when he rides on the way does not think of home in every step. Ay, but he does that he does in virtue of his prime intention when he first set out, and calls to remembrance ofttimes as he goes; he thinks of his journey's end. And, by the way, I observe this note of some weak Christians that think they are not heavenly-minded, except they do nothing but think of heaven and heavenly things. This is but a weak and silly conceit. It should be our thought in the morning. Our thoughts should open with that. It should be the key to open the morning, the thought of this course what will become of us ere long in heaven. But then all that we do should be in virtue and strength of that prime intention to please God, and to go to heaven. Though we think not alway of the present business, yet it is good as much as may be to quicken our endeavour. —*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

(2764.) The sea-birds which followed our vessel taught an important lesson. I watched their beautiful motions—now gently floating on the wind with no apparent exertion, now flapping their wings in

upward flight, now descending to catch from the crest of a wave the food thrown from the ship, now outstripping the wind to recover the distance lost, now wheeling with graceful curve to the right and left, and ever crossing and recrossing each other as if in harmonious and joyful dance. Watching them one forgot that they had any other motion. Yet all the while they were travelling onwards with the ship at the rate of fourteen knots an hour. Those motions amongst themselves did not for a moment suspend their steady progressive flight across the deep, nor did that progressive flight with the ship prevent those lesser activities of their own. True type of the Christian. There are objects of the present life which we should seek, pleasures which we should enjoy, and duties to ourselves and one another which we should discharge. True religion does not require us to abnegate any part of our nature, nor does the pursuit of the future demand the neglect of the present. The flight of a bird straight across the ocean in one unvarying line would not have been so beautiful, would not have displayed so much activity or required so much strength, as the varied motions of those sea-gulls. The life of the monk or nun who retires from the secular duties of the present life is not so beautiful, is not so Christian, does not require so much grace, does not indicate so high a degree of piety, as that of the man or woman, diligent in the duties of the state, of the exchange, of the workshop, of the family,—with cares of business, cares of children, claims of neighbourhood and friends—who yet, amidst all, is making steady progress heavenward; now stooping for food, now soaring in thankfulness, now sweeping hither and thither in the exercise of God-given faculties, and ever with friendly heart mingling in beautiful harmony with the kindred flight of others—yet in every one of these motions, regulated by the concurrent and all-controlling flight onwards, ever onwards to the desired haven. Some there are whose lives resemble the flight of birds around a ship at anchor. They go up and down, and round and round, yet their locality is unchanged. Their lives may be active and beautiful, but they make no progress heavenward. They are no nearer port. The Christian abstains from all that is sinful and vain in this world; but in diligent exercise of his varied faculties, the performance of earthly duties, and the enjoyment of social and domestic delights, he resembles others. But here is the difference—he is all the while speeding his flight onwards towards God, while they are ever circling round themselves. Oh for grace to be thus, "in the world and not of the world,"—to be performing diligently and cheerfully our part in the present life—yet ever pressing towards our eternal rest. *Newman Hall.*

23. Shut out at last!

(2765.) Several years ago we heard an old minister relate the following incident:—"He had preached the word for many a year in a wood hard by a beautiful village in the Inverness-shire Highlands, and it was his invariable custom, on dismissing his own congregation, to repair to the Baptist Chapel in this village to partake of the Lord's Supper with his people assembled there. It was then usual to shut the gates during this service, in order that communicants might not be exposed to any disturbance through persons going out or coming in. On one occasion the burden of the Lord pressed upon His servant with more than ordinary severity, and, anxious to deliver it and clear his soul, he detained his hearers a little beyond the time, and consequently had to hurry to the chapel. As he drew near he noticed the doorkeeper retire from the outer gate, after having shut it. He called to him, quickening his pace at the same time, but his cry was not heard, the attendant retreated inside and the minister came up 'just in time' to see the door put to, and hear it fastened from within. He walked round the chapel looking up at the windows, but could gain no admittance; there was only one door, and that door was shut. He listened and heard the singing, and thought how happy God's people were inside, while he himself was shut out. The circumstance made an impression upon him at the time which he could never afterwards forget, and he was led to ask himself the question, 'Shall it be so at the last? Shall I come up to the gate of heaven only in time to be too late, to find the last ransomed one admitted, and the door everlastingly shut?'" *—Spurgeon.*

24. To be made a topic of frequent meditation.

(2766.) A heavenly mind is a joyful mind: this is the nearest and the truest way to live a life of comfort. And without this, you must needs be uncomfortable. Can a man be at the fire, and not be warm; or in the sunshire, and not have light? Can your heart be in heaven, and not have comfort? The countries of Norway, Iceland, and all the northward are cold and frozen, because they are farther from the power of the sun; but in Egypt, Arabia, and the southern parts it is far otherwise, where they live more near its powerful rays. What could make such frozen, uncomfortable Christians, but living so far as they do from heaven? And what makes some few others so warm in comforts, but their living higher than others do, and their frequent access so near to God? When the sun in the spring draws near our part of the earth, how do all things congratulate its approach! The earth looks green, and casteth off her mourning habit: the trees shoot forth; the plants revive; the pretty birds, how sweetly do they sing! The face of all things smiles upon us, and all the creatures below rejoice. Beloved friends, if we would but try this life with God, and would but keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us; and all our graces be fresh and green! How would the face of our souls be changed, and all that is within us rejoice! How should we forget our winter sorrows, and withdraw our souls from our sad retirements! How early should we rise (as those birds in the spring) to sing the praise of our great Creator! O Christian! get above; believe it, that region is warmer than this below.
—Baxter, 1615-1691.

(2767.) The honouring of God and our Redeemer doth require that we daily converse with the saints in heaven; because it is in them that God is seen, in the greatest glory of His love; and it is in them that the power and efficacy and love of our dear Redeemer most appeareth. You judge now of the father by his children, and of the physician by his patients, and of the builder by the house, and of the captain by his victories. And if you see no better children of God than such childish, crying, feeble, froward, diseased, burdensome ones as we are, you will rob Him of the chief of this His honour. And if you look at none of the patients of our

Saviour but such lame and languid, pained, groaning, diseased, half-cured ones as we, you will rob Him of the glory of His skill and cures. And if you look but to such an imperfect broken fabric as the Church on earth, you will dishonour the builder. And if you look to no other victories of Christ and His Spirit, but what is made in this confused, dark, and bedlam world, you will be tempted to dishonour His conduct and His conquests. But if you will look to His children in heaven, who are perfected in His love and likeness, and to Christ's patients which are there perfectly cured, and to His building in the heavenly unity and glory, and to all His victories as there complete; then you will give Him the glory which is His due. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(2768.) Another help to sweeten thy soul with the foretastes of rest, is this labour to apprehend how near it is; think seriously of its speedy approach. That which we think is near at hand, we are more sensible of than that which we behold at a distance. When we hear of war or famine in another country, it troubleth us not so much; or if we hear it prophesied of a long time hence: so if we hear of plenty a great way off, or of a golden age that shall fall out who knows when, this never rejoiceth us. But if judgments or mercies begin to draw near, then they affect us. If we were sure we should see the golden age, then it would take with us. When the plague is in a town but twenty miles off, we do not fear it; nor much, perhaps, if it be in another street: but if once it come to the next door, or if it seize on one in our own family, then we begin to think on it more feelingly. It is so with mercies as well as judgments. When they are far off, we talk of them as marvels; but when they draw close to us, we rejoice in them as truths.
—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(2769.) A true saint every day takes a turn in heaven, his thoughts and desires are like cherubims flying up to paradise. Can men of the world so delight in looking upon their bags of gold, and fields of corn, and shall not the heirs of heaven take more delight in contemplating their glory in reversion? Could we send forth Faith as a spy, and every day view the glory of the Jerusalem above, how would it rejoice us, as it doth the heir to think of the inheritance which is to come into his hand shortly.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(2770.) I have noticed, when watching artists at their work, that they are sometimes accustomed to put coloured pebble-stones on their easel, and once in a while to take them up and look at them; and I said, "What is that for?" They said, "In working paints into tints, the eye gets down, and it is necessary to have some colour at hand to tone it up with, in order to be able to distinguish nice shades."

Now, heaven is that place which we have been accustomed to regard as the centre of all that is perfect; and we have day by day and month by month, been remitting there our ideal conceptions of everything that is beautiful and true and honourable and noble and loving; and we have gained a standard, at least of what character ought to be; and we bring that down to tone up our eye with in this world. Every day we are among people that are highly temptable, that are lax, that are stumbling, that are sometimes hateful, and that are but just lovely at the best of times; and we become worn, weakened, jaded, and depraved by this commerce with the world. We want to lift the mind up, so that we may get a conception of the possibilities of being and character higher than we have found in this world; and we are to get it by setting our affections on things above.

Heaven answers with us the same purpose that the tuning-fork does with the musician. Our affections, the whole orchestra of them, are apt to get below the concert-pitch; and we take heaven to tune our hearts by. In this way, instead of making the heavenly state a romance-ground, we are every day framing it by the imagination, and ascribing to it all our higher and nobler and finer ideals, and then taking this state and bringing it down to measure our daily life by. And so, instead of taking us away from the duties of life, it brings us back to them with renewed strength, with better moral discrimations, with more patience, more gentleness, and more hope. —*Beecher.*

25. The Influence of the hope of heaven.

(2771.) The slaves that serve the Turks in their galleys, if they could but think that, at seven years' end, some Christian would come and redeem them, would be better affected and tug at the oar with more cheerfulness, especially if they could be assured of their delivery. If Jacob serve the churl Laban seven years longer, if he think he shall have Rachel at the end of it, it will be but as seven days, and he goes on with comfort and is content that God shall use him to His hand as it pleaseth Him. Thus it is that the hope of better things sweeteneth the present sadness of any outward condition. There is no grief so heavy but, if a man tie heaven at the end of it, it will become light; but put them together, and the one will be swallowed up in the other. If the times be bad, hope for better, the expectation whereof will be an excellent lenitive to allay the smart of present calamity.
—*Alphonsus ab Avendano*, 1590.

(2772.) As a man passing through a very swift flood, doth not look down to the water, lest it should make him giddy, and so he be in danger of falling, but he hath his eyes fixed on the bank or shore that he goeth over unto: even so a Christian, passing through the waves of the troubles of this world, lifteth up his eyes to heaven, and beholding there, with a spiritual regard, the quiet bank that he shall come to by Christ, respecteth not the troubles that he is in, which troubles the wicked do respect, and that is it that casteth them into desperation.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2773.) Travellers tell us that they that are on the top of the Alps may see great showers of rain fall under them, which they overlook, but not one drop of it comes at them. And he that is on the top of some high tower mindeth not the croaking of frogs and toads, the hissing of serpents, adders, and the like venomous creatures that are below. Thus, a heavenly-minded man, who dwells in heaven on earth, looks through and beyond all troubles and afflictions, rides triumphantly through the storm of disparagements—nay, he boldly stares Death in the face, though never so ugly disguised. As Anaxarchus said to the tyrant, "*Tunde, tunde, Anaxarchum non tundis,*" beat him and bruise him

and kill him it may, but he will keep up his soul in the very ruins of his body. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(2774.) Especially dwell by faith in heaven where love is perfect, and there you will learn more of the work of love. To think believingly that mutual love is heaven itself, and that this is our union with God and Christ and all the holy ones, and that love will be an everlasting felicity, this will breed in us a desire to begin that happy life on earth. And as he that heareth excellent music will long to draw near, and join in the concert or the pleasure; so he that by faith doth dwell much in heaven, and hear how angels and blessed souls do there praise God in the highest fervours of rejoicing love, will be inclined to imitate them, and long to partake of their felicity. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2775.) The believer's feelings are those of an exile, who, amidst various comforts, still thinks of his home, his country, and his friends. The hope of his return gilds the intermediate hours of his existence; he fulfils his duty, he refreshes his spirit, by the objects of beauty or of interest which are around him, but his affections cling around his native shores. To that unforgotten scene the needle of his heart turns hourly. Thus it is with the Christian on whom the mercy of God is exerting its sacred and purifying influence. Religion is to him, not the cold balance of certain restrictions and certain comforts, but the warm acknowledgments of infinite obligations and infinite love. It is the blessed and refreshing conviction that yet a little while, and the veil which hides him from his true happiness will be withdrawn; that yet a little while, and the Saviour, into whose hands he has confided the great interests of his soul, will return.
—*Salter.*

(2776.) The fact respecting a strong though rational direction in the mind of man toward heavenly things, however it may raise suspicion in those who have not felt it, is unquestionable among such as have. To illustrate the subject:—I see a small bar of steel in the lid of a box now before me. I see it tremble, as if undetermined, yet keep a certain direction. I can cause it to deviate from its point by impulse; but, though I can disturb its natural direction, I cannot give it a new one. Nay, this very disturbance will still more fully discover its inclination; it will put it upon labouring to recover its point: if I cease to agitate, it will soon cease to vibrate, and will return to its proper rest. Of this I am clearly conscious; but I am not more conscious of this fact than I am of another, of which the former may stand as an emblem. Thousands, as well as myself, know that the polar direction of the steel is not more a matter of fact in the natural world than the heavenly direction they feel is a fact in the moral world, and that a disposition often observed in men who were once the most reprobate—to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," is the proper effect of this influence. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(2777.) Enough of heaven is known to make the confident hope of it one of the greatest purifying powers that you can bring to bear upon our polluted natures. Heaven is far away, but not too far away to make its power felt. All of us here have seen the ebb and flow of the tide. We know what a wondrous provision that is in nature, what a service that tide renders to commerce, how it keeps the great bed of the waters of the sea from stagnation and corruption. At one time we see the waters rolling seaward and westward, bearing on its bosom all who wish to go in that direction, and presently we see it turning round and flowing eastward and seaward, bearing all who wish to go in that direction. If you and I had power to stop the tidal motion of the waters, and were to exercise that power, we cannot tell the mischief we should inflict on thousands of cities, whilst we should ruin not a few. And I ask you where is the power that produces this tidal motion? The winds do not accomplish it; the earth nowhere carries the power in her own bosom; the power is far away. A quarter of a million of miles away the moon walks across the sky in her unsullied brightness. There is the first depository of the great power by which God makes this tidal motion in the waters. Farther away the sun burns in his brightness and splendour, and there is the second great depository that makes this useful and wondrous tidal motion. These heavenly bodies seem to reach through the intervening space, and with a hand of gravitating power take hold of the waters on the face of the earth and lift them up towards themselves. This teaches us that in God's universe one world is made to tell with practical power upon another world. The work, the blessed work, may be done here, and the power that does it may be as far away as the third heaven. And what we see in nature is what our text tells us is to take place in the kingdom of His grace. Heaven is far away, but the life we are to have in heaven is to be telling with daily power upon the life we live upon the earth. What I am to be there, is to influence me every day in what I do here; what you are to be there, is to influence you every day in what you are here. —*Vince.*

(2778.) Paul had established in his mind such a clear conviction of the invisible world, of the state of the redeemed beyond this life, that it had become a refuge to him (2 Cor. iv. 16, v. 8). This world could not touch him. He had the power of losing himself in that other world. He had a spiritual antithesis of sleep. We, every day, know how to hide ourselves from care and trouble by sinking into sleep. Men are like a traveller in a wilderness pursued by wolves. He scares them, he kills some, he wounds others, he keeps them at bay; and yet they hang on and howl, and run in at chances with snapping and yelping, until at length he espies a cave whose mouth is narrow and easily barred; and, entering, he blocks the passage; and retiring far back, secure, beyond the sound of his enemies, he lies down in the cool and dry cavern, with full security from the pestering, dangerous pack. Every day we are hunted, and every night we find the cave of sleep, and all our cares are baffled, though they lie in ambush waiting for the morrow. But we know how to find the dark caves, and there we elude all our pursuers. But Paul had a cave for the day, as well as for the night. By faith he rose into the bright and heavenly sphere, and left troubles barking and baulked far down below. —*Beecher.*

(2779.) A minister of the Gospel was one day visiting a pious old woman who was in the poorhouse. While in conversation with her on the comforts, prospects, and rewards of religion, the minister saw an unusual lustre beaming from her counten-

ance, and the calmness of Christian triumph glistening in her eye. Addressing her by name, he said: "Will you tell me what thought it was that passed through your mind which was the cause of your appearing so joyful?"

The repiy of the "old disciple" was, "Oh, sir, I was just thinking what a change it will be from the poorhouse to heaven!"

26. The ardour with which the Christian longs for it.

(2780.) Even as a little bird shut up in a cage, although the cage be very precious and costly, desireth to go out, and striveth to have her liberty, and in her eager desire to be gone doth oftentimes thrust her bill through the loops of the cage; so the soul of a virtuous man, inflamed with an unfeigned love of God, being shut up in the coop of his body, although he abound with all necessaries fit for the preservation of this temporal life, doth most earnestly desire to depart hence and go to his country, which is heaven. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2781.) If a loving wife's husband be absent in some far country, though she have by messengers and by letters some communion with him, yet this will not satisfy; there is a great desire to see him, to be each in the embrace of the other: so it should be with us. The letter of His word, the recourse of His messengers, should rather excite desires fully to enjoy our God than occasion us to rest contented in this present condition. I remember Absalom, when he was now recalled from exile, but not admitted to see his father's face at court, he was so impatient that his exile seemed almost as easy as such a condition. Thus it is with us: from what time God has brought us to believe, we are called back again from our exile spiritual to the Church or city of our God; but, alas! we are not admitted into the court, into the glorious presence of our great Lord. Let us, *ergo*, if we be risen with Christ, groan after this prerogative, to which God has chosen us, and take no delight to dwell here further than the serving God in His saints sweetens our abode.

—*Bayne*, 1617.

(2782.) As the fire mounteth upwards to its proper place, and as the needle still trembleth till it stand at the north; so the soul once inflamed with the heavenly fire, and acquainted with her first original, cannot be at rest until it find itself in that comfortable way which certainly leads homewards. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2783.) There is a great deal of difference between the desires of heaven in a sanctified man and an unsanctified. The believer prizeth it above earth, and had rather be with God than here (though death that stands in the way, may possibly have harder thoughts from him). But to the ungodly, there is nothing seemeth more desirable than this world; and therefore he only chooseth heaven before hell, but not before earth; and therefore shall not have it upon such a choice. We hear of gold and silver mines in the Indies: if you offer a golden mountain there to an Englishman that hath an estate and family here that are dear unto him, perhaps he will say, "I am uncertain whether their golden mountains be not mere fictions to deceive men; and if it be true that there are such things, yet it is a great way thither, and the seas are perilous; and I am well enough already where I am, and therefore let who will go thither for me, I will stay at home as long as I can." But if this man must needs be banished out of England, and had his choice whether he would go to the golden islands, or to dig in a coal-pit, or live in a wilderness, he would rather choose the better than the worse. So it is with an ungodly man's desires, in respect to this world and that to come. If he could stay here, in fleshy pleasure for ever, he would; because he looks at heaven as uncertain and a great way off, and the passage seemeth to him more troublesome and dangerous than it is, and he is where he would be already. But when he sees that there is no staying here for ever, but death will have him away, he had rather go to heaven than to hell, and therefore will be religious, as far as the flesh and the world will give him leave, lest he should be cast into hell when he is taken from the earth.

But take an Englishman that is in poverty and reproach, and hath neither house nor land, nor friend to comfort him, and let him have the offer of a golden island, and a person of unquestionable skilfulness and fidelity that will promise in short time to bring him safe thither; if he believe this person, and can put his trust in him, doubtless he will be gone and follow him over sea and land; and though the passage may somewhat daunt him, yet the promised possession will carry him through all. So it is with the true Christian: he is dead to this world, and sees nothing here in which he can be happy; he is burdened and wearied with sin and suffering; he is firmly persuaded of the truth of the Gospel, and seeth by faith the world that is to flesh invisible; and believeth in Jesus Christ who hath promised to convey him safely thither, and therefore he would go away; and though he love not death, the stormy passage, yet he will submit to it, having so sure a pilot, because he loves the life which through death he must pass into, and had rather be there than here.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2784.) Conceive the case of a man, who, having been cast upon a dreary inhospitable island, awaits the time for a vessel to come and bear him away. He paces its barren and desert sands, and looks up at the overcast sky, anxiously waiting for its arrival to carry him to a land of light and fertility. So the Christian, like the exile on a rock, feels that he is far from his natural home, and is looking for, and hasting unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. He knows that the vessel is prepared, and the convoy ready, which are to bear him hence from a barren wilderness to a happy land flowing with milk and honey. —*Salter*.

(2785.) When on one occasion a crowd of crusaders approached the Holy City, and caught the first sight of its spires and turrets through the blue luminous tremors of the distance, some knelt in silent praise, some kissed the earth, some prayed and laughed and wept in wild emotion; and knight and palmer, old man and little child, joined to raise the cry, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" Ought not a sight of the "heavenly Jerusalem" to inspire within us a vehement heavenliness, and make us in greater earnest to be there? —*Stanford*.

27. Longings for it strengthen with the spiritual life.

(2786.) None long for heaven more than those who enjoy most of heaven; all delays now are ex-

ceedingly tedious to such. Their continual moan is "*Why is His chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?*" The last year is thought longer by the apprentice than all his time before, because now it is nearer out.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2787.) Hope begets in a Christian a holy impatience after further attainments, especially when it grows to some strength. The higher our hopes of salvation rise, the more will our hearts widen and distend themselves in holy desires; "*Not only they, but we ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*" Methinks rejoicing would better become them for what they had already, than groaning for what they have not. Who may better stay long for their dinner, than they who have their stomachs stayed with a good breakfast? This would hold in bodily food, but not spiritual. No doubt, the sweetness which they tasted from their first-fruits in hand, did cheer their spirits; but the thoughts of what was behind, made them groan. Hope waits for all, and will not let the soul sit down contented, till all the dishes be on the board, till the whole harvest that stands on the field of the promise be reaped and well inned. Yea, the more the Christian hath received in partial payments, the deeper groans hope makes the soul fetch for what is behind; because these foretastes do acquaint the Christian more with the nature of those joys which are in heaven, and so enlarge his understanding to have more raised conceptions of the felicity those enjoy that are arrived there: and the increasing of his knowledge must needs enlarge his desires, and those desires break out into sad groans, to think what sweet wine is drunk in full bowls by glorified saints, and he live where only a sip is allowed, that doth not satisfy, but kindle his thirst. It is harder now for him to live on this side heaven, than before he knew so much. He is like one that stands at the door, within which is a company set at a rich feast; he hears them how merry they are; through the key-hole he sees what variety they have; and by a little which he licks from the trenchers that are brought out, is sensible how delicious their fare is: Oh, how such a one's teeth would water after their cheer, which another misseth not, that hears not of it, or only hears, and tastes not of their dainties! *Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

28. Foretastes of its joys are granted here and now.

(2788.) How do the heavenly-minded welcome death, desiring to depart! What foretastes do they often have, as they approach the confines of Canaan! Land-birds of beautiful plumage greeted Columbus days before his eye caught a glimpse of the New World. A more southern voyager found himself in the fresh waters of the Amazon before discovering the continent whence they came. So, at the close of life's voyage, do birds of paradise come hitherward, careering on bright wings, and the river of life sends its refreshing current far out into the briny sea of this world. —*A. C. Thompson.*

(2789.) If we really live under the hope of future happiness, we shall taste it by way of anticipation and forethought; an image of it will meet our minds often, and stay there, as all pleasing expectations do. —*Atterbury*, 1662–1732.

29. The journey thither.

(1.) *The difficulties of the way.*

(2790.) Jonathan and his armour-bearer, being upon their march against the Philistines, were to pass betwixt two rocks, the one called Bozez, which signifies dirty; the other called Seneh, which signifies thorny—a hard passage. But on they went, as we say, through thick and thin, and at last gained the victory. The Israelites were first brought to the bitter waters of Marah before they might taste of the pleasant fountains or the milk and honey of Canaan. And in vain shall any man expect the river of God's pleasures before he hath pledged Christ in the cup of bitterness; when we have pledged Him in His gall and vinegar, then He will drink to us in the new wine of His kingdom. He that is the Door and the Way hath taught us that there is but one way, one door, one passage to heaven, and that a strait one, through which, though we do pass with much pressure and tugging, having our superfluous rags torn away from us here, in the crowd of this world, yet we shall be happy. He that will be knighted must kneel for it, and he that will enter in at the strait gate must crowd for it—a gate made so on purpose, narrow and hard in the entrance, yet, after we have entered, wide and glorious, that after our pain our joy may be the sweeter.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(2.) *The difficulties of the way are not to turn us from it.*

(2791.) In my course to heaven, almost all things are against me; but God is for me, and how happily still doth the work succeed! Do I set upon this work in my own strength, or rather in the strength of Christ my Lord; and cannot I do all things through Him that strengtheneth me? Was He ever foiled, or subdued by an enemy? He hath been assaulted indeed, but was He ever conquered? Can they take the sheep till they have overcome the shepherd? Why then doth my flesh lay open to me the difficulties, and urge me so much with the greatness and troubles of the work? It is Christ that must answer all these objections, and what are the difficulties that can stay His power? Is anything too hard for the omnipotent God? May not Peter boldly walk on the sea, if Christ do but give the word of command; and if he begin to sink, is it from the weakness of Christ, or the smallness of his faith? The water, indeed, is but a sinking ground to tread on, but if Christ be by, and countenance us in it; if He be ready to reach us His hand, who would draw back from fear of danger? Is not sea and land alike to Him? Shall I be driven from my God, and from my everlasting rest, as the silly birds are frighted from their food with a man of clouts, or a loud noise, when I know before there is no danger in it? How do I see men daily in these wars adventure upon armies, and forts, and cannons, and cast themselves upon the instruments of death; and have not I as fair a prize before me, and as much encouragement to adventure as they? What do I venture? My life at most; and in these prosperous times there is not one of many that ventures that. What do I venture on? Are they not unarmed foes? A great hazard, indeed, to venture on the hard thoughts of the world; or on the scorns and slanders of a wicked tongue! Surely, these serpent's teeth are out; these vipers are easily shaken into the fire; these adders have no stings;

these thorns have lost their prickles. As all things below are silly comforters, so are they silly, toothless enemies; bugbears to frighten fools and children, rather than powerful, dreadful foes.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3.) ***At the end of the way there is a sufficient recompense for all that can befall us in it.***

(2792.) A man in his journey sees afar off some great mountain, so that his very eye is weary with the foresight of so great a distance; yet his comfort is that time and patience will overcome it, and that every step he takes sets him nearer to his journey's end, and being once there, he shall both forget how long it then seemed, and please himself in looking back upon the way that he hath measured. It is just thus in our passage to heaven; our weak nature is ready to faint under the very conceit and length of the journey; our eyes do not more guide than discourage us. Many must be the steps of grace and true obedience that must insensibly bring us thither; only let us move and hope, and God's good grace will perfect our salvation. And when we are once come to the top of that holy mount, *meminisse juvabit*, all the weary steps and deep sloughs that we have passed through, all the pangs that we have felt, all the sorrows that we have undergone, all the difficulties that we have met with in the way, shall either be forgotten or contribute to our happiness in the remembrance of them.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(2793.) The difficulty of obtaining shows the excellency; and, surely, if you consider but what it cost Christ to purchase it; what it costs God's Spirit to bring men's hearts to it; what it costs ministers to persuade to it; what it costs Christians, after all this, to obtain it; and what it costs many a half-Christian that, after all, goes without it; you will say, that here is difficulty, and therefore excellency. Trifles may be had at a trivial rate, and men may have damnation far more easily. It is but to lie still, and sleep out our days in careless laziness. . It is but to take our pleasure, and mind the world, and cast away the thoughts of sin, and grace, and Christ, and heaven, and hell, out of our minds; and do as the most do, and never trouble ourselves about these high things, but venture our souls upon our presumptuous conceits and hopes, and let the vessel swim which way it will; and then stream, and wind, and tide, will all help us apace to the gulf of perdition. You may burn a hundred houses easier than build one; and kill a thousand men, than make one alive. The descent is easy, the ascent not so. To bring diseases is but to cherish sloth, please the appetite, and take what most delights us; but to cure them, will cost bitter pills, loathsome potions, tedious gripings, abstemious, accurate living; and perhaps all fall short too. He that made the way, and knows the way better than we, hath told us "it is narrow and strait," and requires striving; and they that have paced it more truly and observantly than we, do tell us it lies through many tribulations, and is with much ado passed through. Conclude, then, it is surely somewhat worth that must cost all this.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

HELL.

1. Its locality unknown.

(2794.) Some of the upper part of the earth is to us yet *terra incognita*, an unknown land; but all of the lowest part of hell is to us an unknown land. Many thousands have travelled thither, but none have returned thence, to make reports, or write books of their travels. That piece of geography is very imperfect . . . When a curious inquisitor asked Austin what God did before He created the world, Austin told him He was making hell for such busy questionists, for such curious inquirers into God's secrets. Such handsome jerks are the best answers to men of curious minds. It concerns us but little to know where hell is. Certainly they are the best and wisest of men, who spend most thoughts, and time, and pains how to keep out of it, than to exercise themselves with disputes about it.

—*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

2. Reasonableness of belief in its existence.

(2795.) Hell is the infinite terror of the soul, whatever that may be. To one man it is pain. Rid him of that, he can bear all degradation. To another it is public shame. Save him from that, and he will creep and crawl before you to submit to any reptile meanness. "Honour me now, I pray thee, before the people," cries Saul, till Samuel turns from the abject thing in scorn. To others, the infinite terror is that compared with which all these would be a bed of roses. It is the hell of having done wrong—the hell of having had a spirit from God, pure, with high aspirations, and to be conscious of having dulled its delicacy, and degraded its desires—the hell of having quenched a light brighter than the sun's, of having done to another an injury that through time and through eternity never can be undone—infinite, maddening remorse—the hell of knowing that every chance of excellence, and every opportunity of good, has been lost for ever. This is the infinite terror; this is wrath to come.

You doubt that? Have you ever marked that striking fact, the connection of the successive stages of the soul? How sin can change the countenance, undermine the health, produce restlessness? Think you the grave will end all that? That by some magic change, the moral being shall be buried there, and the soul rise again so changed in every feeling that the very identity of being would be lost, and it would amount to the creation of a new soul? Say you that God is love? Oh! but look round this world. The aspect of things is stern; very stern. If they be ruled by love, it is a love which does not shrink from human agony. There is a law of infinite mercy here, but there is a law of boundless rigour too. Sin, and you will suffer—that law is not reversed. The young, and the gentle, and the tender, are inexorably subjected to it. We would shield them if we could; but there is that which says they shall not be shielded. They shall weep, and fade, and taste of mortal anguish, even as others. Carry that out into the next world, and you have "wrath to come."

—*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

3. The dungeon of the universe.

(2796.) I confess it greatly quieteth my mind against this great objection of the numbers that are damned and cast off for ever, to consider how small

a part this earth is of God's creation, as well as how sinful and impenitent. Ask any astronomer that hath considered the innumerable numbers of the fixed stars and planets, with their distances and magnitude and glory, and the uncertainty that we have whether there be not as many more, or a hundred or thousand times as many, unseen to man as all those which we see (considering the defectiveness of man's sight), and the planets about Jupiter, with the innumerable stars in the milky way, which the tube hath lately discovered, which man's eyes without it could not see: I say, ask any man who knoweth these things, whether all this earth be any more in comparison of the whole creation than one prison is to a kingdom or empire, or the paring of one nail, or a little mole, or wart, or a hair in comparison of a whole body. And if God should cast off all this earth, and use all the sinners in it as they deserve, it is no more sign of a want of benignity, or mercy in Him, than it is for a king to cast one subject of a million into a gaol, to hang him for his murder or treason or rebellion; or for a man to kill one louse which is but a molestation to the body that beareth it, or than it is to pare a man's nails, or to cut off a wart, or a hair, or to pull out an aching, rotten tooth. I know it is a thing uncertain and unrevealed to us, whether all these globes be inhabited or not. But he that considereth, that there is scarce any uninhabitable place on earth, or in the water, or air; but men, or beasts, o birds, or fishes, or flies, or worms, and moles, do take up almost all; will think it a probability so near a certainty as not to be much doubted of, that the vaster and more glorious parts of the creation are not uninhabited; but that they have inhabitants answerable to their magnitude and glory, as palaces have other inhabitants than cottages; and that there is a con-naturality and agreeableness there as well as here, between the region, or globe, and the inhabitants. But whether it be the globes themselves, or only the interspaces, or other parts, that are thus inhabited, no reason can doubt, but that those more vast and glorious spaces are proportionably possessed. And whether they are all to be called angels or spirits, or by what other name, is unrevealed to us: but whatever they are called, I make no question but our number to theirs, is not one to a million at the most. Now this being so, for aught we know, those glorious parts may have inhabitants without any sin or misery; who are filled with their Maker's love and goodness, and so, fitter to be the demonstration of that love and goodness than this sinful molehill or dungeon of ignorance is. If I were sure that God would save all mankind, and only leave the devils in their damnation, and forsake no part of His creation but their hell, it would not be any great stumbling to my faith. Or if earth were all God's creation, and I were sure that He would condemn but one man of a hundred thousand, or a million, and that only for final impenitency in the contempt of the mercy which would have saved him, this would be no great difficulty to my faith; why then should it be an offence to us, if God, for their final refusal of His grace, do for ever forsake and punish the far greater part of this little, dark, and sinful world, while He glorifieth His benignity and love abundantly upon innumerable angels, and blessed spirits, and inhabitants of those more large and glorious seats? If you would judge of the beneficence of a king, will you go to the gaol and the gallows to discern it; or to his palace, and all the rest of his kingdom? And will you make a few condemned malefactors the measure of it; or all the rest of his obedient prosperous subjects? If hell be totally forsaken of God, as having totally forsaken Him; and if earth have made itself next to hell, and be forsaken as to the far greater part, because that greater part hath forsaken Him; as long as there may be millions of blessed ones above to one of these forsaken ones on earth, it should be no offence to any but the selfish, guilty sinner. I confess, I rather look upon it as a great demonstration of God's holiness and goodness in His justice, that He will punish the rebellious according to His laws; and a great demonstration of His goodness in His mercy, that He will save any of such a rebellious world, and hath not forsaken it utterly, as hell. And when of all the thousands of globes or worlds which He hath made, we know of none forsaken by Him; but hell, and part of the earth, all the devils, and most of men; we should admire the glory of His bounty, and be thankful, with joy, that we are not of the forsaken number; and that even among sinners, He will cast off none but those that finally reject His mercy.

But selfishness and sense do make men blind, and judge of good and evil only by self-interest and feeling: and the malefactor will hardly magnify justice, nor take it to be a sign of goodness: but God will be God, whether selfish rebels will or not.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2797.) The unseen bears to the seen world the same relation which the vast universe bears to a house or mansion. Every house, however sumptuous, is more or less dark, more or less confined, limits more or less the view of the surrounding country, defiles more or less, through its enclosures, the purity of the atmosphere. But go abroad from the midnight festival, where lamps shed an artificial glare, and the house reeks with the odours of the banquet,—go abroad into the still, solemn starlight, and catch the fresh breeze on thy brow, and look upwards into the vast expanse, lit up with the lamps of heaven. Or go forth from the close and darkened chamber of sleep, into the light and stir of the fair summer morning, when the woods and streams are vocal with melody, and every little insect is on the wing, and all nature teems with life and animation. Such is the passage from the sphere which is seen with the eye of flesh, to that which is not seen; from the false artificial lights of time, to the solemn stillness of eternity; from the noxious vapours of the world, to the pure breath of heaven's atmosphere; from scenes where man's art and man's handicraft have on all sides set up their memorials, to scenes which man has never trodden. To that unseen realm whereof we speak, the Gehenna, so often confounded with it, bears the same relation, as the dungeon of a baronial castle bears to the entire domain of the feudal lord. The dungeon is the place of punishment and incarceration, where prisoners expiate, by slow degrees, their offences,—allowed to pine away in darkness and solitude, shut out from the blessed light of heaven, shut out from the hum and stir of human intercourse, from the joyous sound of the huntsman's bugle, and the gay minstrelsy of the banqueting-hall. And Gehenna is that spot of everlasting banishment from light, which forms, or will form, the prison-house of the impenitent, a small and insig-

nificant section of the vast domains of Him, of whom we read that He is Light, and that He is Love. —*Goulburn.*

4. The wickedness of its inhabitants.

(2798.) How little you know what will be the effect of what you do when you cast that little black seed of a poisonous plant into the ground. It looks as fine as a seed of the most harmless flower; but how little do you know what it will come to. How little do you know what the plant will be from the seed. And so shall it be with the human soul that grows and grows in pride, in selfishness, and in hostility to the Divine will. Such a soul drops into death as the seed drops into the open furrow. Its roots shall come forth again, it shall lift up its trunk again, it shall grow again; but, oh! who can tell what that growth may come to? To what will the unregenerate man come when he grows in the soil of another life? If in all our developments here we are but seeds, to what states of wickedness shall we come in that land where all restraints are removed from men, and they are left to be swept on by the whole force and impetus of their depraved natures? —*Beecher.*

5. The misery of its inhabitants.

(1.) *Its utterness.*

(2799.) Hell is the centre in which all the lines of sin and of misery meet, the common shoal into which they all disgorge themselves, as rivers do their streams into the vast ocean; and as rivers, when they are fallen into the sea, lose their several names in one that comprehends them all—the ocean;—so all the evils of this life, when resolved into this, forget their private names — sickness, pains, poverty, &c. — and are called HELL; not that these are all formally and literally there, but virtually, in that the torment of the damned doth not only amount to, but beyond expression exceed them all. As in heaven there is no belly-cheer, yet a feast; no silks and satins worn, yet all in glorious robes; as silver is in gold, and gold in a jewel, so all these are in heaven, because that is of infinitely more value and worth than such things as are of highest reckoning on earth. Thus the great miseries of this life are incomparably less than the least torment of hell. Never can the creature say he is completely miserable till the devouring jaws of that infernal pit enclose him. Were the worst of his punishment what he feels here, he might in a manner bless himself; as Paul on the contrary saith, he should judge the saint miserable above others if all his hope were here. But there is the sinner's easeless endless state; there is not so much as one well day to release him a while from his pain, but he shall continue for ever in the height of his paroxysm; no change of weather or hope of clearing, but a perpetual storm set in to rain fire and brimstone upon him to all eternity, for so long it will be before the arm of the Almighty is weary of pouring out His wrath, or His heart be brought in love with sin, and reconciled to the sinner. —*Gurnall,* 1617–1679.

(2800.) The lost soul will raise himself out of the fire only to fall back into it. He will always feel the desire of rising, because he was created for God, as a bird shut up in a room flies to the ceiling and falls down again; the justice of God is the ceiling which keeps down the lost. —*Vianney.*

(2.) *From what it arises.*

(2801.) In hell it is sin that is the pitch in the barrel that makes it burn, it is sin in the conscience that makes the fire; God's wrath comes upon it, but it is that which burns.

—*Goodwin,* 1600–1679.

6. Its unquenchable fire.

(2802.) That fire is unquenchable. "And how," it may be said, "is it unquenchable?" Seest thou not this sun ever burning, and never quenched? Didst thou not behold the bush burning, and not consumed? —*Chrysostom,* 347–407.

(2803.) Oh, sirs, were all the water in the sea ink, and every pile of grass a pen, and every hair on all the men's heads in the world the hand of a ready writer, all would be too short graphically to delineate the nature of this dungeon, where all lost souls must lodge for ever. . . . If all the fires that ever were, or shall be in the world, were contracted into one fire, yet such a fire would be but as a painted fire upon the wall, to the fire of hell! . . . They that have seen the flames and heard the thunderings of Ætna, the flushing of Vesuvius, the thundering and burning flakes evaporating from those marine rocks, have not seen, no, not so much as the very glimmering of hell. A painted fire is a better shadow of these, than these can be of hell-torments, and the miseries of the damned therein. . . . Infernal fire is neither tolerable nor terminable. Impenitent sinners in hell shall have end without end, death without death, night without day, mourning without mirth, sorrow without solace, and bondage without liberty. The damned shall live as long in hell as God Himself shall live in heaven. Their imprisonment in that land of darkness, in that bottomless pit, is not an imprisonment during the King's pleasure, but an imprisonment during the everlasting displeasure of the King of kings.

—*Brooks,* 1608–1680.

(2804.) Unless under such miraculous circumstances as those in which the three Hebrew children walked unhurt in the furnace, or the mountain bush, as if bathed in dew, flowered amid the flames, life cannot exist in fire under any shape or form. No creature feeds, or breeds, or breathes in flames. What the winds fan, and the soil nourishes, and the dews refresh, fire kills. It scorches whatever it touches, and whatever breathes it, dies. Turning the stateliest tree, and sweetest flowers, and loveliest form of the daughters of Eve, into a heap of ashes, or a coal-black cinder, fire is the tomb of beauty, and the sepulchre of all life; the only region and realm within which death reigns, with none to dispute his sway. And thus the characteristic feature of this element—beside the pain it inflicts—is the death it works.

Suppose, then, that the fire that is never quenched is but a painted flame—grant that it is nothing but a symbol or figure of the punishment which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving, in what respects have they, who have persuaded themselves of that, improved their prospects? It is, "as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." Although the language of Scripture were figurative, yet expressing as it does the utter consumption and death of all hope and happiness, it is not less madness for any one to reject the

Saviour, and for the enjoyment of a passing pleasure to brave so terrible a doom. —*Guthrie.*

7. Its torments eternal.

(2805.) Wrath to come implies both the futurity and perpetuity of this wrath. It is wrath that shall certainly and inevitably come upon sinners. As sure as the night follows the day, as sure as the winter follows the summer; so shall wrath follow sin and the pleasures thereof. Yea, it is not only certainly future, but when it comes it will be abiding wrath, or wrath still coming. When millions of years and ages are past and gone, this will still be *wrath to come.* Ever coming as a river ever flowing. —*Flavel,* 1630-1691.

(2806.) The torments of hell abide for ever, "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Time cannot finish it, tears cannot quench it: the wicked are salamanders, who live always in the fire of hell, and are not consumed; after sinners have lain millions of years in hell, their punishment is as far from ending, as it was at the beginning. If all the earth and sea were sand, and every thousandth year a bird should come, and take away one grain of this sand, it would be a long time ere that vast heap of sand were emptied; yet, if after all that time the damned might come out of hell, there were some hope; but this word EVER breaks the heart. —*Watson,* 1696.

8. Voluntarily chosen by the wicked.

(2807.) You would not burn in hell, but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils in hell, but you will do that which will certainly procure it in despite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, I will drink poison, but yet I will not die; I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself; I will thrust my knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life; I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, but yet I will not burn it. Just so it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and live after the flesh in the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that the means do lead unto the end? and that God has by His righteous law concluded that ye must repent or perish? He that will take poison may as well say, I will kill myself, for it will prove no better in the end; though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it, and would not be persuaded it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceit and confidence that will save his life. So if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, we will be damned; for so you shall be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief or murderer that would say, "I will steal or kill, but I will not be hanged;" when he knows that if he do the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done. If he says, "I will steal and murder," he may as well say plainly, "I will be hanged;" so if you go on a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, "We will go to hell."

Moreover, the wicked will not use those means without which there is no hope of their salvation. He that will not eat may as well say plainly he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey may as well say plainly he will not come to the end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly he will be drowned. So if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well say plainly you will be damned. For if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before. —*Baxter,* 1615-1691.

9. In what sense it is the doom of the rejectors of Christ.

(2808.) A man being sick and like to die, the physician, knowing his case, takes with him some preservative to comfort him, and coming to the door falls a-knocking. Now, if he either will not or be not able to let him in, he must of necessity perish, and the cause cannot properly lie at the physician's door, who was ready and willing to relieve him, but in himself, that is not willing to be relieved. Thus it is that sin is a disease whereof we are all sick. We have all sinned. Now, Christ is the great Physician of our souls; He came down formerly from heaven on purpose to heal us, and He comes down daily to the door of our hearts, and there He knocks. If we but open the door of our hearts He will come in and sup with us, as He did with Mary, and forgive all our sins; but if we will not let Him in, or, through long contagion of sin, be not able to let Him in, we must of necessity die in our sins; and the case is evident, not because He doth not offer grace, but because we receive it not when it is offered. —*Inchinus.*

(2809.) It must not be forgotten that there is a broad distinction between a penalty and a consequence, as those terms are commonly understood. When Christ said, "He that believeth not shall be damned," He announced a consequence. He did not threaten a penalty in the usual acceptation of the term. A consequence is the direct and inevitable result of certain processes, partaking of their very nature, and inseparable from them; but a penalty may possibly be something different, something arbitrarily superadded, regardless of adaptation or measure. Being chilled is a consequence of exposure to cold air, but being flogged for such exposure is a penalty. Eternal punishment is the consequence of rejecting the Gospel, not a penalty (in the low sense of revenge) attached to a crime. —*Parker.*

10. Men should be warned against it.

(2810.) The thought of the future punishment for the wicked, which the Bible reveals, is enough to make an earthquake of terror in every man's soul. I do not accept the doctrine of eternal punishment because I delight in it. I would cast in doubts, if I could, till I had filled hell up to the brim. I would destroy all faith in it; but that would do me no good; I could not destroy the thing. Nor does it help me to take the word "everlasting," and put it into a rack like an inquisitor, until I make it shriek out some other meaning; I cannot alter the stern fact.

The exposition of future punishment in God's Word is not to be regarded as a threat, but as a merciful declaration. If, in the ocean of life, over which we are bound to eternity, there are these rocks and shoals, it is no cruelty to chart them down; it is an eminent and prominent mercy. —*Beecher.*

(2811.) I firmly believe that it is by the power of Christ that every man who shall touch the shore of heaven will be saved, but I am not authorised to say that God uses no other channels of grace than those that we know, and that in the sovereignty of His love He cannot make up to men who are in darkness that salvation which we reject, and give them a reflected light, at least, of that glory which shines full on us!

But, for all those who have been clearly taught, who have been moved by their wicked passions deliberately to set aside Him of whom the prophet spake, whom the apostles more clearly taught, whom the Holy Spirit, by the Divine power, makes known now to the world, through the Gospel—for them, if they reject their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. If they deliberately neglect, set aside, or reject their Saviour, He will as deliberately in the end reject them, and for ever set them apart from the glory of heaven.

Sometimes, in dark caves, men have gone to the edge of unspeaking precipices, and, wondering what was the depth, have cast down fragments of rock, and listened for the report of their fall, that they might judge how deep that blackness was; and, listening!—still listening!—no sound returns! no sullen splash, no clinking stroke as of rock against rock—nothing but silence, utter silence! And so I stand upon the precipice of life. I sound the depths of the other world with curious inquiries. But from it comes no echo, and no answer to my questions. No analogies can grapple and bring up from the depths of the darkness of the lost world the probable truths. No philosophy has line and plummet long enough to sound the depths. There remains for us only the few authoritative and solemn words of God. These declare that the bliss of the righteous is everlasting; and with equal directness and simplicity they declare that the doom of the wicked is everlasting.

The incorrigibly wicked, the deliberately impenitent, have nothing to hope in the future, if they set aside the light and the glory that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. And therefore it is that I make haste, with an inconceivable ardour, to persuade you to be reconciled to your God. I hold up before you that God who loves the sinners and abhors sin; who loves goodness with infinite fervour, and breathes it upon those who put their trust in Him; who makes all the elements His ministering servants; who sends years, and weeks, and days, and hours, all radiant with benefaction, and, if we would but hear their voice, all pleading the goodness of God as an argument of repentance and of obedience. And remember that it is this God who yet declares that He will at last by no means clear the guilty. Make your peace with Him now, or abandon all hopes of peace! —*Beecher.*

11. Inefficacy of unbelief in its existence.

(2812.) O my brother! your opinion about "for ever" can have no manner of effect upon the reality of that "for ever!" A party of boatmen on the Niagara river may have a very strong opinion when they are caught by the rapids that it is very pleasant rowing; but neither their shouts nor their merriment will alter the fact that the world's cataract is close at hand.

You have a strong opinion that hell-fire is a delusion; that they are superstitious, and cruel, and ignorant who ask you to pause, and awake, and prepare for this coming, this continued retribution; but your opinion will not have the slightest, the remotest, the minutest influence on the tremendous fact. —*Reynolds.*

HOLINESS.

1. Defined.

(2813.) I do not mean by holiness the mere performance of outward duties of religion, coldly acted over, as a task; not our habitual prayings, hearings, fastings, multiplied one upon another (though these be all good, as subservient to a higher end); but I mean an inward soul and principle of divine life (Romans viii. 1–5), that spiriteth all these. . . . The first, though it work in us some outward conformity to God's commandments, and so hath a good effect upon the world, yet we are all this while but like dead instruments of music, that sound sweetly and harmoniously when they are only struck and played upon from without by the musician's hand, who hath the theory and law of music living within himself; but the second, the living law of the Gospel, "the law of the Spirit of life" within us, is as if the soul of music should incorporate itself with the instrument, and live in the strings, and make them of their own accord, without any touch or impulse from without, dance up and down, and warble out their harmonies.

—*Cudworth*, 1617–1688.

2. As displayed in God and Man.

(2814.) If the stars, which appeared most brilliant during the night, lose their splendour on the rising of the sun, what can we suppose will be the case with the most excellent innocence of man, when compared with the purity of God?

—*Calvin*, 1509–1564.

(2815.) The holiness of a covenant soul is a resemblance of the holiness of God, and formed by it, as the picture of the sun in a cloud is a fruit of his beams, and an image of its author. The fulness of the perfection of holiness remains in the nature of God, as the fulness of the light does in the sun; yet there are transmissions from the sun to the moon, and it is a light of the same nature both in the one and in the other. The holiness of a creature is nothing else but the reflection of the Divine holiness upon it. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2816.) There is as little proportion between the holiness of the Divine majesty and that of the most righteous creature, as there is between the nearness of a person that stands upon a mountain to the sun, and of him that beholds him in a vale; one is nearer than the other, but it is an advantage not to be boasted, in regard of the vast distance that is between the sun and the elevated spectator.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2817.) No creature can be essentially holy but by participation from the chief fountain of holiness, but we must have the same kind of holiness, the same truth of holiness; as a short line may be as straight as another, though it parallel it not in the immense length of it; a copy may have the likeness of the original, though not the same perfection. We cannot be good without eyeing some exemplar of goodness as the pattern. No pattern is so suit-

able as that which is the highest goodness and purity. That limner that would draw the most excellent piece fixes his eye upon the most excellent pattern. He that would be a good orator, or poet, or artificer, considers some person most excellent in each kind as the object of his imitation. Who so fit as God to be viewed as the pattern of holiness in our intendment of, and endeavours after, holiness? The Stoics, one of the best sects of philosophers, advised their disciples to pitch upon some eminent example of virtue, according to which to form their lives, as Socrates, &c. But true holiness doth not only endeavour to live the life of a good man, but chooses to live a divine life. As before the man was "alienated from the life of God," so upon his return he aspires after the life of God. To endeavour to be like a good man is to make one image like another, to set our clocks by other clocks without regarding the sun; but true holiness consists in a likeness to the most exact sampler. God being the first purity, is the rule as well as the spring of all purity in the creature, the chief and first object of imitation.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

3. Is well-pleasing to God.

(2818.) God is essentially, originally, and efficiently holy: all the holiness in men and angels is but a crystal stream that runs from this glorious ocean. God loves holiness, because it is His own image. A king cannot but love to see his own effigies stamped on coin. God counts holiness His glory, and the most sparkling jewel of His crown. "Glorious in holiness." —*Watson*, 1696.

(2819.) It must be a prospect pleasing to God Himself to see His creation for ever beautifying in His eyes, and drawing nearer to Him by greater degrees of resemblance. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

4. Is absolutely necessary.

(1.) *To our salvation.*

(2820.) You may as well see without light, and be supported without earth, or live without food, as be saved without holiness, or happy without the one thing necessary (Heb. xii. 14; John iii. 3–5; Matt. xviii. 3). And when this is resolved of by God, and established as His standing law, and He hath told it you so oft and plainly, for any man now to say, "I will yet hope for better, I hope to be saved on easier terms, without all this ado," is no better than to set his face against the God of heaven, and instead of believing God, to believe the contradiction of his own ungodly heart; and to hope to be saved whether God will or not; and to give the lie to his Creator, under the pretence of trust and hope. It is indeed to hope for impossibilities. To be saved without holiness is to see without eyes, and to live without life. And who is so foolish as to hope for this? Few of you are so unreasonable as to hope for a crop at harvest, without ploughing or sowing; or for a house without building; or for strength without eating and drinking; or to sleep and play, when you have nothing to maintain your families, and say you hope that God will maintain both you and them. And yet this were a far wiser kind of hope, than to hope to be saved without the one thing necessary to salvation.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2821.) Holiness indeed is not the cause of our justification, but it is the concomitant; the heat in the sun is not the cause of its light, but it is the concomitant. It is absurd to imagine that God should justify a people, and they go on in sin. If God should justify a people and not sanctify them, He should justify a people whom He could not glorify. God, as He is an holy God, cannot lay a sinner in His bosom. The metal is first refined before the king's stamp is put upon it: first the soul is refined with holiness, before God puts the royal stamp of justification upon it.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(2.) *To our acceptance with God.*

(2822.) A mere existence or being is an indifferent thing (it is a *rasa tabula*), that may be coloured over with sin or holiness; and accordingly it receives its value from these; as a picture is esteemed not from the materials upon which it is drawn, but from the draught itself. Holiness elevates the worth of the being in which it is, and is of more value than the being itself. As in scarlet, the bare dye is of greater value than the cloth. Sin debases the being in which it is; and makes the soul more unlike God, in respect of its qualities, than it is like Him in respect of its substance. It is not the alliance of flesh and blood, but the resemblance of virtue, that makes the greatest likeness between the father and the son. Consanguinity and likeness of features will not so much incite him to love, as a dissimilitude, by reason of vice, will cause him to disinherit him. Better have no son, than a prodigal, profane, unclean son; better not to be a man, than an irreligious man; better an innocent nothing, than a sinful being. God has shed some of His perfections upon the natural fabric of the soul, in that He made it a spiritual, immaterial substance, refined from all the dross of body and matter; but the chief perfection of it consisted in this, that He did adorn it with holiness. As the temple of Solomon was glorious, because built with cedar; but its chief magnificence was the overlaying it with gold. But now, when this part of God's image is blotted out, He cannot read His likeness in the soul's other perfections. Be the soul ever so spiritual in its substance, yet if it be carnal in its affections; be it ever so purified from the grossness of body, yet if it be polluted with the corruption of sin; it has nothing to show why God should not disown it, even to its eternal perdition. If we meet with a letter drawn over with filthy, scurrilous, unbecoming lines, the fineness of the paper will not rescue it from the fire. It is not thy strength, thy wit, thy eloquence, that God so much regards; these indeed may adorn thee, but it is thy holiness that must save thee. A sinner appearing before God, adorned with the greatest confluence of natural endowments, is like Agag presenting himself to Samuel in his costly robes: the richness of his attire could not compound for the vileness of his person. When those glorious pleas shall be produced in the court of heaven, "We have prophesied, we have cast out devils, we have wrought wonders;" God shall answer them with one word, weightier than them all, but "ye have sinned." Howsoever we flatter ourselves, and misjudge of things, yet God will overlook all the natural perfections of the soul, and punish us for want of moral. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(2823.) The outward forbearance of sin without

inward purity can never commend us to the Divine acceptance. A rebel may be driven from the frontiers, but so long as he keeps the royal city he is unsubdued. So if a lust keeps possession of the heart, though the executive powers may be refrained or disabled from the outward acts, it still reigns.

(2824.) God abhors and man despises the fair colours of a religious profession that stand out, as it were, above the surface of the nature, like the *appliquée* of the embroiderer, instead of being interwoven with the stuff so as to become a part of it. Mere outward decorum and religious decency are not what God requires, though they are too often, alas! what is presented to Him in lieu of the beauties of holiness. It is easy to assume the character of God's people, to imitate their manners, to use their language, to conform to their habits. It is easier to paint a flower than to grow one.
—*Macmillan.*

(3.) *To our union with Christ.*

(2825.) If God ordains a man to be in Christ, He ordains him to be a member of Christ, and the spou e of Christ. Now the head and members must be homogeneal, and husband and spouse must be of the same kind and image. When Adam was to have a wife, she must be of the same species, she must have the same image upon her. None of the beasts was fit to be a wife for Adam. So if God chooseth a man in Christ, he must necessarily be holy. —*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(4.) *To our safety in temptation.*

(2826.) Pray not only against the power of sin, but for the power of holiness also. A naughty heart may pray against his sins, not out of any inward enmity to them, or love to holiness, but because they are troublesome guests to his conscience. His zeal is false that seems hot against sin, but is key-cold to holiness. A city is rebellious that keeps their rightful Prince out, though it receives not his enemy in. Nay, the devil needs not fear, but at last he shall make that soul his garrison again, out of which for a while he seems shut, so long as it stands empty, and is not filled with solid grace (Matt. xii. 44, 45). What indeed should hinder Satan's re-entry into that house which hath none in it to keep him out? —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5.) *To our usefulness here or hereafter.*

(2827.) If I may so speak, God has no ultimate use for a man who is not holy, and such a man does not become what he was meant to be. A rose-tree that does not blossom is of no use in a garden. A vine that bears no grapes is of no use in a vineyard. The idiot has no place in the organisation of human life, for intellect is necessary for the fulfilment of the functions of humanity. A criminal has no place in the State; the State can do nothing with him except put him to death, or shut him up where he can do no harm. A vicious man must be cast out of reputable and decent society, because he does not fulfil the conditions which are necessary for a place in it. And in that Divine and everlasting kingdom in which the glory of God and the perfection of man will be at last fully revealed, there can be no place for those who have not an intense passion for holiness, and who do not themselves illustrate its dignity and beauty. —*R. W. Dale.*

(6.) *To our happiness.*

(2828.) In all reasonable creatures there is a certain kind of temper that is essential to happiness, and that is holiness; which, as it is the perfection, so it is the great felicity of the Divine nature: and, on the contrary, this is one chief part of the misery of devils and of unholy men, that they are of a temper contrary to God, they are envious, malicious, and wicked; that is, of such a temper as is naturally a torment and disquiet to itself, and here the foundation of hell is laid in the evil disposition of our spirits; and till that be cured, which can only be done by holiness, it is as impossible for a wicked man to be happy in himself, as it is for a sick man to be at ease; and the external presence of God, and a local heaven, would signify no more to make a wicked man happy, than heaps of gold, and concerts of music, and a well-spread table, and a rich bed, would contribute to a man's ease in the paroxysms of a fever, or in a violent fit of the stone. If a sensual, or covetous, or ambitious man were in heaven, he would be like the rich man in hell, he would be tormented with a continual thirst; and burnt up in the flames of his own ardent desires, and would not meet a drop of suitable pleasure and delight to allay the heat; the reason is, because such a man hath that within him which torments him, and he cannot be at ease till that be removed.
—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(7.) *To qualify us for heaven.*

(2829.) There is great danger of false conceits of the way of heaven when we make it broader than it is, for by this means we are like men going over a bridge, who think it broader than it is, but, being deceived by some shadow, sink down and are suddenly drowned; so men, mistaking the straight way to life, and trusting to the shadow of their own imagination, fall into the bottomless pit of hell before they are aware. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2830.) Holiness is the image of God, and a likeness unto Him, which makes us capable of communion with Him. As likeness in one man unto another makes him sociable and fit to converse with another man his superior, so holiness for communion with the great God. As some colours are the groundwork to the laying on of others, and all colours to varnish, so is grace a groundwork unto glory and communion with Himself. As reason is the foundation of learning, no man being able to attain it unless he hath reason, so we cannot attain to the glory of heaven, which is meant by adoption, till such time as we have holiness, and perfect holiness. "Without holiness no man shall see God." So that holiness is the image of God which makes us like unto Him, and fit for communion with Him; and heaven is but communion with God.
—*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(2831.) Heaven is not like Noah's ark, where the clean beasts and the unclean entered; no unclean beast comes into the heavenly ark: though God suffer the wicked to live a while on the earth, He will never suffer heaven to be pestered with such vermin. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2832.) Holiness leads to heaven: holiness is the King of heaven's highway. "An highway shall be there, and it shall be called The way of holiness." At Rome there was the temple of virtue and honour, and they were to go through the temple of

virtue to the temple of honour: so we must go through the temple of holiness to the temple of heaven. Glory begins in virtue. "Who hath called us to glory and virtue." Happiness is nothing else but the quintessence of holiness; holiness is glory militant, and happiness holiness triumphant.

—*Watson*, 1696.

5. Is true happiness.

(2833.) Thou hast an art above God Himself, if thou canst fetch any true pleasure out of unholiness. It is not the lowest of blasphemies for thee to charge the way of holiness to be an enemy to true pleasure; for in that thou chargest God Himself to want true pleasure, who has no pleasure, if holiness will not yield it. "*Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.*" Mark that phrase, "*The river of Thy pleasures.*" God hath His pleasures, and God gives His saints drink of His pleasures. This is the sweet accent of the saints' pleasures. When a prince bids his servants carry such a man down into the cellar, and let him drink of their beer or wine, this is a kindness from so great a personage to be valued highly. But for the prince to set him at his own table, and let him drink of his own wine, this, I hope, is far more. When God gives a man estate, corn, and wine, and oil, the comforts of the creature, He entertains the man but in the common cellar; such as have none but carnal enjoyments, they do but sit with the servants, and in some sensual pleasures; they are but fellow-commoners with the beasts. But when He bestows His grace, beautifies a soul with holiness, now He prefers the creature the highest it is capable of; He never sends this rich clothing to any, but he means to set such by Him, at His own table with Him, in heaven's glory.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2834.) Sensual good is but a nominal good, if it reach not higher. All that you hunt after so eagerly in the world, is nothing but real vanity and vexation, a shadow of good, a picture of profit, a dream of delight, which one frown of God will turn into astonishing horror and despair: like a tender flower that is nipped with one frosty night, or withered with one scorching day; but it is only this one thing that is the solid, substantial, and enduring good. The pleasure of the flesh is a good that is common to men with brutes; they can eat, and drink, and play, and satisfy their lusts, and master one another as well as you. But it is the spiritual good that is proper to a reasonable creature. The pleasure of the flesh may melt you into foolish mirth, and make you like drunken men, that are gallant fellows in their own eyes, while sober men are ashamed of them, or pity them, or they become a laughingstock to others. But it is this one thing only which is that good which wisdom itself will justify. A man that is tickled may laugh more than he that is possessed of a kingdom, or hath the desires of his heart; but he is not therefore to be accounted the happier man, nor will any wise man so account him. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2835.) Will you say that godliness is unpleasant, because it makes a man sorry for his ungodliness? If a man that hath killed his dearest friend, or his own father, be grieved for the fact when he cometh to repentance, will you blame his repentance or his murder for his grief? Will you say, What a hurtful thing is this repentance; or rather, What an odious crime was it that must be so repented of? Would you wish a man that hath lived so long in sin and misery, to have no sorrow for it in his return—especially when it is but a healing sorrow, preparing for remission, and not a sorrow joined with despair, as theirs will be that die impenitently? Observe the complaints of penitent souls, whether it be their present godliness, or their former ungodliness, which they lament! Will you hear a man lament his former sinful, careless life, and yet will you lay the blame on the contrary course of duty which now he hath undertaken?—You may as wisely accuse a man for landing in a safe harbour, because he there lamenteth his loss by shipwreck while he was at sea. Or as wisely may you blame a man for rising that complaineth how he hurt himself by his fall. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

6. How a knowledge of its blessedness is to be attained.

(2836.) If you see the motion of dancers afar off, and hear not the music, you will think they are frantic. But when you come near and hear the music, and observe their harmonical, orderly motion, you will take delight in it, and desire to join with them. So men that judge at a distance of the truth and holy ways of God, by the slanderous reports of malignant men, will think of the godly, as Festus of Paul, that they are beside themselves; but if they come among them, and search more impartially into the reasons of their course, and specially if they join with them in the inward and vital actions of religion, they will then be quickly of another mind, and not go back for all the pleasures or profits of the world. —*Peter Martyr.*

(2837.) Come near and search into the inwards of a holy life, and try it a little while yourselves, if you would taste the pleasure of it; and do not stand looking on it at a distance, where you see nothing but the outside; nor judge by bare hearsay, which giveth you no taste or relish of it. The sweetness of honey, or wine, or meat, is not known by looking on it, but by tasting it. Come near and try what it is to live in the love of God, and in the belief and hope of life eternal, and in universal obedience to the laws of Christ, and then tell us how these things do relish with you. You will never know the sweetness of them effectually as long as you are but lookers on. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2838.) In the works of nature (and sometimes of art) the outside is so far from showing you the excellencies, that it is but a comely vail to hide them. Though you would have a handsome cover for your watch, yet doth it but hide the well-ordered frame and useful motions that are within. You must open it, and there observe the parts and motions if you would pass a right judgment of the work. You would have a comely cover for your books; but it is but to hide the well-composed letters from your sight, in which the sense, and use, and excellency doth consist. You must open it, if you will read it, and know the worth of it. A common spectator when he seeth a rose or other flower or fruit-tree, thinketh he hath seen all, or the chiefest part. But it is the secret unsearchable motions and operations of the vegetative life and juice within, by which the beauteous flowers and sweet fruits are produced, and wonderfully differenced from each other that are the excellent part and mysteries in these natural works of God. Could you but see these secret inward causes and

operations, it would incomparably more content you. He that passeth by and looketh on a beehive, and seeth but the cover, and the laborious creatures going in and out, doth see nothing of the admirable operations within which God hath taught them. Did you there see how they make their wax and honey, and compose their combs, and by what laws, and in what order their commonwealth is governed, and their work carried on, you would know more than the outside of the hive can show you. So it is about the life of godliness. If you saw the inward motions of the quickening Spirit upon the soul, and the order and exercise of every grace, and by what laws the thoughts and affections are governed, and to whom they tend, you would then see more of the beauty of religion than you can see by the outward behaviour of our assemblies.
—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(2839.) The shell is not sweet, but serves to hide the sweeter part from those that will not storm those walls, that they may possess it as their prize. The kernel of religion is covered with a shell so hard that flesh and blood cannot break it. Hard sayings, and hard providences to the Church, and to particular believers, are such as many cannot break through, and therefore never taste the sweetness.

The most admired feature and beauty of any of your bodies (which fools think to be the most excellent part of the body) is indeed but the handsome, well-adorned case that God by nature doth cover His more excellent inward works with. Were you but able to see within the skin, and but once to observe the wonderful motions, heart, and brain, and the course of the blood in the veins and arteries, and the several fermentations, and the causes and nature of chylifications and sanguifications and the spirits, and senses, and all their works; and if you saw the reason of every part and vessel in this wondrous frame, and the causes and nature of every disease; much more if you saw the excellent nature and operations of that rational soul, that is the glory of all, you would then say that you had seen a more excellent sight than the smooth and beauteous skin that covers it. The invisible soul is of greater excellency than all the visible beauties in the world.

So also, if you would know the excellencies of religion, you must not stand without the doors, or judge of it by the skin and shell, but you must come near, and look into the inward reasons of it, and think of the difference between the high employments of a saint, and the poor and sordid drudgery of the ungodly; between walking with God in desire and love and in the spiritual use of His ordinances and creatures, and conversing only with sinful men and transitory vanities; between the life of faith and hope, which is daily maintained by the foresight of everlasting glory, and a life of mere nature, and worldliness, and sensuality, and idle compliment and pomp, which are but the progenitors of sorrow and end in endless desperation. Come near, and try the power of God's laws, and of the workings of His Spirit; and think in good sadness of the place where you must live for ever, and the glory you shall see, and the sweet enjoyment and employment you shall have in the presence of the eternal Majesty; and think well of all the sweet contrivances and discoveries of His love in Christ, and how freely they are offered to you; and how certainly they may be your own; peruse the promises, and sweet expressions of love and grace; and exercise your souls in serious meditation, prayer, thanksgiving, and praise; and withal remember, that none but these will be durable delights; and tell me whether a life of sport, and pride, and worldliness, and flesh-pleasing, or a life of faith and holiness, be the better, the sweeter, and more pleasant life. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

7. Its source.

(2840.) The godly are "partakers of the Divine nature." It is not the essence of God that is here called the Divine nature that we partake of; we abhor the thoughts of such blasphemous arrogancy, as if that grace did make men gods. But it is called the Divine nature, in that it is caused by the Spirit of God, and floweth from Him as the light or sunshine floweth from the sun. You use to say the sun is in the house, when it shineth in the house, though the sun itself be in the firmament. So the Scripture saith that God dwelleth in us, and Christ and the Spirit dwelleth in us, when the heavenly light, and love, and life which streameth from Him dwelleth in us; and this is called the Divine nature. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(2841.) It is the sun that gives light to the flower and paints it with all its bright and varied hue. The chemical processes which its rays set in motion form the leaves and blossoms, and so arrange the surfaces that they reflect various hues from light shining on them; and so it is with the believer. It is the same Sun of righteousness which raised him from the dead and animated him with the power of a divine life, which clothes him with the beauties of holiness. All evil is from ourselves, and all good is from God. —*Macmillan*.

8. Its production God's aim in all His providences.

(2842.) As God makes use of all the seasons of the year for the harvest, the frost of winter as well as the heat of summer; so doth He of fair and foul, pleasing and unpleasing providences, for promoting holiness. Winter-providences kill the weeds of lusts, and summer-providences ripen and mellow the fruits of righteousness. When He afflicts, 'tis for our profit, to make us partakers of His holiness. Afflictions Bernard compares to the tezel, which, though it be sharp and scratching, is to make the cloth more pure and fine. God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well He had rather see a hole than a spot in His child's garments. When He deals more gently in His providences, and lets His people sit under the sunny bank of comforts and enjoyments, fencing them from the cold blasts of affliction, 'tis to draw forth the sap of grace, and hasten their growth in holiness. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(2843.) God's holiness makes it certain that He regards our holiness as the very crown of our nature, apart from which the idea which He desires to have illustrated in every man is unfulfilled. Being holy Himself, it must be, and it is, His great concern that we should attain to moral and spiritual perfection.

There are some parents who care too much for the mere physical health and strength of their children; their supreme anxiety, in fact, is that

their children should be healthy, beautiful animals, —everything is subordinated to that. There are others who are intellectually ambitious in relation to their children, and whose chief joy is to recognise what seems to them faint traces and prophecies of genius, and everything in their case in subordinated to the intellectual culture of their children. Those of a nobler temper care most that their children should have courage, which lies near the root of all virtue, and temperance and truthfulness and generosity, and a nice sense of honour. They feel that every inferior aim should be sacrificed to this. And, from what we know of the Divine holiness, I repeat that we are certain that God's great concern for all of us is that we should be holy even as He is holy. —*Beecher.*

9. Its production the end and object of all religious observances.

(2844.) Suppose a person were to visit one of those vast manufactories which exist in such variety in our large towns, without knowing what were the particular articles made in the place he was inspecting. When his first curiosity was satisfied, and as the feeling caused by the novelty of the scene began to wear away, the question would arise in the visitor's mind, "What is the *object* of all this busy scene? What is all this complicated machinery used for? What are all these hundreds of work-people really employed in doing? What do they *make* here? And when this inquiry had risen to his lips, there would be shown to him a beautiful polished knife, or a piece of silk of exquisite texture, and of variegated hue. And then he would learn that all this vast combination of physical energy and intellectual skill was employed solely to produce this knife or this piece of silk.

Now this illustrates a law which prevails throughout nature. Everywhere there is a vast accumulation of forces at work, to bring about apparently very slight results. Who shall recount the various powers which have been at work in nature's mysterious recesses to produce a single drop of dew? Who shall describe the countless laws which have been set in motion for the birth of a wayside flower? Who shall tell the infinite varieties of process which are at work in the laboratory of the universe to bring down for us one ray of the sunshine which warms us, one breath of the air without which we could not for an instant exist?

How does this principle apply in religious matters? We have, so to speak, a vast mass of Christianising machinery at work throughout the world. Now, is all this church-building and church-going an end in itself, or only the means to an end? I fear there are some who imagine that church-going is in itself the aim and end of all religion. No mistake can be more deplorable or pernicious. It is a blunder as egregious as it would be for the visitor to the manufactory such as I have described, to suppose that the machinery was all set in motion merely to be gazed at, and to keep employed the people who are engaged in tending it. The manufacturer, who lays out his capital in such costly apparatus, would find but an unsatisfactory return at the end of the year if there had not been a given quantity of finished goods for profitable sale in the market. So it is with church-going. It is wretched work if the worship of the house of God begins and ends with the prayers uttered there. If I were asked, What is the *end* and *object* of all religious observance?—what, to carry out the metaphor, is the *finished product* intended as the result of all the machinery of religious worship whether public or private?—I should reply, *Holiness of life.* It is just in so far as religion produces holiness of life that it is religion. When it fails to do this, it is not real religion at all; it is a spurious, counterfeit religion, a delusion, a mockery, a snare of the devil. —*Hooper.*

10. Should be continually striven after.

(1.) *Notwithstanding that it may expose us to hatred and suffering.*

(2845.) Nothing more easy and common than for the most ungodly to say they are all for a godly life; and God forbid that any should be against it; when yet they hate and reject it indeed, when it comes to the practice of those particular duties in which it doth consist. It is not godliness that they hate and reproach, but it is fervent prayer, holy conference, meditation, self-denial, mortification of the desires of the flesh, heavenly-mindedness, &c. In general they will say that God's law must be obeyed, and His will preferred before their own. But when it comes to the particulars, they love Him not above all, they take His name in vain, they keep not holy His day, they disobey superiors that would reform them, they are envious, malicious, covetous, lustful, and break all the commandments in particular, which in general they profess to keep. As if your servant should promise to do your work; and when you set him to it, one thing is too hard, and another he is not used to, and so he hath his exceptions against the greatest part which he undertook. As if one should wound one of you in the head, and stab you to the heart, and cut off an arm or a leg, and say, "I wish the man no harm; it is not the man that I hate or hurt, but only the head, the heart, the arm," &c. Even so it is not holiness that these men hate and speak against; but it is so much praying, and meditating, and reading the Scriptures, and making such a stir about religion when less ado may serve the turn.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(2846.) I must profess that since I observed the course of the world, and the concord of the word and providences of God, I took it for a notable proof of man's fall, and of the verity of the Scripture, and the supernatural origin of true sanctification, to find such a universal enmity between the holy and the serpentine seed, and to find Cain and Abel's case so ordinarily exemplified, and him that is born after the flesh to persecute him that is born after the Spirit. And methinks to this day it is a great and visible help for the confirmation of our Christian faith.

But that which is much remarkable in it is, that nothing else in the world, except the crossing of men's carnal interest, doth meet with any such universal enmity. A man may be as learned as he can, and no man hate him for it. If he excel all others, all men will praise him and proclaim his excellency; he may be an excellent linguist, an excellent philosopher, an excellent physician, an excellent logician, an excellent orator, and all commend him. Among musicians, architects, soldiers, seamen, and all arts and sciences, men value, prefer, and praise the best; yea, even speculative theology, such wits as the schoolmen and those that are called great divines are honoured by all, and meet, as such, but with little enmity, presecution,

or obloquy in the world. Though I know that even a Galilæus, a Campanella, and many such have suffered by the Roman Inquisitors, that was not so much in enmity to their speculations or opinions, as through a fear lest new philosophical notions should unsettle men's minds and open the way to new opinions in theology, and so prove injurious to the kingdom and interest of Rome. I know also that Demosthenes, Cicero, Seneca, Lucan, and many other learned men, have died by the hands or power of tyrants. But this was not for their learning, but for their opposition to those tyrants' wills and interests. And I know that some religious men have suffered for their sins and follies, and some for their meddling too much with secular affairs, as the counsellors of princes, as Functius, Justus Jonas, and many others. But yet no parts, no excellency, no skill or learning is hated commonly, but honoured in the world; no, not theological learning, save only this practical godliness and religion, and the principles of it, which only rendereth men amiable to God, through Christ, and saveth men's souls.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2.) *In spite of misrepresentation.*

(2847.) When a sinner is convinced of the necessity of holiness in a time and place where it is rare, and ungodliness is the common road, the necessary singularity of such a one in giving up himself to the will of God, is commonly charged on him as his pride; as if he were proud that cannot be contented to be damned in hell for company with the most; or to despise salvation if most despise it, and to forsake his God when most forsake Him, and to serve the devil when most men serve him. If you will not swear, and be drunk, and game, and spend your time, even the Lord's day, in vanity and sensuality, as if you were afraid of being saved, and as if it were your business to work out your damnation, the world will call you proud and singular, and "think it strange that you run not with them to excess of riot, speaking evil of you." You shall quickly hear them say, "What! will you be wiser than all the town? What a saint! What a holy precisian is this!" When Lot was grieved for the filthiness of Sodom, they scorned him as a proud controller. "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge."

(3.) *Notwithstanding that perfection is unattainable in this life.*

(2848.) It is a weak pretence that, because the consummate measure of sanctification can only be attained in the next life, therefore we should not endeavour after it here. For by sincere and constant endeavours we make nearer approaches to it, and according to the degrees of our progress such are those of our joy. As nature has prescribed to all heavy bodies their going to the centre, and although none comes to it, and many are at a great distance from it, yet the ordination of nature is not in vain; because, by virtue of it, every heavy body is always tending thither in *motion* or *inclination:* so although we cannot reach to complete holiness in this imperfect state, yet it is not in vain that the Gospel prescribes it, and infuses into Christians those dispositions whereby they are gradually carried to the full accomplishment of it. Not to arrive at perfection is the weakness of the flesh, not to aspire after it is the fault of the spirit. —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

And what thought they of Noah, that walked with God in so great singularity, when the world was drowned in (and for) their wickedness? When David "humbled his soul with fasting" they turned it to "his reproach." Especially when any of the servants of Christ do press towards the highest degree of holiness, they shall be sure to be accounted proud and hypocrites. And yet they accuse not that child or servant of pride who excelleth all the rest in pleasing them and doing their work. Nor do they take a sick man to be proud, if he be more careful than others to recover his health. But he that will do most for heaven, and most carefully avoideth sin and hell, and is most serious in his religion, and most industrious to please his God, this man shall be accounted proud.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

11. How it is to be attained.

(2849.) Often look on the perfect pattern which Christ in His holy example hath given thee for a holy life. Our hand will be as the copy is we write after; if we set low examples before us, it cannot be expected we should rise high ourselves; and indeed the holiest saint on earth is too low to be our pattern, because perfection in holiness must be aimed at by the weakest Christian (2 Cor. vii. 1), and that is not to be found in the best of saints in this lower world. If thou wilt walk holily, thou must not only endeavour to do what Christ commands, but as Christ Himself did; thou must labour to shape every letter in thy copy, action in life, in a holy imitation of Christ.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2850.) A painter, employed in the limning some excellent piece, has not only his pattern before his eyes, but his eye frequently upon the pattern, to possess his fancy to draw forth an exact resemblance. He that would express the image of God must imprint upon his mind the purity of His nature, cherish it in his thoughts, that the excellent beauty of it may pass from his understanding to his affections, and from his affections to his practice. How can we arise to a conformity to God in Christ, whose most holy nature we glance upon, and more rarely sink our souls into the depths of it by meditation? Be frequent in the meditation of the holiness of God. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(2851.) It is not by fits and starts that men become holy. It is not occasional, but continuous, prolonged, and lifelong efforts that are required; to be daily at it; always at it; resting but to renew the work; falling but to rise again. It is not by a few, rough, spasmodic blows of the hammer, that a graceful statue is brought out of the marble block, but by the labour of continuous days, and many delicate touches of the sculptor's chisel. It is not a sudden gush of water, the roaring torrent of a summer flood, but a continuous flow, that wears the rock; and a constant dropping that hollows out the stone. It is not with a rush and a spring that we are to reach Christ's character, attain to perfect saintship; but step by step, foot by foot, hand over hand, we are slowly and often painfully to mount the ladder that rests on earth and rises to heaven.

—*Guthrie.*

(2852.) A false notion of holiness springs up in many minds, and finds such a lodgment that it is very difficult to dispossess it. Holiness is sup-

posed to be an achievement mastered at length—much as a lesson is mastered—by a variety of exercises, prayers, fastings, meditations, almsdeeds, self-discipline, sacraments; and when mastered, a sort of permanent acquisition, which goes on increasing as the stock of these spiritual exercises accumulates. It is not regarded in its true light as a momentary receiving out of Christ's fulness, grace for grace, as the result of His inworkings in a heart which finds the task of self-renewal hopeless, and makes itself over to Him, to be moulded by His plastic hands, resigning, of course, its will to Him in all things, without which resignation such a surrender would be a horrible hypocrisy.

Now let us take up the illustrations of this truth; and first His own illustration, the wisest, profoundest, and most beautiful of all. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me;" "Apart from Me ye can do nothing." The circulating sap, which is the life of the tree, is indeed in the vine-branch so long as it holds of the stem; but in no sense whatever is it from the vine-branch. Cut off the branch from the stem, and it ceases instantaneously to live, for it has no independent life. Even so the fruits of the Spirit, while of course our hearts are the sphere of their manifestation, are in no sense from our hearts; they are not the result of the energising of our own will; they are not a righteousness of our own, built up by a series of endeavours, or a laborious process of self-discipline, but a righteousness outflowing continually from the fulness of grace which is in Christ.

Another illustration may perhaps help to impress the truth. When we walk abroad on a beautiful day, and survey a landscape lit up by the beams of a summer sun, our eye catches a variety of colours lying on the surface of this landscape. There is the yellow of the golden grain, the green of the pasture-land, the dark brown of those thick planted copses, the silver gleam of the stream which winds through them, the faint blue of the distant hills seen in perspective, the more intense blue of the sky, the purple tinge of yonder sheet of water; but none of these colours reside in the landscape, they are not the properties of the material objects on which they rest. All colours are wrapt up in the sunlight, which, as is well known, may be seen resolved into its elementary colours in the prism or the rainbow. Apart from the sunlight no object has any colour; as is shown by the fact that, as soon as light is withdrawn from the landscape, the colours fade from the robe of nature. The difference of colour in different objects, while the sun is shining, is produced by some subtle difference of texture or superficies, which makes each object absorb certain rays, and reflect certain other rays, in different proportions. Now Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—the fair colour of every grace and Christian virtue. When Christ is shining upon the heart, then these virtues are manifested there, by one Christian grace of one description, by another of another, according to their different receptivity and natural temperament; just as, when the sun is shining, colours are thrown upon a landscape, and reflected by the different objects in different proportions. But as no part of the landscape has any colour in the absence of the sun, so Christians have no grace except from Christ, nor hold any virtue independently of Him.

Let it be clearly understood, then, that the great secret of bringing forth much fruit, or, in other words, of all advance in grace and holiness, is, according to the profound teaching of our Lord Himself, a constant keeping open (and if possible, enlarging) the avenues of the soul towards Him. If a vine-branch is to sprout and throw out new suckers and shoots, the tube by which it communicates with the stock of the tree must adhere tightly to the stem, and be well open for the passage of the sap. If you desire to see the colours of furniture in this room, whose shutters are closed, throw open the shutters, and admit the full flood of sunlight. And if you desire to see the dead heart put forth the energies of spiritual life, and the dark heart illumined by the fair colours of spiritual grace, throw wide open the passage of communication between Christ and it, and allow the Life which is in Him, and the Light which is in Him, to circulate freely through it. —*Goulburn.*

(2853.) What if the poor bird imprisoned in the cage should be thinking that, if it is ever to gain its liberty, it must be by its own exertions, and by vigorous and frequent strokes of its wings against the bars? If it did so, it would ere long fall back breathless and exhausted, faint and sore, and despairing. And the soul will have a similar experience which thinks that Christ has indeed won pardon and acceptance for her (but that sanctification she must win for herself), and under this delusion beats herself sore in vain efforts to correct the propensities of a heart which the Word of God pronounces to be "desperately" wicked. That heart,—you can make nothing of it yourself; leave it to Christ, in quiet dependence upon His grace. Suffer Him to open the prison doors for you, and then you shall fly out and hide yourself in your Lord's bosom, and there find rest. Yield up the soul to Him, and place it in His hands, and you shall at once begin to have the delightful experience of His power in sanctifying.

"Yield up the soul," we say; and in saying so, we of course imply (though it needs to be expressed, as well as implied) that you yield up your will without reserve. There is no such thing as yielding up the soul without yielding up the will; for the will is the chief power of the soul. Christ Himself cannot sanctify a moral agent whose will holds persistently to his corruption. Even a man cannot liberate a bird from its cage which likes to stay there, refuses to move when the door is opened, and flies back when it is taken out. God has given us a free will, the exercise of which cannot indeed change our hearts, or renew our moral nature, but which can say "Nay" to the world, to the flesh, and the devil; which shows that it can say "Nay" by saying it sometimes when worldly interests are concerned. And this "Nay" it must say if the soul is to be sanctified and bring forth fruits.
—*Goulburn.*

(2854.) Holiness of character is not a thing into which we can jump in a moment, and just when we please. It is not like a mushroom, the growth of an hour. It cannot be attained without great watchfulness, earnest effort, much prayer, and a very close walk with Jesus. Like the coral reef which grows by little daily additions until it is strong enough to resist the mighty waves of the ocean, so is a holy character made up of what

may be called littles, though in truth each of those littles is of vast importance. Little duties prayerfully discharged; little temptations earnestly resisted in the strength which God supplies out of the fulness which He has made to dwell in Jesus Christ for His people; little sins avoided, or crucified;—these all together help to form that holy character which, in the hour of need, will be, under God, such a sure defence to the Christian. —*Aubrey C. Price.*

(2855.) The mere doing of God's will cannot produce positive goodness in a man, just because a man must be good before he can do that will. But it naturally tends to produce in that man a love to goodness and a dislike of its opposite. Suppose a man to become the servant of God, as a consequence of this he does the will of God from a sense of duty. But at first virtue thus performed may be found irksome; there may be no affection in the heart for the thing performed; no strong or ready recoil from its opposite. What is done is done from a sense of duty and obligation, from an honourable motive, it is true, but yet without that full and overflowing sense of delight which would result from a real and deep-rooted love for the thing itself. To produce this result, then, is manifestly desirable, for without it, the moral excellence of the man is not complete. But how is it to be produced? The language of Paul suggests the reply: It is by continuing to serve God. If we go on doing our duty, by and by what was first done merely from a sense of obligation will come to be done in love to the thing itself. The real loveliness and value of God's law will unfold itself to us; the doing of our hand will come to be the delight of our heart; that which was at first a way of performance merely will come to be a way of pleasantness; and so it will be found that the grand result of serving of God is "towards holiness." There are many analogies by which this process of our regenerated nature might be illustrated. Take, for instance, the case of a child learning to read. At first his efforts are simple acts of obedience. He sees no excellence in his daily tasks. He performs them simply because his master bids him. But as he advances, learning takes hold of his mind. There is a fitness in it to interest and engross him. He sees how good it is to have knowledge, and he feels how pleasant it is to hold intercourse with other minds by books. He comes to feel as if he could not live without this exercise. It has grown to be part and parcel of his being, his chosen occupation, and his highest treat. And thus what he at first did simply because his master bade him do it, has, by the mere act of doing it, grown to be a treasured delight to him. Of that child's service to his teacher we may surely say that the fruit of it has been towards a love of letters.

Just so is it with the case before us. We begin God's service because He calls us to it, we end by loving the service for its own sake. And this is an advanced stage of the divine life. It implies a greater likeness to God who doth that which is good, not from any outward obligation, but from the free and unalterable propensity of His eternal nature towards that which is good. We thus cease to be servants, and grow into the life and liberty of sons. Our obedience to God has brought us in happy advance towards His presence. We have been doing the will of the Father, and the consequence is, that our own will has become identified with His. Inclination and duty now go hand in hand. The sense of bondage has disappeared, and a sweet sense of free choice has come in its place. We have learned what it is to be holy as God is holy. By serving Him we have found our fruit unto holiness. —*Alexander.*

12. Must pervade the whole life, and cause us to hate all sin.

(2856.) God hath given us precepts of such a holiness and such a purity, such a meekness and such humility, as hath no pattern but Christ, no precedent but the purities of God: and, therefore, it is intended we should live with a life whose actions are not chequered with white and black, half sin and half virtue. God's sheep are not like Jacob's flock, "streaked and spotted;" it is an entire holiness that God requires, and will not endure to have a holy course interrupted by the dishonour of a base and ignoble action. I do not mean that a man's life can be as pure as the sun, or the rays of celestial Jerusalem; but like the moon, in which there are spots, but they are no deformity; a lessening only and an abatement of light, no cloud to hinder and draw a vail before its face, but sometimes it is not so severe and bright as at other times. Every man hath his indiscretions and infirmities, his arrests and sudden incursions, his neighbourhoods and semblances of sin, his little violences to reason, and peevish melancholy, and humorous, fantastic discourses; unaptness to a devout prayer, his fondness to judge favourably in his own cases, little deceptions, and voluntary and involuntary cozenages, ignorances and inadvertences, careless hours, and unwatchful seasons. But no good man ever commits one act of adultery; no godly man will at any time be drunk; or if he be, he ceases to be a godly man, and is run into the confines of death, and is sick at heart, and may die of the sickness—die eternally. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(2857.) He that hath a tight shoe and a tender foot is sensible of the least stone or rubbish got in; nor can he be at ease till he hath taken it out. The holy soul is troubled with the smallest error he commits; and is so far from favouring any sin, that he will not pardon himself for stumbling against his will. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2858.) Let us then resemble the high priest, who, when he was anointed with that sacred unction, let the oil run down to the very hems and fringes of his garment, that even the smallest parts might shed the fragrant perfume of the sanctuary. —*D'Alet.*

(2859.) The Christian character should *savour* of holiness. The promise is, "I will be as the dew unto Israel;" and how sweet is the fragrance of the flower after the falling of the dew! so must the believer be under the soft distilments of the droppings of heaven on his heart.

(2860.) Holiness was meant, our New Testament tells us, for every day use. It is home-made and home-worn. Its exercise hardens the bone, and strengthens the muscle, in the body of character. Holiness is religion shining It is the candle lighted, and not hid under a bushel, but lighting the house. It is religious principle put into motion. It is the love of God sent forth into circulation, on the feet, and with the hands, of love to man. It is faith gone to work. It is charity coined into actions,

and devotion breathing benedictions on human suffering, while it goes up in intercessions to the Father of all piety. —*F. D. Huntington.*

13. Is not at once confirmed in the soul.

(2861.) As the needle of a compass, when it is directed to its beloved star, at the first addresses waves on either side, and seems indifferent of its courtship of the rising or declining sun ; and when it seems first determined to the north, stands awhile trembling, as if it suffered inconvenience in the first fruition of its desires, and stands not still in full enjoyment till after first a great variety of motion, and then an undisturbed posture ; so is the piety and so is the conversion of a man wrought by degrees and several steps of imperfection : and at first our choices are wavering ; convinced by the grace of God, and yet not persuaded ; and then persuaded, but not resolved ; and then resolved, but deferring to begin; and then beginning, but, as all beginnings are, in weakness and uncertainty ; and we fly out often into huge indiscretions, and look back to Sodom, and long to return to Egypt : and when the storm is quite over, we find little bubblings and unevennesses on the face of the waters. We often weaken our own purposes by the returns of sin ; and we do not call ourselves conquerors till, by a long possession of virtues, it is a strange and unusual, and, therefore, an uneasy and unpleasant thing to act a crime. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

14. Its progress is not always perceptible.

(2862.) The progress of holiness is sometimes like the lengthening of daylight, after the days are past the shortest. The difference is for some time imperceptible, but still is real ; and in due season becomes undeniably visible. —*Salter.*

15. How it is to be maintained.

(2863.) The bloom of the hawthorn or White-May looks like snow in Richmond Park, but nearer London, or by the road side, its virgin whiteness is sadly stained. Too often contact with the world has just such an effect upon our piety ; we must away to the far-off garden of paradise to see holiness in its unsullied purity, and meanwhile we must be much alone with God if we would maintain a gracious life below. —*Spurgeon.*

16. Is not to be trusted in.

(2864.) When thou trustest in Christ *within* thee, instead of Christ *without* thee, thou settest Christ against Christ. The bride does well to esteem her husband's picture, but it were ridiculous if she should love it better than himself, much more if she go to it rather than to him to supply her wants. Yet thou actest thus when thou art more fond of Christ's image in thy soul than of Him who painted it there. Will thy husband, the Lord Jesus, thank thee for honouring His creature to the dishonour of His person? —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

17. Does not entitle us to heaven.

(2865.) From justification arises our title to heaven ; from sanctification arises our meetness for it. A king's son is heir-apparent to his father's crown. We will suppose the young prince to be educated with all the advantages, and to be possessor of all the attainments, that are necessary to constitute a complete monarch. His accomplishments, however great, do not entitle him to the kingdom ; they only qualify him for it ; so the holiness and obedience of the saints are no part of that right on which their claim to glory is founded, or for which it is given ; but a part of that spiritual education, whereby they are fitted and made meet to inherit "the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world." —*Salter.*

(2866.) As a dead man cannot inherit an estate, no more can a dead soul (and every soul is spiritually dead until quickened, and born again of the Holy Ghost) inherit the kingdom of God. Yet, sanctification and holiness of life do not constitute any part of our title to the heavenly inheritance, any more than mere animal life entitles a man of fortune to the estate he enjoys : he could not, indeed, enjoy his estate if he did not live ; but his claim to his estate arises from some other quarter. In like manner, it is not our holiness that entitles us to heaven ; though no man can enter into heaven without holiness. —*Salter.*

HOLY SPIRIT. THE

I. *THE THIRD PERSON IN THE BLESSED TRINITY.*

(2867.) If a sober, wise, and honest man should come and tell you that in such a country, where he has been, there is one who is the governor of it, that doth well discharge his office,—that he hears causes, discerns right, distributes justice, relieves the poor, comforts them that are in distress ; supposing you gave him that credit which honesty, wisdom, and sobriety deserve, would you not believe that he intended a righteous, wise, diligent, intelligent *person*, discharging the office of a governor? What else could any man living imagine? But now suppose that another unknown person, or, so far as he is known, justly suspected of deceit and forgery, should come to you and tell you that all which the other informed you and acquainted you withal was indeed true, but that the words which he spake have quite another intention ; for it was not a man or any person that he intended, but it was the sun or the wind that he meant by all which he spake of him : for whereas the sun by his benign influence makes a country fruitful and temperate, suited to the relief and comfort of all that dwell therein, and disposes the minds of the inhabitants to mutual kindness and benignity, he described these things figuratively to you, under the notion of a righteous governor and his actions, although he never gave you the least intimation of any such intention :— must you not now believe that either the first person, whom you know to be a wise, sober, and honest man, was a notorious trifler, and designed your ruin, if you were to order any of your occasions according to his reports, or that your latter informer, whom you have just reason to suspect of falsehood and deceit in other things, has endeavoured to abuse both him and you, to render his veracity suspected, and to spoil all your designs grounded thereon? One of these you must certainly conclude upon.

And it is no otherwise in this case. The Scripture informs us that the Holy Spirit rules in and over the Church of God, appointing overseers of it under Him ; that He discerns and judges all things ; that He comforts them that are faint, strengthens

them that are weak, is grieved with them and provoked by them who sin; and that in all these, and in other things of like nature innumerable, He works, orders, and disposes all "according to the counsel of His own will." Hereupon it directs us so to order our conversation towards God that we do not grieve Him nor displease Him, telling us thereon what great things He will do for us; on which we lay the stress of our obedience and salvation. Can any man possibly, that gives credit to the testimony thus proposed in the Scripture, conceive any otherwise of this Spirit but as of a holy, wise, intelligent Person? Now, whilst we are under the power of these apprehensions, there come to us some men, Socinians or Quakers, whom we have just cause on many other accounts to suspect, at least of deceit and falsehood; and they confidently tell us that what the Scripture speaks concerning the Holy Spirit is indeed true, but that in and by all the expressions which it uses concerning Him, it intends no such person as it seems to do, but "an accident, a quality, an effect, or influence of the power of God," which figuratively does all things mentioned,—namely, that has a will figuratively, and understanding figuratively, discerns and judges figuratively, is sinned against figuratively, and so of all that is said of Him. Can any man that is not forsaken of all natural reason, as well as spiritual light, choose now but determine that either the Scripture is designed to draw him into errors and mistakes about the principal concernment of his soul, and so to ruin him eternally; or that these persons, who would impose such a sense upon it, are indeed corrupt seducers that seek to overthrow his faith and comforts? Such will they at last appear to be. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

II. *HIS ASSISTANCE.*

1. Its nature.

(2868.) When the Spirit doth in an ordinary way help us in remembering or meditating on any text or holy doctrine, He doth it according to our capacity and disposition, and therefore there is much of our weakness and error usually mixed with the Spirit's help in the product; as when you hold the hand of a child in writing, you write not so well by his hand, as by your own alone, but your skill and his weakness and unskilfulness do both appear in the letters which are made; so is it in the ordinary assistance of the Spirit in our studies, meditations, prayers, &c., otherwise all that we do would be perfect, in which we have the Spirit's help; which Scripture and all Christians' experience do contradict. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2869.) It is not the work of the Spirit to tell you the meaning of Scripture, and give you the knowledge of divinity, without your own study and labour, but to bless that study, and give you knowledge thereby. Did not Christ open the eyes of the man born blind as suddenly, as wonderfully, and by as little means as you can expect to be illuminated by the Spirit? And yet that man could not see any distant object out of his reach, till he took the pains to travel to it, or it was brought to him, for all his eyes were opened. When he was newly healed, he could not have told what was done in Samaria, nor seen what was in Jericho, nor what a town Tyre or Sidon was, unless he would be at the pains to travel thither. And if he would see Rome, he must be at so much more pains, as the place was more distant. Would you have been so silly as to say, "This man can presently see Samaria, Tyre, Rome, because Christ hath opened his eyes?" So is it here. If Christ have anointed your eyes with the eye-salve of the Spirit, and removed the inward impediments of your sight, yet it is not that you may presently know all truths which you never heard of, or read of, or studied to know. You must study, and study again; and the further off, and more difficult the truths are, the more must you study, and then expect to know by the blessing of the Spirit: let experience witness. Did you not hear all those truths which you know from the mouth of some teacher, or other person, or else consider and study of them yourselves, before you came to know them by the Spirit? Go not, then, out of God's way, if you expect His blessing.

Doth not experience commonly tell you, that men know more that study and have learning than those that do not? Are not the ministers and other learned men and godly people, that have studied the Scriptures long, the most knowing people in England? Nothing but mad ignorance or impudence can deny it. What man breathing knew as much the first hour he received the Spirit, as he doth after many years' study and diligent labour?

To reject study on pretence of the sufficiency of the Spirit, is to reject the Scripture itself; for as a man rejecteth his land that refuseth to till it, or rejecteth his meat if he refuse to eat it, though he praise it never so much; so doth he reject the Scripture that refuseth to study it, or to study that which must first be known, or is necessary thereto. Meditation digesteth the word, which else is cast up again. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691

(2870.) The Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. It is the instrument by which the Spirit worketh. He does not tell us anything that is out of the record; but all that is within it He sends home with clearness and effect upon the mind. He does not make us wise above that which is written, but He makes us wise up to that which is written. When a telescope is directed to some distant landscape, it enables us to see what we could not otherwise have seen; but it does not enable us to see anything which has not a real existence in the prospect before us. It does not present to the eye any delusive imagery—neither is that a fanciful and fictitious scene which it throws open to our contemplation. The natural eye saw nothing but blue land stretching along the distant horizon. By the aid of the glass there bursts upon it a charming variety of fields, and woods, and spires, and villages. Yet who would say that the glass added one feature to this assemblage? It discovers nothing to us which is not there; nor out of that portion of the book of nature, which we are employed in cultivating, does it bring into view a single character which is not really and previously inscribed upon it. And so of the Spirit. He does not add a single truth or a single character to the book of revelation. He enables the spiritual man to see what the natural man cannot see; but the spectacle which He lays open is uniform and immutable. It is the Word of God which is ever the same; and he whom the Spirit of God has enabled to look to the Bible with a clear and affecting discernment, sees no phantom passing before him; but, amid all the visionary extravagance with which he is charged, can, so-

every one article of his faith, and every one duty of his practice, make his triumphant appeal to the law and to the testimony.

—*Chalmers*, 1780–1847.

2. Our need of it.

(1.) *To deliver us from sin.*

(2871.) To know the way to heaven, sometimes to cast a longing eye in that direction, and by fit and start to make a feeble effort heavenwards, can end in nothing. Man must get the Spirit of God. Thus only can we be freed of the shackles that bind the soul to earth, the flesh, and sin. I have seen a captive eagle, caged far from its distant home, as he sat mournfullike on his perch, turn his eye sometimes heavenwards; there he would sit in silence, like one wrapt in thought, gazing through the bars of his cage up into the blue sky; and, after a while, as if noble but sleeping instincts had suddenly awoke, he would start and spread out his broad sails, and leap upward, revealing an iron chain that, usually covered by his plumage, drew him back again to his place. But though this bird of heaven knew the way to soar aloft, and sometimes, under the influence of old instincts, decayed but not altogether dead, felt the thirst of freedom, freedom was not for him, till a power greater than his own proclaimed liberty to the captive, and shattered the shackles that bound him to his perch. Nor is there freedom for us till the Holy Spirit sets us free, and, by the lightning force of truth, breaks the chains that bind us to sin. —*Guthrie.*

(2.) *To guide and uphold us from day to day.*

(2872.) The Holy Spirit of God is our guide. Who will displease his guide, a sweet comfortable guide, that leads us through the wilderness of this world? As the cloud before the Israelites by day, and the pillar of fire by night, so He conducts us to the heavenly Canaan. If we grieve our guide, we cause Him to leave us to ourselves. The Israelites would not go a step further than God by His angel went before them. It is in vain for us to make toward heaven without our blessed Guide.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2873.) We need a monitor to stir up in us diligence, watchfulness, and earnest endeavours: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." The cares and business of the world do often drive the sense of our duty out of our minds. One great end of God's Spirit is to put us in remembrance, to revive truths upon us in their season. A ship though never so well rigged, needs a pilot: we need a good guide to put us in mind of our duty.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(2874.) By "regeneration," we understand the commencement of the life of God in the soul of man; the beginning of that which had not an existence before: by "renewal" the invigoration of that which has been begun; the sustentation of a life already possessed. The impartation of life is one thing; its support another. Its "renewal" does not mean its reanimation after dying out, as the light of an extinguished lamp may be renewed —but that the life itself is supported and preserved; that there is the revival of exhausted energy, the supply of the waste and decay occasioned by the wear and tear of whatever expends or tries its powers. The subject may be illustrated by the analogy of natural life. When a child is born, we do not say that its life is renewed, but that its life has begun; its visible existence starts from its commencement. Having thus started, it then needs to be sustained and fed; the living being requires nourishment and invigoration in the form of food and rest. Even the strong man, worn and reduced by care and toil, by the battle and the burden of each day, is conscious of weakened and wasted energy, and needs the constant and regular renewal of his strength. All this is obviously analogous to the inward and spiritual life of man, it has its beginning. In "the washing of regeneration" the new life commences. Having begun, it needs to be supported and preserved. And not only so; but exposed to injury, liable to be weakened and depressed by the perils that menace and the labours that belong to it, it needs to be refreshed and recruited, strengthened and revived. That is effected by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost,"—the flowing into the soul, through "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," of the varied gifts of that Divine agent by whom the life itself was imparted at first.

—*Binney.*

(2875.) Consciously, distinctly, resolutely, habitually, we need to give ourselves, our business, our interests, our families, our affections, into the Spirit's hands, to lead and fashion us as He will. When we work with the current of that Divine will, all is vital, efficient, fruitful; for leaning back against the Omnipotent arm, this human frame attracts strength into all its sinews. But when we strive against that current, some secret flaw vitiates even what we call our successes; and how do we know but our proudest successes then are only failures in disguise? You have seen the rower's strength put vigorously against the tide; and, judging from his own narrow point on the water, the dash of his oars seemed to be dividing the waves, and sending him up the channel. But when the mist lifts, let him send his glance away to some stable landmark on the shore, and he finds the triumphant stream has all the time been drifting him backward and downward. So with the moral issue of our plans. By our conceited standards we seem to compass our ends; but transfer the scale of measurement to eternity, and behold! we have been losers of the soul while we gained the world, because the Spirit was not invited to befriend our toil! After the bolts are all driven, and the shrouds are all set, we must still wait for the breath of heaven to fill the sail. Nothing, literally nothing, in the final reckoning, without our Lord!

—*F. D. Huntington.*

(3.) *To support us in affliction.*

(2876.) If you thoroughly exhaust a vessel of the air it contains, the pressure of the air outside will break that vessel into perhaps millions of pieces, because there is not a sufficiency of air within to resist and counteract the weight of the atmosphere from without. A person who is exercised by severe affliction, and who does not experience the Divine comforts and supports in his soul, resembles the exhausted receiver above described; and it is no wonder if he yields, and is broken to shivers, under the weight of God's providential hand. But affliction to one who is sustained by the inward presence of the Holy Ghost, resembles the aerial pressure

on the outer surface of an unexhausted vessel. There is that within which supports it, and preserves it from being destroyed by the incumbent pressure from without. —*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(4.) *In the study of God's Word.*

(2877.) God is able to interpret His own Word unto thee. Indeed none can enter into the knowledge thereof but he must be beholden unto His Spirit to unlock the door. If thou hadst a riper head and higher parts than thou canst now pretend to, thou wouldst, without His help, be but like the blind Sodomites about Lot's house, groping but not able to find the way into the true saving knowledge thereof. He that hath not the right key is as far from entering the house as he that hath none, yea, in some sense further off; for he that hath none will call to him that is within, while the other, trusting to his false key, stands pottering without to little purpose. The Pharisees were no little conversant in the Scriptures, yet even these missed that truth which lay before them almost in every leaf of Moses and the Prophets, whom they were, in their everyday study, tumbling over: I mean that grand truth concerning Christ, of whom both Moses and the Prophets speak.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2878.) None so blind and ignorant whose eyes His Spirit cannot open. He who by His incubation upon the waters at the Creation hatched that rude mass into the beautiful form we now see, and out of that dark chaos made the glorious heavens, and garnished them with so many orient stars, can move upon thy dark soul, and enlighten it, though now it be as void of knowledge as the evening of the world's first day was of light. The schoolmaster sometimes sends home the child and bids his father put him to another trade, because not able, with all his art, to make a scholar of him; but if the Spirit of God be the Master, thou shalt learn, though a very dunce. *Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2879.) Scripture can be savingly understood only in and by the inward illumination of the Holy Ghost. The Gospel is a picture of God's free grace to sinners. Were we in a room hung with the finest paintings and adorned with the most exquisite statues, we could not see one of them, if all light were excluded. Now the blessed Spirit's irradiation is the same to the mind that outward light is to the bodily eyes.

—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2880.) The Word of God will not avail to salvation without the Spirit of God. A compass is of no use to the mariner unless he has light to see it by. —*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2881.) You may try to teach a child the meaning of the term "sweetness," but words will not avail: give him some honey and he will never forget. You might seek to tell him of the glorious mountains, and the Alps, that pierce the clouds and send their snowy peaks, like white-robed ambassadors, up to the courts of heaven: take him there; let him see them, and he will never forget them. You might seek to paint to him the grandeur of the American continent, with its hills and lakes and rivers, such as the world saw not before: let him go and view it, and he will know more of the land than he could know by all your teaching, when he sits at home. So the Holy Spirit does not only tell us of Christ's love; He sheds it abroad in the heart. He does not merely tell us of the sweetness of pardon; but He gives us a sense of no condemnation, and then we know all about it, better than we would have done by any teaching of words and thoughts. —*Spurgeon.*

(2882.) In order for me to find my way to heaven two things become necessary. I must have an inspired chart external to me, which is the Bible. I must have, secondly, an inspired heart, which is internal to me, in order to enable me to read profitably that book. Now of all charts, or, to use the more common phrase, of all books, the Bible is the plainest. Comments, commentaries, sermons, explanations, are most precious; but still the Bible itself, in all things that are vital, is so plain, that the humblest peasant can understand it, while in all things that are mysterious, it is so difficult that we shall spend heaven, and still not exhaust them. The Holy Spirit is needful, not to enable me to understand the Bible; for I can understand it by study just as well as Homer, or Shakespeare, or Milton, or any other writer; but so to understand it that, instead of being a mere outer truth it may exercise an influence within, overcoming the hostility of my heart, sanctifying its governing principles, and giving new life and energy within. Hence it is the Spirit that fills every symbol in it with celestial glory, that inspires every truth in the Bible with life, gives to its every promise sweet music, and communicates to the heart that studies its receptive power, and makes this book the guide unto life everlasting. The Romanist looks to the Pope to interpret the Bible; the Tractarian looks to the Church to interpret it; the Socinian looks to reason to interpret it; the Christian looks to the Holy Ghost to explain and interpret the Bible to him.

To show you the necessity of the Spirit, let us take the very simple illustration of a sundial. If you go to a sundial at midnight and study it with a brilliant lamp, you will be able to trace every figure, and to understand it as thoroughly as any human being ever understood it. But while the lamp or moonlight applied to the sundial will enable you to understand its structure most accurately, neither will enable you to reach its practical use. If you want to do that, you must go out when the sun has risen, or shines from its meridian, and then you will not only be able to see the structure of the dial, but to discover from it the hour of the day. So in reading this blessed book, you can by the lamplight of human reason, or by the moonlight of tradition, or by a light which is a mixture of the darkness of both—the pope—understand this book in its outward facts; but in its inner, its practical, and saving meaning, you must ask the Author of the book to explain it to you. Suppose that you have heard that a person has written a book, and on reading that book you find a passage in it which you can make nothing of; and you appeal to this divine or to that divine to ask them to explain its meaning, but in vain. Suppose you heard that the author of the book would be in the vestry at a certain hour ready to explain the passage, you would say, What is the use of going to others, when the author of the book is accessible and ready to explain his meaning? He will be the best able to make it plain.

The author of this book, the Bible, waits, wherever there is a heart that can pray, or lips that can move, to explain the meaning or the mystery of the passage that the reader himself cannot understand. —*Cumming.*

(5.) *In prayer.*

(2883.) "None can say Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." One may say the words without any special work of the Spirit in him, and so may a parrot; but to say Christ is Lord believingly, with thoughts and affections comporting with the greatness and sweetness thereof, requires the Spirit of God to be in his heart and tongue. Now it is not the bare naming Christ in prayer, and saying, For the Lord's sake, that procures our welcome with God, but saying it in faith; and none can do this without the Spirit. Christ is the door that opens into God's presence and lets the soul into His very bosom, faith is the key that unlocks the door; but the Spirit is He that makes this key, and helps the Christian to turn it in prayer, so as to get any access to God. You know in the law it was a sin not only to offer "strange incense," but also to bring "strange fire." By the incense, which was a composition of sweet spices, appointed by God to be burnt as a sweet perfume in His nostrils, was signified the merit and satisfaction of Christ, who being bruised by His Father's wrath, did offer Himself a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. By the fire that was put to the incense (which also was appointed to be taken from the altar, and not any common hearth) was signified the Spirit of God, by which we are to offer up all our prayers and praises, even as Christ offered Himself up by the Eternal Spirit. To plead Christ's merits in prayer, and not by the Spirit, is to bring right incense but strange fire, and so our prayers are but smoke, offensive to His pure eyes, not incense, a sweet savour to His nostrils. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2884.) As the sails of a ship carry it into the harbour, so prayer carries us to the throne and bosom of God. But as the sails cannot of themselves speed the progress of the vessel, unless filled with a favourable breeze, so the Holy Spirit must breathe upon our hearts, or our prayers will be motionless and lifeless.

—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(6.) *In preaching.*

(2885.) It is reported of a great person, that being desirous to see the sword wherewith Scanderbeg had done so great exploits, when he saw it, replied, he saw no such great matter in that sword more than any other sword. "It is truth," quoth one, standing by; "you see the sword, but not the arm that wielded it." So, when we look upon the Scriptures, the bare word, whether printed in our Bibles or audible in the pulpit, we shall find no such business in it more than in other writings; but when we consider the arm of God's power that joins with it, when we look upon the operation of His Holy Spirit working therein, then we shall change our thoughts and say, "*Nec vox hominem sonat, O Deus certe!*" or as Jacob did of Bethel, "Surely, of a certain, God is in this Word!"

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(2886.) The most correct and lively description of the sun cannot convey either the light, the warmth, the cheerfulness, or the fruitfulness, which the actual shining of that luminary conveys; neither can the most laboured and accurate dissertations on grace and spiritual things impart a true idea of them, without an experience of the Holy Spirit's work on the heart. *Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2887.) The bellows one day heaved a long-drawn sigh.

"What's the matter, friend Bellows, that you seem so sad?" said the hearth.

"I have been toiling to no purpose," it answered in a dejected tone.

"Haven't succeeded to kindle the fire, is it?" asked the hearth.

"That's the cause," replied the bellows; "after all my blowing there is no flame! Occasionally it has flickered for a moment, but as suddenly relapsed into its former condition. In fact, the more I blow the darker it appears;—and oh! it is so painfully disheartening!"

"Perhaps," said the hearth considerately, "it requires something besides in order to quicken it;—simple blowing may else unsuccessfully labour in the effort to obtain a spark."

Gospel ordinances, which are so instrumental in quickening the affections of the spiritually minded, are unsuccessful if the heart is not enkindled by Divine grace. The Holy Spirit must apply the love of Christ to the soul, and then the fire will begin to burn, and the value of ordinances be felt in raising the affections into a flame, that we shall say as the disciples at Emmaus, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

—*Bowden.*

(2888.) Such is my belief in the reality, and existence, and agency of the Divine Spirit, that I think I should have no hope and no faith as a minister and as a labourer for the enfranchisement of mankind, if it were not that I believed there was an all-prevalent, vitalising Divine Spirit. I should as soon attempt to raise flowers if there were no atmosphere, or produce fruits if there were neither light nor heat, as I should attempt to regenerate men if I did not believe there was a Holy Ghost. I have faith in the Divine Spirit spread abroad over the whole human family, which is really the cause of life in the higher directions; and it is this faith that gives me hope and courage in all labour.

—*Beecher.*

(7.) *In the use of ordinances.*

(2889.) Ordinances are but as the sails of a ship, ministers as the seamen that manage those sails: the anchor may be weighed, the sails spread, but when all this is done, there is no sailing till a gale come. We preach and pray, and you hear; but there is no motion Christ-ward until the Spirit of God blows upon them. —*Flavel*, 1627–1691.

(2890.) In vain do the inhabitants of London go to their conduits for supply unless the man who has the master-key turns the water on. And in vain do we think to quench our thirst at ordinances, unless God communicate the living water of His Spirit. —*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2891.) The atmosphere which encompasses our globe forty-five miles every way, is equally important to the life of animals and to the vegetation of plants. But it would quickly cease to answer these

valuable ends were it not for the additional influence of the sun. Whereas, in subordination to that, and as a medium between that and us, it ministers every moment to our best temporal interests. Thus, the ordinances of the Gospel are to be numbered among those streams which gladden the Church of God when He makes them the vehicles of His own power and presence to the soul. Abstracted from the converting and cherishing operations of the Holy Ghost, the best means of grace would infallibly leave us (as a sunless atmosphere would leave the earth) no less cold and unanimated than they found us. *Salter.*

III. *HIS INFLUENCE.*

1. On whom it is exerted.

(2892.) As we press our seals, not on air or water, but on materials capable of receiving the characters, so the Holy Spirit of God is only given to really believing minds capable of receiving and preserving His seal. —*Jean Claude.*

2. How it is exerted.

(1.) *Freely.*

(2893.) The Spirit of God is a free agent, "Uphold me," saith David, "with Thy free Spirit." He is not as a prisoner tied to the oar, that must needs work when we will have him; but as a prince, when He pleaseth, He comes forth and shows Himself to the soul, and when He pleaseth He retires and will not be seen. What freer than the wind? not the greatest king on earth can command it to rise for his pleasure; to this the Spirit of God is compared (John iii.). He is not only free to breathe where He lists, in this soul, and not in that, but when He pleaseth also. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2.) *Gently.*

(2894.) The Holy Spirit leads us as a mother leads by the hand her child of two years old; as a person who can see leads one who is blind.

—*Vianney.*

(3.) *Silently.*

(2895.) The operation of the Spirit doth very much imitate that of Nature; it is in a very still and silent way that the sap is drained in by the root, and ascends up the trunk of the tree, and diffuses itself to every branch, so that we may see that it lives, but we do not see how. The case is with souls that are brought to live in the Spirit, as with very infirm and languishing persons who have been consumed, and even next to death, in a corrupt air; being removed into such as is pure and wholesome they revive, but in a very insensible way; so is this life preserved by a vital, spiritual influence, which is a pure air to them, a gentle, indulgent, benign, and cherishing air; they live by it, and never a whit the worse, because it is not so turbulent as to make a noise. —*Salter.*

(2896.) We do not perceive the Agent who changes the character at work, but we conclude He has been working by the discovering effects produced. It is for this reason, among others, that He is compared to the wind, "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The silent nature of the Spirit's operations has sometimes made His agency to be denied altogether by those who are ever demanding some sensible evidence of the truth communicated in the Word. But those who urge this objection forget that many of the most powerful of the agents of Nature are themselves unseen, and are only to be discovered by their fruits. We do not, for instance, see the wind, whether it comes in the gentle breeze, to fan us, or in the hurricane, to work such devastation among the labours of man and the very works of God. The heat that nourishes the plants of the earth, and the electricity so intimately connected with all atmospherical and organic changes, move secretly and in silence. These individuals forget that God is always Himself unseen in the midst of His works. When we walk forth in the eventide to meditate, we are constrained to acknowledge that God is everywhere present among these works of grandeur; and yet, by intense gaze, we cannot discover His person, nor, by patient listening, hear the sound of His footsteps. No jarring sound of mechanism comes across the void that intervenes between us and these heavens—no voice of boasting reaches our ear, to tell of the Worker; it is the heavens themselves that declare His glory. And why should the God who created us not be able to renew the heart when it is debased by the effects of sin, and yet be as unseen in the one case as the other? And there is a manifest congruity in the circumstance that the Agent conducts His work so silently and imperceptibly. It is only by such a mode of procedure that the spirit of man can retain its separate action and freedom. There is no violence done to man's nature in the supernatural work carried on in the heart. The dealings of God are, in every respect, suited to the essential and indispensable principles of man's nature. "I drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." —*M'Cosh.*

(4.) *Yet its effects are perceptible.*

(2897.) When the rays of the sun fall on the surface of a material object, part of those rays are absorbed; part of them are reflected back, in straight lines; and part of them refracted this way and that in various directions. When the Holy Ghost shines upon our souls, part of the grace He inspires is absorbed to our own particular comforts; part of it is reflected back in acts of love and joy and prayer and praise; and part of it refracted every way in acts of benevolence, beneficence, and all moral and social duty.

—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2898.) "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Now there are two truths which appear to be clearly taught in these words, viz., (1) That the new birth, like the wind, is perceptible in its effect; and, (2) That it is not invariably attached to any agency or instrumentality whatever. The wind itself is invisible, but none mistake the evidence of its motion. I may see the sails flapping against the mast of the ship that drifts powerless on the surface of a calm and glassy sea; and I may look again, and while I hear the breeze rustling in the trees, may see that same vessel dashing through the waves with its sails full, and its masts straining under the pressure of the gale, and I know, without inquiry, that the wind has risen; while, on the other hand, if I were to see the ship still lifeless, the sails still hanging loose, and the sea still glassy, it would be but lost labour

to assure me that the gale had begun. And then, again, if any one was to inquire why the soft south wind is bringing up the gentle shower, or why the cold north-easter is cutting down so many tender plants by fell consumption, none can reply. Not all the philosophers in the world can devise a plan by which to regulate the motion of the breeze. It is one of those things, which though a matter of everyday life, God has kept in His sovereign hand. He has made us acquainted with no rule, and if there be a secret machinery, He has hidden it from our eye. The wind blows at His bidding, and He gives no account of any of His matters.

Now, our Blessed Lord teaches us in this text that it is just so with the new birth: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." If, therefore, there is no sound—if all be dead, all slumbering, and all regardless of the Master's law and the Master's will—if there be no fruit, no result, no love, no victory,—then we are not justified in asserting of that soul that it is born again. But if we are permitted to see the breeze spring up—if there is a kindling of a new life, a springing forward with a new power, a holy devotedness on new principles,—then we trust, whatever be the instrumentality, that it is the work of the Spirit, and that the soul is born again of God.

But again, according to the principle of the text, we cannot tie Him down to stated means.

—*E. Hoare.*

3. Should not be resisted.

(2899.) Take heed, therefore, sinners, how you use the Spirit when He comes, knocking at the door of your hearts. Open at His knock, and He will be your guest; you shall have His sweet company: repulse Him, and you have not a promise He will knock again. And if once He leave striving with thee, unhappy man, thou art lost for ever; thou liest like a ship cast up by the waves upon some high rock, where the tide never comes to fetch it off. Thou mayest come to the Word, converse with other ordinances, but in vain. 'Tis the Spirit of them which is both tide and wind, to set the soul afloat, and carry it on, or else it lies like a ship on dry ground which stirs not.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

IV. *HIS INDWELLING IN THE SOUL.*

1. Its manner.

(2900.) God is united to us, and we are united to Him, not by any form of matter, not by physical conjunction or contiguity, but by the intersphering of soul-life. It is that which knits us to Him. Our thoughts reach out and thread themselves to His thoughts, and thus bring us towards Him.

Hence, God's union with men is not a shadow, is not a figure, is not a dream: it is the statement of a fact as literal as any law in nature. The union of sunlight with vegetables is not more real. The flow of nourishing sap in fruits is not more literal than the interfusion and soul-union of God's soul with men's.

What a wonderful and glorious doctrine is this, that the soul of God touches the soul of man! As there is no babe cradled and rocked that has not its mother, in the ordinary course of life, to overhang it by night and by day, to kiss it as it sleeps, and to cover it with smiles and caresses when it wakes; so every creature that is born into life has a God whose ever-watchful soul broods tenderly over it by day and by night, and who interspheres it in His own life.

—*Beecher.*

2. The safety of the soul.

(2901.) An house uninhabited soon comes to ruin; and a soul uninhabited by the Holy Spirit of God verges faster and faster to destruction.

—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

3. Is a pledge and foretaste of heaven.

(2902.) God is especially present in the hearts of His people, by His Holy Spirit; and indeed the hearts of holy men are temples in the truth of things, and, in type and shadow, they are heaven itself. For God reigns in the hearts of His servants; there is His kingdom. The power of grace has subdued all His enemies; there is His power. They serve Him night and day, and give Him thanks and praise; that is His glory. This is the religion and worship of God in the temple. The temple itself is the heart of man; Christ is the high priest, who from thence sends up the incense of prayers, and joins them to His own intercession, and presents all together to His Father; and the Holy Ghost, by His dwelling there, has also consecrated it into a temple; and God dwells in our hearts by faith, and Christ by His Spirit, and the Spirit by His purities; so that we are also cabinets of the mysterious Trinity; and what is this short of heaven itself, but as infancy is short of manhood, and letters of words? The same state of life it is, but not the same age. It is heaven in a looking-glass, dark, but yet true, representing the beauties of the soul, and the graces of God, and the images of His eternal glory by the reality of a special presence.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(2903.) In the early times when land was sold, the owner cut a turf from the greensward and cast it into the cap of the purchaser as a token that it was his; or he tore off the branch of a tree and put it into the new owner's hand to show that he was entitled to all the products of the soil; and when the purchaser of a house received seizin or possession, the key of the door, or a bundle of thatch plucked from the roof, signified that the building was yielded up to him. The God of all grace has given to His people all the perfections of heaven to be their heritage for ever, and the earnest of His Spirit is to them the blessed token that all things are theirs. The Spirit's work of comfort and sanctification is a part of heaven's covenant blessings, a turf from the soil of Canaan, a twig from the tree of life, the key to mansions in the skies. Possessing the earnest of the Spirit we have received *seizin* of heaven.

—*Spurgeon.*

4. A matter of consciousness.

(2904.) It is not, of course contended, that we can have absolute and demonstrative certainty of the presence of the Holy Spirit, any more than of any other fact which depends on evidence, and consequently admits of doubt. We can have as much moral certainty as we need for practice: ground enough for hope to build and joy to flourish on. Who doubts that he is in health when the pulse beats truly, and the nerves are braced, and the spirits buoyant, and each organ with unfelt regularity elaborates its proper functions? Questioned it may be, demonstrated it cannot be; but we know it,

and are thankful. And so there may be evidence of the indwelling of the Spirit within us, not demonstrative, indeed, but sufficient to make the believer walk warily, as one who has received a precious gift which he is bound to cherish, and to fill his bosom with peace and thankfulness and joy of the Holy Ghost. —*Jackson.*

5. Its evidences.

(2905.) The only true test of the presence of the Holy Spirit is its sanctifying influence on our hearts and lives. It is evidenced only by its effects. So much indeed would appear to be conveyed to us even by the name by which the Almighty Comforter has been pleased to reveal Himself to us in the pages of His Word. The Spirit, *πνευμα*,—the imperceptible, yet vital *breath*, which *is*, and there is life and will and motion; which departs, and all is cold and senseless and still;—the impalpable and viewless, but powerful and beneficent *wind;* now rending the rocks and laying low the forests; now purifying the stagnant air or opening the blossoms of spring; now wafting the seeds each to its appointed place. And thus it was said by our blessed Lord Himself: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." As the vital principle of our material frame,—which science may search for but cannot detect, and when it has dissected the members, and analysed the fluids, and untied the muscles and ganglions, and followed line by line the delicate tracery of the nerves, is forced to confess that it has had to do but with the instruments and mechanism of the mysterious power within,—may yet be recognised by a child's intellect, in the fire of the eye, the force of the arm, and the immediate certainty with which action follows on the determination of the will; so the presence of the Holy Spirit of God in the hearts of His people, though secret itself,—the presence of the Invisible—is discernible by its effects.

—*Jackson.*

V. *THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.*

1. Variable, yet real.

(2906.) The witnessing of the Spirit admits of degrees; as the operations of the Spirit are at one time more powerful and manifest than at another, so may the soul's persuasion of its adoption by it be. At one time He acts so powerfully as that all fears and doubts are banished; at another time it may not be so clear, but much overclouded, and yet accompanied with some degrees of persuasion that Christ is theirs, even though faith be weak. A rich man's window may be wider than a poor man's, and so the sun may make his house the more light, that the things within it may be better discerned; but the poor man may really enjoy the beams of the sun, and see what is in his house; so the poorest, the weakest believer may know the Spirit hath shined into his heart, as well as others that enjoy brighter beams than he hath been acquainted with. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(2907.) Do not wonder if that evidence of which we speak vary and change in its clearness and force in your own hearts. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." Do not think it cannot be genuine because it is variable. There is a sun in the heavens, but there are heavenly lights, too, that wax and wane; they *are* lights, they *are* in the heavens, though they change.

—*Maclaren.*

2. An evidence of the divine mission of Christ.

(2908.) Abundance of honest, holy souls, do live in the fervent love of God and in hatred of sin, and in sincere obedience, in justice and charity to all men, and in heavenly desires and delights, who yet cannot well dispute for their religion; nor yet do they need to fly to believe as the Church believeth, though they know not what or why, nor what the Church is. But they have that Spirit within them which is the living witness and advocate of Christ, and the seal of God, and the earnest of their salvation; not a mere pretence that the Spirit persuadeth them, and they know not by what evidence; nor yet that they count it most pious to believe strongest without evidence when they least know why. But they have the Spirit of renovation and adoption, turning the very bent of their hearts and lives from the world to God, and from earth to heaven, and from carnality to spirituality, and from sin to holiness. And this fully assureth them that Christ, who hath actually saved them, is their Saviour, and that He who maketh good all His undertaking is no deceiver, and that God would not sanctify His people in the world by a blasphemy, a deceit and lie, and that Christ who hath performed His promise in this, which is His earnest, will perform the rest. And withal the very love to God, and holiness, and heaven, which is thus made their new nature by the Spirit of Christ, will hold fast in the hour of temptation, when reasoning otherwise is too weak. Oh, what a blessed advantage have the sanctified against all temptations to unbelief! And how lamentably are ungodly sensualists disadvantaged, who have deprived themselves of this inherent testimony! If two men were born blind, and one of them had been cured, and had been shown the candlelight and twilight, how easy it is for him to believe his physician if he promise also to show him the sun, in comparison of what it is to the other who never saw the light! —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

HOPE.

I. *DEPICTED.*

(2909.) *Hope* is a virgin of a fair and clear countenance; her proper seat is upon earth, her proper object is in heaven; of a quick and piercing eye that can see the glory of God, the mercy of Christ, the society of saints and angels, the joys of paradise, through all the clouds and orbs; as Stephen saw heaven opened, and Jesus standing in the holy place. Her eye is so fixed on the blessedness above that nothing in the world can remove it. Faith is her attorney-general, prayer her solicitor, patience her physician, charity her almoner, thankfulness her treasurer, confidence her vice-admiral, the promise of God her anchor, peace her chair of state, and eternal glory her crown.

—*Adams*, 1653.

II. *ITS INFLUENCE.*

1. It is the spring and soul of enterprise.

(2910.) Hope of salvation puts the Christian upon high and noble exploits. It is a grace born for

great actions. Faith and hope are the two poles on which all the Christian's noble enterprises turn. As carnal hope excites carnal men to their achievements which gain them any renown in the world; so is this heavenly hope influential into the saint's undertakings. What makes the merchant sell house and land, and ship his whole estate away to the other end almost of the world, and this amidst a thousand hazards from pirates, waves, and winds, but hope to get a greater by this bold adventure? What makes the daring soldier rush into the furious battle upon the very mouth of death itself, but hope to snatch honour and spoil out of its jaws? Hope is his helmet, shield, and all, which makes him laugh in the face of all danger. In a word, what makes the scholar beat his brains so hard, sometimes with the hazard of breaking them, by overstraining his parts with too eager and hot a pursuit of learning, but hope of commencing some degrees higher in the knowledge of those secrets in nature that are locked up from vulgar understandings? who when he hath attained his desire, is paid but little better for all his pains and study, that have worn nature in him to the stumps, than he is that tears the flesh off his hands and knees with creeping up some craggy mountain which proves but a barren, bleak place, to stand in, and wraps him up in the clouds from the sight of others, leaving him little more to please himself with but this, that he can look over other men's heads, and see a little further than they. Now if these peddling hopes can prevail with men to such fixed resolutions for the obtaining of these poor, sorry things, which borrow part of their goodness from men's fancy and imagination, how much more effectual must the Christian's hope of eternal life be to provoke him to the achievement of more noble exploits!

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2911.) Hope is the very spring that sets all the wheels agoing. Who would preach if it were not in hope to prevail with poor sinners for their conversion and confirmation? Who would pray, but for the hope to prevail with God? Who would believe, or obey, or strive, or suffer, or do anything for heaven, if it were not for the hope that he hath to obtain it? Would the mariner sail, and the merchant adventure, if they had not hope of safety and success? Would the husbandman plough, and sow, and take pains, if he had not hope of increase at harvest? Would the soldier fight, if he hoped not for victory? Surely no man doth adventure upon known impossibilities. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2912.) Once on a time, certain strong labourers were sent forth by the great King to level a primeval forest, to plough it, to sow it, and to bring to him the harvest. They were stout-hearted and strong, and willing enough for labour, and much they needed all their strength and more. One stalwart labourer was named Industry—consecrated work was his. His brother Patience, with thews of steel, went with him, and tired not in the longest days under the heaviest labours. To help them they had Zeal, clothed with ardent and indomitable energy. Side by side there stood his kinsman Self-denial, and his friend Importunity. These went forth to their labour, and they took with them, to cheer their toils, their well-beloved sister Hope; and well it was they did, for they needed the music of her consolation ere the work was done, for the forest trees were huge, and demanded many sturdy blows of the axe ere they would fall prone upon the ground. One by one the giant forest kings were overthrown, but the labour was immense and incessant. At night when they went to their rest, the day's work always seemed so light, for as they crossed the threshold, Patience, wiping the sweat from his brow, would be encouraged, and Self-denial would be strengthened by hearing the sweet voice of Hope within singing, "God will bless us, God, even our own God, will bless us." They felled the lofty trees to the music of that strain; they cleared the acres one by one, they tore from their sockets the huge roots, they delved the soil, they sowed the corn, and waited for the harvest, often much discouraged, but still held to their work as by silver chains and golden fetters by the sweet sound of the voice which chanted so constantly, "God, even our own God, will bless us." They never could refrain from service, for Hope never could refrain from song. They were ashamed to be discouraged, they were shocked to be despairing, for still the voice rang clearly out at noon and eventide, "God will bless us, God, even our own God, will bless us." You know the parable, you recognise the voice: may you hear it in your souls to-day!

—*Spurgeon.*

2. It relieves, sustains, and comforts in affliction.

(2913.) Hope is indeed the rattle which nature did provide to still the froward crying of the fond child, man. *Fellitham*, 1668.

(2914.) Hope is the handkerchief that God puts into His peoples' hands to wipe the tears from their eyes, which their present troubles, and long stay of expected mercies, draw from them.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2915.) Hope breaks the alabaster-box of the promise over the Christian's head, and so diffuseth the consolations thereof abroad the soul, which like a precious ointment, have a virtue as to exhilarate and refresh the spirit in its faintings, so to heal the wounds, and remove the smart, which the Christian's poor heart may feel from its affliction. "Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2916.) This hope of salvation supports the soul in the greatest afflictions. The Christian's patience is, as it were, his back, on which he bears his burdens; and some afflictions are so heavy that he needs a broad one to carry them well. But if hope lay not the pillow of the promise between his back and his burden, the least cross will prove unsupportable: therefore it is called "The patience of hope." —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2917.) What the sponge is to the cannon when hot with often shooting in, that is hope to the soul in multiplied afflictions; it cools the spirit, and meekens it, that it doth not fly to pieces, and break out into distemper'd thought or words against God.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2918.) Hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye, sigh and sing all in a breath; it is called "the rejoicing of hope" (Heb. iii. 6).

And hope never affords more joy than in affliction; it is on a watery cloud that the sun paints those curious colours in the rainbow. We "rejoice in the hope of glory, and not only so, but we glory in tribulation." —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2919.) A religious hope does not only bear up the mind under her sufferings, but makes her rejoice in them. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(2920.) Hope throws a generous contempt upon ill usage, and looks like a handsome defiance of a misfortune; as who should say, You are somewhat troublesome now, but I shall conquer you.
—*Jeremy Collier*, 1650–1726.

(2921.) Hope is necessary in every condition. The miseries of poverty, of sickness, or captivity, would, without this comfort, be insupportable; nor does it appear that the happiest lot of terrestrial existence can set us above the want of this general blessing; or that life, when the gifts of nature and of fortune are accumulated upon it, would not still be wretched, were it not elevated and delighted by the expectation of some new possession, of some enjoyment yet behind, by which the wish shall be at last satisfied, and the heart filled up to its utmost extent.

Hope is, indeed, very fallacious, and promises what it seldom gives; but its promises are more valuable than the gifts of fortune, and it seldom frustrates us without assuring us of recompensing the delay by a greater bounty.
—*Dr. S. Johnson*, 1709–1784.

3. It sustains in the conflicts and temptations of life.

(2922.) As the whole use of the anchor is to hold fast the ship in one sure and certain place, notwithstanding all tempests and waves beating against it, because it entereth into the very bottom of the sea, there taking fast hold: even so the principal use of hope is to enter into the heaven of heavens, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and to hold fast our souls there with Him, notwithstanding all the waves and tempests of Satan, sin, and condemnation do beat daily and continually against them.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2923.) Like a valiant captain, in a losing battle, hope is ever encouraging man, and never leaves him till they both expire together. It is almost as the air by which the mind doth live.
—*Fellthan*, 1668.

4. It enables a man to be helpful to his fellowmen.

(2924.) The man who carries a lantern in a dark night can have friends all around him, walking safely by the help of its rays, and he not defrauded. So he who has the God-given light of hope in his breast can help on many others in this world's darkness, not to his own loss, but to their precious gain.
—*Beecher.*

5. We should therefore pray that it may be increased in us.

(2925.) There are many Christians who, all their life long, carry their hope as a boy carries a bird's nest containing an unfledged bird that can scarcely peep, much less sing—a poor, fledgeless hope.
—*Beecher.*

III. *HOW AND WHY A CHRISTIAN HOPE IS TO BE ATTAINED.*

(2926.) There are persons that cannot do otherwise than hope; and after they have once resolved that they will live a Christian life, it never enters their head that they are going to do anything else, or that there can be but one result. They say, "If a man comes to me, I will not cast him out; and when I go to Christ, He will not cast me out." They consider it a settled thing. It may be presumptuous sometimes; but when persons are soundly converted, it is not. Then it is eminently Gospel-like. A man says to his creditor, "I owe you a debt, and I am utterly unable to pay it. You hold my note. It lies against my industry. I do not see how I am going to get along." "Well," says the creditor, "I will cancel that debt;" and he takes the note, and dashes his pen across it, and hands it to the man. And you cannot persuade the man that he any longer owes the debt. He knows that it is cancelled, and that that is the end of it.

Now a man says, "I owed Christ a debt, and could not pay it; but Christ has cancelled it, and it cannot stand against me any longer." Then he acts as if he really believed that it was cancelled. Is not that sensible? Is not that Christian? Another man says, "I should like to do just so, but I cannot. I do not know what is the reason. Sometimes, when I go to the prayer-meetings, and sing sweet Christian hymns, and hear the brethren pray, I get lifted into this joyful experience; but, I do not know why, the next morning I feel worse than I did before." There are a great many persons who are of a vine-like nature, and who depend for their religious support on the influences that are exerted upon them by stronger Christians. And when they are left to themselves, they are like vines that, having fallen, are trailing on the ground.

Many persons do not know how to feed themselves spiritually. When food is presented to them by others, they see it, and are nourished by it; but the moment others cease to present it to them, they cease to perceive it and to be benefited by it. They have not the power to minister it to themselves. They are unable without help to gain these views; and, failing to have the views, they fail to have that experience of peace which is the result of them.
—*Beecher.*

IV. *CAUTIONS CONCERNING ITS EXERCISE.*

1. We should remember that many of the hopes we cherish are baseless and illusory.

(2927.) Our hopes, I see, resemble much the sun,
That rising and declining casts large shadows;
But when his beams are dress'd in mid-da brightness,
Yields none at all: when they are farthest from
Success, their gilt reflection does display
The largest show of events fair and prosp'rous.
—*Chapman.*

2. We should not set our hopes on too distant objects.

(2928.) It is a precept several times inculcated by Horace, that we should not entertain a hope of anything in life which lies at a great distance from us. The shortness and uncertainty of our time here makes such a kind of hope unreasonable and absurd. The grave lies unseen between us and the object

which we reach after. Where one man lives to enjoy the good he has in view, ten thousand are cut off in the pursuit of it.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

3. We should not permit our hopes to become extravagant or idle.

(2929.) If we hope for what we are not likely to possess, we act and think in vain, and make life a greater dream and shadow than it really is.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(2930.) Used with due abstinence, hope acts as a healthful tonic; intemperately indulged, as an enervating opiate. The visions of future triumph which at first animate exertion, if dwelt upon too intensely, will usurp the place of the stern reality; and noble objects will be contemplated, not for their own inherent worth, but on account of the day-dreams they engender. Thus hope, aided by imagination, makes one man a hero, another a somnambulist, and a third a lunatic; while it renders them all enthusiasts. —*Sir. J. Stephen.*

4. We should test its reality.

(2931.) How many Christians there are who have a hope which lasts only until they need to use it! How many persons there are who are able to sustain sorrow until sorrow comes upon them! How many there are who trust in God until they have occasion to trust in Him!

Do you recollect the scene in Don Quixote in which the immortal knight put upon himself a helmet made of pasteboard? That helmet being smitten and pierced by a sword, he sewed it up again, and would not part with it, but in his insanity wore it, and felt that he had an all-sufficient helmet on his head. Are there not many Don Quixotes among men, who put on armour that looks very well till some sword or spear is thrust into it, but which then is found to be like the pasteboard helmet that went to pieces the moment it was touched? If we are to have a piety that shall sustain us in the flood and in the fire; if we are to have a faith that shall be an all-sufficient armour by day and by night, the year round, and from year to year, we must have one that is made up of something better than mere pasteboard instruction or a paper belief.

—*Beecher.*

(2932.) It is quite in vain for any of us to have a hope in God which is valid only in the fair hour of prosperity and of health. When an anchor is thrown overboard, if it floats in the stream it is useless. No anchor is of any use whatsoever to a ship that cannot by its cable go down to take hold of the firm bottom, and that, taking hold of it, is not able to keep the ship. If when the storm beats, if when the whole concentrated fury of the storm beats on the ship, the anchor holds it, that is an anchor worth having. Woe to the mariner whose anchor breaks in the time of testing! If you have a hope that is good when you are young, when you are prosperous, and when you are happy, but does not hold you when you are sick, when you are cast out, when you are bereaved and discouraged, when life is taken away from you—if you have no hope that holds you then, you have got nothing at all. An anchor that not only deceives men with the appearance of safety, but that gives way in the hour of danger, is worse than none at all—a hope that holds a man when he does not need holding, but breaks when he does. —*Beecher.*

V. *ITS DISAPPOINTMENTS.*

(2933.) The setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun. The brightness of our life is gone, shadows of the evening fall around us, and the world seems but a dim reflection itself,—a broader shadow. We look forward into the coming lonely night: the soul withdraws itself. Then stars arise, and the night is holy. —*Longfellow.*

(2934.) It is when our budding hopes are nipped beyond recovery by some rough wind, that we are the most disposed to picture to ourselves what flowers they might have borne if they had flourished.

—*Dickens.*

(2935.) Hope is the ruddy morning of joy, recollection is its golden tinge; but the latter is wont to sink amid the dews and dusky shades of twilight; and the bright blue day which the former promises, breaks indeed, but in another world, and with another sun. —*Richter.*

VI. *A HOPE THAT WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.*

(2936.) The supreme hope of seeing Christ is a hope that will never, never be disappointed. Many hopes we cherish that are disappointed; many purposes we form that have to be broken off. In fact, my brethren, human life is, after all, a pile of fragments or half-built towers; and there are few of us who have attained to anything like mature years whose hearts may not be compared to the graveyards, where lie entombed many earthly dreams, the objects of young ambition, as well as many plans and pursuits that we once followed eagerly, but are now ashamed of, or perhaps have abandoned to take up fresh courses altogether. But, my friends, the hope of the Bridegroom's coming is a hope that will never fail us, a hope that we never need relinquish, and of which we shall never despair. As our life-star, it shall lead us on, like the star which guided the wise men, and never disappear till it actually brings us to the vision of Christ. —*R. W. Forrest.*

HUMILITY.

I. *IN WHAT IT CONSISTS.*

1. Not in under-rating ourselves.

(2937.) Humility doth no more require that a wise man think his knowledge equal with a fool's, or ignorant man's, than that a sound man take himself to be sick. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2938.) If a man does not take notice of that excellency and perfection that is in himself, how can he be thankful to God, who is the author of all excellency and perfection? Nay, if a man hath too mean an opinion of himself, it will render him unserviceable both to God and man.

—*Selden*, 1584–1654.

2. But in not over-valuing ourselves.

(2939.) Humility consists not in wearing mean clothes, and going softly and submissively, but in mean opinion of thyself.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(2940.) By humility I mean not the abjectness of a base mind; but a prudent care not to over-value ourselves upon any account.

—*Grew*, 1607–1698.

(2941.) What do you esteem yourself before God? Doubtless nothing. It is no great humility in a fly to esteem itself nothing in comparison to a mountain; nor for a drop of water to hold itself nothing in comparison of the sea; nor for a spark of fire to hold itself nothing in respect of the sun. But humility consists in not esteeming ourselves above others, and in not desiring to be so esteemed by others. —*Francis de Sales.*

II. *ITS CHARACTERISTICS.*

1. It is not self-conscious.

(2942.) In spiritual graces let us study to be great, and not to know it, as the fixed stars are every one bigger than the earth, yet appear to us less than torches. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2943.) Those persons who do most good are least conscious of it. The man who has but a single virtue or charity is very much like the hen that has but one chicken. *That solitary chicken* calls forth an amount of clucking and scratching that a whole brood seldom causes. —*Beecher.*

2. It delights in privacy.

(2944.) Pride loves to climb up, not as Zaccheus to see Christ, but to be seen himself. "The fool" (Solomon tells us) "hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself." Pride would be somebody, and therefore comes abroad to court the multitude, whereas humility delights in privacy; as the leaves do cover and shade the fruits, that some hand must gently lift them up before they can see the fruit: so should humility and a holy modesty conceal the perfections of the soul, till a hand of Providence by some call invites them out.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2945.) Hast thou passed by the hedgerow at eventide, and has a delicious fragrancy been all about thee, and thou knewest not whence it came? Hast thou searched and found the sweet violets hidden beneath its leaves, and known that it was that which gave its odours to the air around thee? Thus should the Christian make sweet the place of his abode with the perfume of his good deeds; and thus, in all humility, should he endeavour to remain unnoticed himself. When thou seest the hungry fed, and the naked clothed, the sick man visited, and the widow comforted—search, and thou shalt find the flower whence all this odour arose: thou shalt find full often that the Christian hath been there constrained by the love of Christ.

—*Salter.*

III. *IS CONSTANTLY EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WISE AND GOOD.*

(2946.) See how, in the fanning of this wheat, the fullest and greatest grains lie ever the lowest; and the lightest take up the highest place. It is no otherwise in morality: those which are most humble are fullest of grace; and ofttimes these have most conspicuity which have the least substance. To affect obscurity or submission is base and suspicious; but that man, whose modesty presents him mean to his own eyes and lowly to others, is commonly secretly rich in virtue. Give me rather a low fulness than an empty advancement.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(2947.) True goodness is proved like true balm; for as balm, when dropped into water, if it sinks and rests at the bottom is accounted the most excellent and precious; so, would you know whether a man be truly wise, learned, or generous, observe whether his qualifications tend to humility, modesty, and submission, for then they shall be good indeed; but if they swim on the surface, and strive to appear above water, they shall be so much the less true in the same proportion as they appear.

—*De Sales.*

(2948.) Samuel, the judge and high priest of Israel, one day visited the school of the prophets at Gibeah, which he had founded; and rejoiced at the progress which the pupils of the prophets had made in various kinds of knowledge, and the art of playing the lute, and in songs. Among them was a youth, named Adoniah, the son of Milcha, who found favour in the eyes of Samuel;—for his countenance was fair to look upon, and the sound of his voice was full of strength and sweetness. But his heart was filled with pride and empty delusion, because he was superior to others in knowledge and understanding. He fancied himself wiser than seven sages, and behaved haughtily towards his teachers, and his lips were full of empty words and of conceit. The judge of Israel had compassion on the boy Adoniah, for he loved him more than the rest, because he was full of wisdom and fair to look upon. Therefore Samuel said, "The Spirit of the Lord has chosen this boy to be a prophet in Israel; but he strives against Him, and will mar His work."

Then Samuel led forth the youth into the mountains, to a vineyard which lay towards Ramah. And behold, it was the time that the vine was in bloom.

Then Samuel lifted up his voice, and said, "Adoniah, what seest thou?" Adoniah answered, "I see a vineyard, and I inhale the sweet odour of blossoms." And Samuel said, "Approach and examine the flower of the vine."

The youth obeyed, and answered, "It is a tender little flower, simple and humble." Then Samuel answered, and said, "And yet it produces God's fruit, to gladden man's heart, and to strengthen his body and make it fair. Adoniah, thus is the pleasant vine in the time of its bloom, before it brings forth the delicious fruit. Remember the vine in the days of thy blooming youth!"

And Adoniah, the son of Milcha, kept all these words of Samuel in his heart, and henceforth he walked with humble and gentle spirit. Then all men loved Adoniah, and said, "The Spirit of God is come upon the youth."

And Adoniah increased in wisdom and beauty, and became a man like the herdsman of Tekoa and Isaiah the son of Amoz, and his name was praised in Israel. —*F. A. Krummacher.*

(2949.) The highest piety being ever associated with the deepest humility, true religion is like that sweetest of all singing birds, the skylark, which, with the lowest nest but highest wing, dwells on the ground, and yet soars to the skies. —*Guthrie.*

IV. *ITS IMPORTANCE.*

1. It is the foundation of Christian character.

(2950.) As a building is so much the stronger as the groundwork of the same is laid deeper: even so the groundwork of Christian philosophy is unfeigned humility, and the deeper the same is settled in our hearts, the surer and more permanent will the building of our religion be. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

2951.) A heart full of pride is but a vessel full of air; this self-opinion must be blown out of us before saving knowledge be poured into us. Humility is the knees of the soul, and to that posture the Lamb will open the book; but pride stands upon tiptoes, as if she would snatch the book out of Christ's hand and unclasp it herself. The first lesson of a Christian is humility; and he that hath not learned the first lesson is not fit to take out a new. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2952.) Humility is the first lesson we learn from reflection, and self-distrust the first proof we give of having obtained a knowledge of ourselves.
—*Zimmermann*, 1728–1795.

(2953.) True humility, the basis of the Christian system, is the low, but deep and firm, foundation of all real virtue. *Burke*, 1728–1797.

2. It is absolutely necessary to our acceptance with God.

(2954.) Humility is all important in Christian morality. It is necessary, in order to change every apparently good action into a really Christian action, and to make it acceptable with God. It is like the cipher at the right hand of a figure, nothing in itself, but yet increasing tenfold the value of that with which it is connected. It is the salt, giving savour to otherwise tasteless food. Yet we sometimes see men actually proud of their right feelings or right actions, and thereby vitiating them altogether. —*Cotton.*

3. It qualifies us for the reception of grace.

(2955.) God promises His grace to the humble, and therefore there must be something in humility that disposes men for grace. This heavenly rain in this differs from the natural, that it falls chiefly in the lower places, whereas that falls indifferently. But herein, however, it resembles the natural rain, that however it falls, yet it stays and lodges in the lower grounds, in the valleys, which also is the chief place for springs and fountains, according to that observation of the Psalmist: "He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills." Now to these valleys, both St. Austin and St. Bernard compare the humble and low-spirited man. So St. Austin: "If they are humble, they are valleys, they take what is infused and do not let it go. If water falls upon a high place, it runs down and falls off; but if upon a concavous and low place, it is there received, and there it stands." He might have further added,—and enriches it, and makes it fruitful. And so it is with the hearts of humble men, those spiritual valleys, they receive the grace of God and keep it (there being nothing in the spirit of humility that is offensive to the Spirit of God, that grieves or provokes Him to depart) and being thus under the standing and remaining influences of the dew of heaven, they grow fruitful with it, and abound in every good word and work; and so, as the Psalmist says, "The valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy."
—*Norris*, 1707.

4. It ennobles our nature.

(2956.) The humble man is a lowly valley, sweetly planted and well watered; the proud man's earth, whereon he tramples, but secretly full of wealthy mines, more worth than he that walks over them; a rich stone set in lead; and lastly, a true temple of God built with a low roof.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(2957.) Humility leads to the highest distinction, because it leads to self-improvement. Study your own characters; endeavour to learn and to supply your own deficiencies; never assume to yourselves qualities which you do not possess; combine all this with energy and activity, and you cannot predicate of yourselves, nor can others predicate of you, at what point you may arrive at last.
—*Sir Benjamin Brodie.*

5. It is the life of prayer.

(2958.) Well, Christian, if thou wouldst keep thy soul awake, take heed thou losest not the sense of thy wants. Begging is the poor man's trade; when thou beginnest to conceit thyself rich, then thou wilt be in danger of ceasing to beg, that is, to pray. —*Gurnall*, 2617–1679.

6. It is the safeguard of all the virtues.

(2959.) Humility is the chain of the chaplet of all the virtues. —*Vianney.*

(2960.) Humility is not only a virtue in itself, but a vessel to contain other virtues: like embers, which keep the fire alive that is hidden under it.
—*Adams*, 1653.

V. *ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CHARACTER AND LIFE.*

1. It promotes growth in grace.

(2961.) As a tree, the more deeply it is rooted in the earth, the taller it groweth: even so, a man, the more humble he is, the higher doth the Lord exalt him. —*Cawdray.* 1609.

(2962.) Where do the rivers run that fertilise our soil—is it on the top of yonder hill? No! in the vales beneath. If you would have "the river whose streams make glad the city of our God" to run through your hearts, and enrich them to His glory, you must abide in the vale of humility.

2. It makes men contented.

(2963.) As light, where it is, cannot but shine, nor fire choose but burn, so where humility is, it will make a man frame himself thereto within and without. In his mind, to take up lowly thoughts and desires; without, to acquaint himself with words and all courses which suit with the lowliness of his mind. A bladder when it is full of wind does swell so big that we cannot grip it in our hand, but when the wind is pressed or let out, it is

a small matter, and is easily contained in a little compass; so pride does so puff up a man that he swells big at heart, looks big, speaks big, and is hardly satisfied with any honour. But when humility comes, that presses out that wind by which the heart was swollen, and then a man sets much less by himself, and is lowly in his words and looks, and can make himself equal with those of low degree. —*Bayne*, 1618.

(2964.) The humble know it is much easier to obey than govern, and that the valleys are the most fruitful grounds, and that it is the cedars and mountain trees that are blown down, and not the shrubs, and that a low condition affordeth not only more safety, but more leisure and quietness to converse with God, and that it is a mercy that others may be employed in his preservation, and keeping the walls, and watching the house, while he may follow his work in quietness and peace; and therefore willingly payeth honour and tribute to whom it is due.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. It makes men thankful.

(2965.) Objects seem large or little according to the medium through which they are viewed. In the microscope, what a remarkable change they undergo! The humble moss rises into a graceful tree; the beetle, armed for battle, flashes in golden or silver mail; a grain of sand swells into a mass of rock; and, on the other hand, a mountain looked at through the wrong end of a telescope sinks into a mole-hill, and the broad lake contracts into a tiny pool. Even so, according as we look at them, with the eyes of self-condemning humility, or of self-righteous pride, God's mercies seem great or little. For example, a minister of the Gospel passing one day near a cottage, was attracted to its door by the sound of a loud and earnest voice. It was a bare and lonely dwelling; the home of a man who was childless, old, and poor. Drawing near this mean and humble cabin, the stranger at length made out these words, "This, and Jesus Christ too! this, and Jesus Christ too!" as they were repeated over and over in tones of deep emotion, of wonder, gratitude, and praise. His curiosity was roused to see what that could be which called forth such fervent, overflowing thanks. Stealing near, he looked in at the patched and broken window; and there in the form of a grey, bent, worn-out son of toil, at a rude table, with hands raised to God, and his eyes fixed on some crusts of bread and a cup of water, sat piety, peace, humility, contentment, exclaiming, "This, and Jesus Christ too!" —*Guthrie.*

4. It makes men useful.

(2966.) The boughs which are best laden with fruit hang downwards, and we can with the most ease gather the fruit from them; high trees are commonly fruitless, and what grows on them is hard to come by; it hangs so high above our reach. So have we more good of the humble, as who have most good in them, and do communicate it to us. Such as are proud have for the most part least true good in them, or look so high, that the fruit they bear cannot be reached by God's poor people.
—*Bayne*, 1618.

(2967.) A Christian minister said, "I was never of any use until I found out that God did not make me for a great man."

VI. *HOW IT IS TO BE ATTAINED.*

(2968.) Let us bring ourselves to greater lights than our own; that is, oft come into the company of those that have greater grace than ourselves. The stars give no light when the sun is up. The stars are something in the night, but they are nothing in the day. And those that are conceited of their own excellences, when they come into the presence and company, and converse with those that are better than themselves, their spirits fall down, they are abased. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2969.) A sight of God's glory humbles: Elijah wrapped his face in a mantle when God's glory passed by. "Now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself" (Job xlii. 5). The stars vanish when the sun appears. —*Watson*, 1696.

(2970.) The creature never appears so pitiful and inconsiderable as when it views itself with one eye, and its Creator with the other.

Everything is more apparent as it stands compared with its opposite. Man is but a weak and a contemptible thing at the best; but much more contemptible, if compared to an angel, and yet infinitely and inconceivably more despicable must he be, if compared to God. A glowworm signifies little if compared but to a candle; but set it before the stars, consider it in emulation with the sun and the ruling lights of heaven, and what a silly ridiculous thing must it appear!

While men consider nothing but themselves, they may grow proud and conceited: for little things may be valued by those who never saw greater. He that never saw the day, may admire and dote upon his lamp. But consideration and experience of great things reduces and degrades little matters to their own proper dimensions. "Those that measure themselves by themselves" (says the apostle) "are not wise." For when we make a thing its own measure, it is impossible to discover any defect in it. But bring it to another thing that excels and outshines it, and then we shall quickly see how much a tree is taller than a shrub, and a royal palace greater and nobler than a country cottage.

Men are enamoured with their own reason; but let them compare it with omniscience, and it is nothing. They perhaps value themselves upon their dominion over these inferior things; but what is all their grandeur to the royalty and universal empire of Providence? what is their policy to the wisdom of Him that governs the world and "charges the very angels with folly?" It is impossible for a man that frequently and seriously thinks of God to value himself. *South*, 1633–1716.

(2971.) Religion, and that alone, teaches absolute humility; by which I mean a sense of our absolute nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. That sense of inferiority which results from the comparison of men with each other is often an unwelcome sentiment forced upon the mind, which may rather embitter the temper than soften it: that which devotion impresses is soothing and delightful. The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the Divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the divine favour. In so august a presence he sees all distinctions lost, and all beings reduced to the same

level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt: and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority which must in many instances be felt is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart.
—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(2972.) Persons pray that they may be humble. Here is a big, strong man who, in the morning, prays that he may be humble through the day; and in order to make it more effectual, while kneeling he puts his head clear down in his chair; and in order to make it still more effectual, he talks in an official voice. When his prayer is finished, he gets up and straightens himself, and goes to his store, and storms about his business. He is not going to see things go to rack and ruin because nobody feels responsible. And the man quite forgets his prayer. He leaves that for God to take care of. When he comes home at night he has some mournful feelings about the way in which he has conducted himself through the day. And the next morning he prays for humility again. The experience of the previous day is repeated. At night his feelings are mellowed down once more (for men almost always have the grace of humility when they are sleepy); and so he gets through another night.

Now, the fault did not lie in the fact that the man prayed God to make him humble. The fault lay in this, that he thought the prayer relieved him from the responsibility of training himself—from the necessity of the yoke and the harness. Men pray for meekness, and yet when they are brought into circumstances which call for the exercise of meekness they forget their prayer. —*Beecher.*

VII. *DEEPENS AS GRACE INCREASES.*

(2973.) They who climb lofty mountains, find it safest, the higher they ascend, the more to bow and stoop with their bodies; and so does the Spirit of Christ teach the saints, the higher they get in their victories over corruption, to bow lowest in humility. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2974.) When the corn is nearly ripe it bows the head and stoops lower than when it was green. When the people of God are near ripe for heaven, they grow more humble and self-denying than in the days of their first profession. The longer a saint grows in the world, the better he is still acquainted with his own heart and his obligations to God; both of which are very humbling things. Paul had one foot in heaven when he called himself the chiefest of sinners and least of saints.

A Christian in the progress of his knowledge and grace is like a vessel cast into the sea—the more it fills, the deeper it sinks. —*Flavel*, 1630–1691.

VIII. *ITS COUNTERFEITS.*

(2975.) Many are humbled that are not humble; many are cast down that have proud hearts still, as Pharaoh had. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(2976.) Let iron be broken into pieces, yet still it remains hard: so, a heart may be broken in pieces, and yet remain hard and unhumbled. But true humility is, when the soul is melted, so as to run into this gospel mould; so as to receive Christ, and walk in Him. *Erskine*, 1685–1752.

IX. *ITS WISDOM.*

(2977.) Let us acquire that height which comes by humility. Let us look into the nature of human things, that we may kindle with the longing desire of the things to come; for in no other way is it possible to become humble, except by the love of what is divine, and the contempt of what is present. For just as a man on the point of obtaining a kingdom, if, instead of that purple robe, one offers him some trivial compliment, will count it to be nothing; so shall we also laugh to scorn all things present, if we desire that other sort of honour.

Do ye not see the children, when in their play they make a band of soldiers, and heralds precede them, and lictors, and a boy marches in the midst in the general's place, how childish it all is?

Just such are all human affairs. Yea, and more worthless than these: to-day they are, and to-morrow they are not. Let us therefore be above these things; and let us not only not desire them, but even be ashamed if any one hold them forth to us. For thus casting out the love of these things, we shall possess that other love which is Divine, and shall enjoy immortal glory.
—*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

(2978.) I will, in things not weighty, submit freely; the purest gold is the most ductile; it is commonly a good blade that bends well. If I expect disadvantage, or misdoubt the conquest, I think it good wisdom to give in soonest; so shall it be more honour to do that willingly, which with stiffness I cannot but hazard on compulsion. I had rather be accounted too much humble than esteemed a little proud; the reed is better that bends and is whole, than the strong oak that, not bending, breaks. If I must have one, give me an inconvenience, not a mischief. *Felltham*, 1668.

(2979.) Remember, therefore, that though thou be a vessel of mercy, it is the fountain that filleth thee, and not thyself. Thou canst scarce more dishonour thy qualifications and actions, and consequently thyself, than to say they are thine own, and originally from thyself. For sure all that is thine, and from thee, will be like thee; and therefore must be weak and bad as thou art. Whenever therefore thou gloriest in thy graces, do it but as the beggar glorieth in his alms, that ascribes all to the giver; or as the patient glorieth in his cure, that ascribeth all to God and the physician; or as a condemned rebel doth glory in a pardon, which he ascribeth to the mercy of his prince.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

X. *ITS REWARDS.*

1. The inheritance of the earth (Matt. v. 5.)

(2980.) To be humble to superiors is duty; to equals, is courtesy; to inferiors, is nobleness; and to all, safety; it being a virtue that, for all her lowliness, commandeth those souls it stoops to.
Sir T. More, 1480–1535.

2. Pardon.

(2981.) Humility is a gracious herb, and allays the wrath of God; whereas pride provokes it. It is recorded of an English king, Edward I., that being exceeding angry with a servant of his, in the sport of hawking, he threatened him sharply. The gentleman answered, It was well there was a river between them. Hereat the king, more incensed, spurred his horse into the depth of the

river, not without extreme danger of his life, the water being deep, and the banks too steep and high for his ascending. Yet at last recovering land, with his sword drawn he pursues the servant, who rode as fast from him. But finding himself too ill-horsed to outride the angry king, he reined, lighted, and on his knees exposed his neck to the blow of the king's sword. The king no sooner saw this but he put up his sword, and would not touch him. A dangerous water could not withhold him from violence; yet his servant's submission did soon pacify him. Whiles man flies stubbornly from God, He that rides upon the wings of the wind posts after him with the sword of vengeance drawn. But when dust and ashes humbles himself, and stands to His mercy, the wrath of God is soon appeased.
—*Adams*, 1653.

3. Grace.

(2982.) Make a valley, receive the rain. Low grounds are filled, high grounds are dried up. Grace is rain. Why dost thou marvel then, if "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the lowly"? *Augustine*, 353-429.

(2983.) The humble man is the tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season, and whose leaf does not wither (Ps. i. 3). For where are the rivers of water but in the valleys? "Surely in the valleys," says St. Bernard: "for who does not see," says he, "that the torrents do decline the steep places of the hills, and divert to the middle lowness of the valley?" "So truly," says he, "God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." He thrives and prospers and is fruitful in his low but fat and rich soil, while the proud man on the top of his bleak and barren mountain, for want of taking up or retaining this spiritual dew, dries up, hardens, and withers. For he is too high for the grace of God, as having no sense of his need of it, nor can the Spirit of God delight to dwell with *him*, who has so much of the spirit of the devil. —*Norris*, 1707.

4. Power with God.

(2984.) Humility wrestleth with God, like Jacob, and wins by yielding; and the lower it stoops to the ground, the more advantage it gets to obtain the blessing. —*Adams*, 1653.

5. Eternal glory.

(2985.) Humility is a commodity, for which God will exchange the crown of glory. Moses, David, Paul went thither with this traffic, I am unworthy; and Christ gave them for it the kingdom of heaven.
—*Adams*, 1653.

HYPOCRITES.

1. Their self-seeking.

(2986.) Even as the swiftest hawk, going about to seize the bird that flieth, as it were, in the top of the air, doth not, when she first seeth her, fly directly towards her, but rather, with setting of a compass, doth seem to despise and to fly from her, but, at the second or third flight, she goeth towards her with a wonderful force and incredible swiftness, to take her in the air and to rend her in pieces: right so do hypocrites behave themselves; for at the first they will seem to thee not to regard, but to contemn the riches and promotions of the world, but then they counterfeit a simplicity, fowling for a greater matter than yet they see at present, and reaching at some higher dignity than the present occasion doth offer; but at the second or third flight, when everything doth answer their expectation, thou shalt perceive that with all speed and greediness they will lay hold upon those things which thou thoughtest they had contemned. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2987.) As rebels make their proclamations in the name of the king, and pirates intending to rob merchants hang out the flags of other nations, both to scandal them and to conceal themselves; so do hypocrites wear Christian colours that they may be the devil's cozeners. —*Adams*, 1653.

(2988.) Cnidius, a skilful architect, building a watch-tower for the king of Egypt (to discover the dangerous rocks by night to the mariners), caused his own name to be engraven upon a stone in the wall in great letters, and afterwards covered it with lime and mortar, and upon the outside of that wrote the name of the king of Egypt in golden letters, as pretending that all was done for his honour and glory; but herein was his cunning, he very well knew that the dashing of the water would in a little time consume the plastering (as it did), and then his name and memory should abide to after generations. Thus there are many in this world, who pretend to seek only the glory of God, the good of His Church, and the happiness of the state; but if there were a window to look into their hearts, we should find nothing there written but self-seeking.
—*Spencer*, 1658.

(2989.) The hypocrite sets his watch, not by the sun, that is, the Bible, but by the town clock; what most do, that he will do. *Vox populi* in his *vox Dei*. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

2. Their zeal for forms and ceremonies.

(2990.) Fruit-trees that bring forth the fairest and most beautiful blossoms, leaves, and shoots, usually bring forth the fewest and least fruits; because where nature is vigorously pressing to do one work (spending its strength there), it is at the same time weak about other works; but distinct and several works of nature, in moderate degree, are all promoted at the same time.

This is another similitude, &c., whence we learn that generally those persons who are excessive, and most curious about the forms of duties, have least of the power of godliness.

The Pharisees were excessively careful about the outside of God's worship: in preaching, praying, fasting, giving alms, &c. But where was sincerity all this while? They had the form, but wanted the power of godliness. These were but leaves, buds or blossoms, but no fruits; they were not profitable to them as to eternal advantages. "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

So it was among us of late years: bowing at the name of Jesus and at the communion table, surplice, common prayer, &c. These and such like were pressed with all eagerness and strictness. The body of religion was large and monstrous, but without a soul, or, if any, it was lean and feeble. These kind of persons are like the Indian fig-tree that Pliny speaks of, which had leaves as broad as targets, but fruits no bigger than a bean.

This is a foul fault among us at this day; some men stand more about the forms of worship than about the power of it; they look so much after the way, manner, and circumstances, that they almost lose the substance; things which are but as husks, or shells to the kernels, or as leaves in respect of fruits.

Some others labour more for gifts than for graces, for human learning than for holiness; all these are guilty of the same folly, as those who take more care about the shape and fashion of the garment, than the health and soundness of the body; or (to use the metaphor in hand), they bring forth leaves instead of fruits, and so are unprofitable trees, liable to God's displeasure and cutting down every moment. —*Austen*, 1656.

(2991.) They are set upon excess of ceremonies, because they are defective in the vital parts, and should have no religion if they had not this. All sober Christians are friends to outward decency and order; but it is the empty self-deceiver that is most for the unwarrantable inventions of man, and useth the worship of God but as a mask or puppet-play, where there is great doings, with little life, and to little purpose. The chastest woman will wash her face; but it is the harlot, or wanton, or deformed, that will paint it. The soberest and the comeliest will avoid a nasty or ridiculous habit, which may make them seem uncomely where they are not; but a curious dress, and excessive care, doth signify a deformed body or a filthy skin, or, which is worse, an empty soul, that hath need of such a covering. Consciousness of such greater want doth cause them to seek these poor supplies. The gaudiness of men's religion is not the best sign that it is sincere. Simplicity is the ordinary attendant of sincerity. It hath long been a proverb, "The more ceremony, the less substance; and the more compliment, the more craft."

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2992.) In the carnal religion of the hypocrite, the outside, which should be the ornament and attendant of the inward spiritual part, hath got the mastery, and is used in an enmity against the more noble part which it should serve; and much more are his human inventions and mixtures thus destructively employed. His bellows do but blow out the candle, under pretence of kindling the fire. He sets the body against the soul, and sometimes the clothing against both. He useth forms to the destruction of knowledge, and quenching of all seriousness and fervour of affection. By preaching, he destroyeth preaching, and prayeth till prayer is become no prayer, but the image or carcass of prayer at the best. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. Their love of publicity.

(2993.) Though the total neglect of secret duties in religion speaks a person to be a hypocrite, yet the performance of duties in secret will not demonstrate thee a sincere person; hypocrisy is, in this, like the frogs brought on Egypt—no place was free from them, no not their bed-chambers; they crept into their most inward rooms. And so doth hypocrisy into chamber duties, as well as public: indeed, though the places be secret where such duties are performed, yet the matter may be so handled, and is by some hypocrites, that they are not secret in their closets; like the hen who goes into a secret place to lay her egg, but by her cackling tells all the house where she is, and what she is doing.

Gurnall, 1617–1679.

(2994.) "Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the street, that they may be seen of men." That they may be seen of men! He rings the changes on that—exposing the pride and vanity that lay at the root of their religion. Loud, ostentatious, and unprofitable, it was like the brawling, noisy, foaming, frothy torrent, which, with a rock for its bed and barrenness on its banks, makes itself seen and heard. How different genuine, gracious piety! Affluent in blessings but retiring from observation, it has its symbol in the stream that pursues a silent course, and, flashing out in the light of day but here and there, but now and then, is not known but by the good it does—the flowers that bloom on its banks, and the evergreen verdure which it gives to the pastures through which it winds on its quiet path. *Guthrie.*

4. Often show fairer than real Christians.

(2995.) Their worship is like to counterfeit money, which is gilded outwardly, but within is nothing but brass, or suchlike base stuff, so that all is not gold that glitters; or like the apples which grow at the Dead Sea (where sometime Sodom and Gomorrah stood), which are fair in colour, beautiful in show, but when you come to touch them, or to handle them, they turn to dust and cast out a filthy savour, more unpleasant to the nostrils than they were pleasant before to the eyes. Thus it is with hypocrites; they appear beautiful before men, they love to be well thought of by them, and have many times more glorious shows than others that are more sound within, because they study nothing else but how to get the applause and praise of the world.

—*Altersol*, 1618.

(2996.) "You are very dull-looking and worn," said the New Coin to an Old Shilling,—surveying its ownself with much satisfaction.

"When you have had experience of the world as I have, you will not appear so fresh and bright perhaps as now. You have all your trials to come, friend; and I only wish that you may wear well unto the end," said the Old Shilling.

"You have had many rough rubs in your time, judging from your appearance," observed the New Coin sarcastically.

"True," replied the Old Shilling.

"Why, indeed, one needs to look narrowly, in order to see whether you are really a shilling at all! What a contrast I am to your smoothness, with my legible inscription and prominent impression," remarked the New Coin.

"All with honest service, though, in my own case, as I am thankful to say," answered the Old Shilling, with humility notwithstanding. "Appearances are not always to be depended upon, and 'All is not gold that glitters.' But, however that may be, this is a fact, that all currency must be subjected to trial; whilst sterling silver will always bear the test and be never rejected; for, when through wear and tear no longer fit for its labour, the Mint will accept and receive it again."

The New Coin was shortly afterwards tested in company with the Old Shilling; and whilst the latter was honourably accepted as a true coin of

the realm, the other was ignominously broken up and destroyed; having been discovered to be base metal—a vile counterfeit!

A day is coming when all men will be "weighed in the balances," and when only the Just will pass current. But the character of professors is now undergoing examination. God's providence often sifts out hypocrites from among genuine believers; and, in the solemn language of the prophet, "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." —*Bowden.*

5. The contrast between what they seem and are.

(2997.) As a thick wood, that giveth great shadow, doth delight the eyes of the beholders greatly with the variety of flourishing trees and pleasant plants, so that it seemeth to be ordained only for pleasure's sake, and yet within is full of poisonful serpents, ravening wolves, and other wild beasts: even so a hypocrite, when outwardly he seemeth holy and to be well-furnished with all sorts of virtues, doth please well the eyes of his beholders; but within him there lurketh pride, covetousness, envy, and all manner of wickednesses, like wild and cruel beasts wandering in the wood of his heart.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2998.) Like as apple-trees, which, in the spring-time, will be full of goodly blossoms, and will give a promise of much fruit, but when the fruit is looked for, and should be gathered, there is none to be had—they were but bare leaves and idle blossoms: such are hypocrites, who will lift up their hands, eyes, and voices towards heaven and God, and with such godly green leaves will make a fair flourish and a beautiful show; but their hearts are surely set upon earthly and transitory things, and are as far from God as heaven and earth are distant one from another.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2999.) Hypocrites are like pictures on canvas, they show fairest at farthest. A hypocrite's profession is in folio, but his sincerity is so abridged that it is contained in decimo-sexto, nothing in the world to speak of. A hypocrite is like the Sicilian Etna, flaming at the mouth when it hath snow at the foot: their mouths talk hotly, but their feet walk coldly. The nightingale hath a sweet voice, but a lean carcass; a voice, and nothing else but a voice: and so have all hypocrites.

—*Adams*, **1653.**

(3000.) They that seem best to the world, are often the worst to God; they that are best to God, seem worst to the world. When the moon is lightest to the earth, she is darkest to heaven; when she is lightest to heaven, she is darkest to the earth. So often men most glorious to the world are obscurest to the divine approbation; others, obscure to the world's acknowledgment, are principally respected in God's favour. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3001.) Wicked men are like the apples of Sodom, seemingly fair but nothing but ashes within. The best of God's servants are like sound apples, lying in a dusty loft (living in a wicked world), gathering much dust about them, so that they must be rubbed or pared before they can be eaten. Such, notwithstanding, are sincere.

—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3002.) Their religion is only in show and outside, as apples may be fair to see in the skin, but rotten at the core. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3003.) It is always winter with the hypocrite in his formal lifeless services, and yet sometime his leaf doth never fall. He is like the box-tree that knows no fruit, and yet its leaves are always green.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3004.) The shops in the square of San Marco were all religiously closed, for the day was a high festival. We were much disappointed, for it was our last day, and we desired to take away with us some souvenirs of lovely Venice; but our regret soon vanished, for on looking at the shop we meant to patronise, we readily discovered signs of traffic within. We stepped to the side door, and found when one or two other customers had been served, that we might purchase to our heart's content, saint or no saint. After this fashion too many keep the laws of God to the eye, but violate them in the heart. The shutters are up as if the man no more dealt with sin and Satan; but a brisk commerce is going on behind the scenes. From such deceit may the Spirit of Truth preserve us.

—*Spurgeon.*

(3005.) In the pursuit of pastoral duty, I stood a little while ago in a cheesemonger's shop, and being in a fidgety humour, and having a stick in my hand, I did what most Englishmen are sure to do, I was not content with seeing, but must needs touch as well. My stick came gently upon a fine cheese in the window, and to my surprise a most metallic sound emanated from it. The sound was rather hollow, or one might have surmised that all the tasteholes had been filled up with sovereigns, and thus the cheese had been greatly enriched, and the merchant had been his own banker. There was, however, a sort of crockery jingle in the sound like the ring of a huge bread or milk pan, such as our country friends use so abundantly; and I came to the very correct conclusion that I had found a very well got-up hypocrite in the shop window. Mark, from this time, when I pass by, I mentally whisper, "Pottery;" and the shams may even be exchanged for realities, but I shall be long in believing it. In my mind the large stock has dissolved into potsherds, and the fine show in the window only suggests the potter's vessel. The homely illustration is simply introduced because we find people of this sort in our churches, looking extremely like what they should be, yet having no substance in them, so that if, accidentally, one happens to tap them somewhere or other with sudden temptation or stern duty, the baked earth gives forth its own ring, and the pretender is esteemed no longer. —*Spurgeon.*

6. Their knowledge is comfortless.

(3006.) The knowledge of the hypocrite brings small joy and comfort with it, and though it exceed in measure, yet it cheers not the heart like the least knowledge of a sound Christian; even as the knowledge of the lawyer in the evidences of a man's lands may be greater than the owner's, but yet he cannot read them with like comfort, because he has no right to them. —*Downame*, 1644.

7. Their religion is only a screen.

(3007.) The use of the hypocrite's religion is to be a screen betwixt him and the flames of wrath, that would scorch him too soon, if he were of no

religion: and to be to him as a tent or a penthouse to keep off the storms that would fall upon him, while he is trading for the world, and working for the flesh. His religion is but the sheath of his guilty conscience, to keep it from wounding him, and cutting his fingers, while they are busy in the brutish service of his lusts. It is but a glove to save his skin, when he hath to do with the nettles and thorns of the threatenings of God, and the thoughts of vengeance, that else would reach his guilty soul. It is but as his upper garment, to save him from a storm, and then to be laid by as an unnecessary burden, when he is at home. The hypocrite's religion is but as his shoe; he can tread it in the dirt, so it will but save his foot from galling. As a man that hath an unquiet scolding wife is fain to speak her fair by flatteries, lest he should have no rest at home; or as a thief is fain to cast a crust to the dog that barketh at him, to stop his mouth; so is an ungodly, sensual person fain to flatter his conscience with some kind of devotion and seeming righteousness that may deceive him into a belief that he is a child of God. Religion is the sovereign in a gracious soul, and the master in an upright conscience, and ruleth above all worldly interests. But with the unregenerate, it is but an underling and servant that must do no more than the flesh and the world will give consent to, and is regarded no further than for mere necessity; and when it hath done the work which the hypocrite appointed it, it is dismissed and turned out of doors. God is acknowledged and confessed by the hypocrite, but not as God. Christ is believed and accepted, but not as Christ, but as an underling to the world, and a journeyman to do some job of work for a distressed, wrangling conscience; or as an unwelcome physician to give them a vomit when they have taken some extraordinary surfeit of sensual delight: when they have fallen into great affliction, or into any foul, disgraceful sin, then, perhaps they take up their prayer-books, or call upon Christ, and seem devout and very penitent. But their piety is blown over with the storm. The effect ceaseth with the cause. It was not the love of God, or of His holy ways and service, that set them upon their devotions, but some tempest of adversity, or shipwreck of their estates, or friends, or consciences; and when the winds are laid, and the waves are still, their devotions cease with their danger. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

8. Their inconstancy in prayer.

(3008.) A hypocrite, Job saith, will not pray always; he will not always call upon God. Possibly he may sometimes cry out, as a scholar under the rod, or a malefactor upon the rack, for deliverance out of some affliction; but when God openeth His hand, and bestoweth the mercy, his mouth is shut, and his heart too, that you shall hear but little more of this duty.

If he pray on his sickbed, and God raise him up, he leaves his prayers sick a-bed behind him. His prayer was but a messenger sent about some particular errand; when that is done, the messenger returneth. As that story of the friar speaketh, how, when he was a poor friar, he went ever sadly casting his eyes upon the ground, but being abbot, he went merrily, looking upward. One of his companions asked him the reason of that alteration: he answered, that he was a common friar, he went dejected by looking downward for the keys of the abbey, which now he had found, and left that posture.

So when a hypocrite hath the temporal good thing he desireth—for that usually is most desired by him—he hath his ends, and his prayers an end too. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

9. Their folly and misery.

(3009.) As it availeth a man nothing at all, to the relief of his poverty, to have false coin in his purse; it must be good current money, otherwise it doth the more endanger himself, and openeth a gap to his utter destruction: even so a fair tongue with a foul heart is false coin; it will help no man if he say he hateth sin, and yet loveth it in his heart; for in so doing he condemneth himself, notwithstanding how many and how good prayers he may make.
—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(3010.) As a man can have very small comfort to be thought by the world to be rich because he hath a shop full of wares and driveth a great trade, when, in the meantime, he knows, poor man, that he oweth much more than he is worth; or because he maketh a counterfeit show of rich wares, whereas he hath nothing but empty boxes with false inscriptions, or but pieces of wood and brickbats made up in paper instead of silks or other costly wares: so is it with all those that seem to be religious, that make a goodly show of godliness, yet, in the meantime, are very bankrupts in grace, and like one of Solomon's fools (Prov. xiii. 7), that boast themselves of great riches, when they are, indeed, exceeding poor. But what get they by it? What comfort reap they by it? None at all; their consciences bearing them witness that they are none such as the world takes them to be.
—*Downame*, 1642.

(3011.) If thou hast an angel's tongue and a devil's heart, thou art no better than a post in the cross-way, that rots itself to direct others; or a torch that, having pleasured others with the light, goes forth itself in smoke and stench.
—*Adams*, 1653.

(3012.) The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted Him. So does the hypocrite; he first says in his heart, God sees not, and then makes bold to sin against Him. He ought to say with Augustine, "I may hide Thee from myself, but not myself from Thee." —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3013.) As a merchant in a storm is loth to cast his goods into the sea, and therefore hopes he may save himself and them, till he and they are drowned together; or as a patient that abhors his physic, or loves some forbidden thing too well, is hoping still that he may escape, though he use the thing he loves, and forbear the medicine which he loathes till he be past remedy, and he consents too late; so is it often with the self-deceiving hypocrite: he loves not this strict, and holy, and heavenly, and self-denying life, and therefore he will hope that God will save him without it, as long as he is religious in a way that he accounts more wise, and safe, and moderate, and comely, and suited to the nature and infirmity of man. These are his hopes, and to deceive his heart, by maintaining these, it is that he is religious, till either grace convert, or justice apprehend him, and his hopes and he are swallowed up by convincing flames and utter desperation. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3014.) A friend had fitted two glasses into a little ivory tube in such a way that any small object, like a midge or other insect, when put into it, and viewed through the smaller and upper glass, seemed of enormous magnitude, with all its parts, however diminutive, distinctly visible. If, however, the tube was reversed, and the objects contemplated through the larger glass, they then appeared to shrink below the usual size. Gotthold looked upon the contrivance with no ordinary pleasure, and said: I know not what better name to give this instrument than the *magnifier*. In my opinion, however, the hearts of the proud and of the hypocritical are of the same construction. When they contemplate what is their own—their virtues and talents—they see through a glass which self-love has so artfully prepared, that all seems of vast dimensions, and they imagine that they have good reason to boast and congratulate themselves upon their gifts. If, however, they have occasion to look at their neighbour and his good points, they turn the instrument upside down, and then all seems small and common-place. In like manner, their own faults and vices they observe through the diminishing glass, and reckon them very inconsiderable; while they contemplate their neighbour's from the opposite side, and so convert a midge into an elephant. The greatest of all delusions in the world is that which man voluntarily practises upon himself, and which betrays him with his eyes open, into pride, self-esteem, and contempt of others. You will own that the heart of the Pharisee, who looked upon himself as a mighty saint, and upon the Publican as a brand fit for the burning, was of this description. That Pharisee, however, has left behind him a numerous offspring, and spread his line over the whole earth. In fact, I do not believe there exists a man who has not sometimes used such an instrument in the way we have described. —*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(3015.) To pretend holiness when there is none, is a vain thing. What were the foolish virgins better for their blazing lamps, when they wanted oil? What is the lamp of profession without the oil of saving grace? What comfort will a show of holiness yield at last? Will painted gold enrich? Painted wine refresh him that is thirsty? Will painted holiness be a cordial at the hour of death? A pretence of sanctification is not to be rested in. Many ships that have had the name of the Hope, the Safeguard, the Triumph, yet have been cast away upon the rocks; so many who have had the name of saintship, have been cast into hell.
—*Watson*, 1696.

10. Their craft.

(3016.) Experience showeth that Irish and Cornish stones, and many other false gems, have such a lustre in them, and so sparkle like true jewels, that a cunning lapidary, if he be not careful, may be cheated with them. Such are the enlightening graces which shine in hypocrites: they so nearly resemble the true sanctifying and saving graces of the elect, that the eye of spiritual wisdom itself may mistake them if it be not single and look narrowly into them. —*Featly*, 1582–1644.

11. The certainty of their ultimate exposure.

(3017.) Counterfeit diamonds may sparkle and glitter, and make a great show for some time, but their lustre will not last long; and experience shows that an apple, if it be rotten at the core, though it have a fair and shining outside, yet rottenness will not stay long, but will taint the outside also. It is the nature of things unsound that the corruption stays not where it began, but corrupteth more and more till all be alike. Thus it is that sincerity tells the Christian, "nothing counterfeit will last long," and that man that hath a rotten heart towards God, his want of sincerity will in time be discovered, and his outside be made as rotten as his inside. Fraud and guile cannot go long unspied, dissembling will not always be dissembled, and hypocrisy will discover itself in the end. —*Bond*, 1646.

(3018.) Hypocrites labour to seem saints, not to be so; but the holy labour to be, more than to seem, saints. The kite may fly aloft, but her eye and mind is to the earth: she seems to be a gallant bird at her pitch, till she falls down upon a carrion. Oh how the dissembling zealot makes a show to honour Christ with his lofty profession, as if he were altogether a man of heaven: tarry but a little, throw the bait of glory in his way, and he will stoop to a carrion, and be taken with the pride of his own commendation. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3019.) Remember that a vessel of true gold will wear brighter and brighter to the last, when a cup which is only gilt will grow paler and paler till all the gilt be off. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3020.) Hypocrites are certain to miscarry at last; so true is that proverb, "Frost and fraud have dirty ends."

The Christian, like a star in the heavens, wades through the cloud that for a time hides his comfort; but the hypocrite, like a meteor in the air, blazeth for a while, and then drops into some ditch where he is quenched. "The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked is put out."

Hypocrites are like tops, that go no longer than they are whipped; but the sincere soul is ever ready; it doth not want a will, but only skill and strength to act. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3021.) God taught man to make coats to cover his naked body, but the devil taught him to weave deceit to cover his naked soul; yet the more subtile thou art in concealing thy sin, the more egregiously thou playest the fool. None so shamed as the liar when found out, and thou art sure to be.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3022.) There is no more difference betwixt an hypocrite and an apostate, than betwixt a green apple and a ripe one: come awhile hence, and you will see him fall rotten-ripe from his profession. Judas a close hypocrite, how soon an open traitor? And as fruit ripens sooner or later, as the heat of the year proves, so doth hypocrisy, as the temptation is strong or weak; some hypocrites go longer before they are discovered than others; because they meet not with such powerful temptations to draw out their corruptions. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3023.) Coals of fire cannot be concealed beneath the most sumptuous apparel, they will betray themselves with smoke and flame; nor can darling sins be long hidden beneath the most ostentatious profession, they will sooner or later discover themselves, and burn sad holes in the man's reputation. Sin needs quenching in the Saviour's blood, not concealing under the garb of religion. —*Spurgeon*.

12. The vanity of their hope.

(3024.) In the 14th verse of the 8th chapter of Job, we have the hypocrite's hope compared to "a spider's web;" a similitude of great elegance and significance; and we may observe a great analogy between the spider's web, and that in a double respect.

1st. In respect of the curious subtilty and the fine artificial composure of it. The spider in every web shows itself an artist: so the hypocrite spins his hope with a great deal of art, in a thin, fine thread. This and that good duty, this good thought, this opposing of some gross sin, are all interwoven together to the making up a covering for his hypocrisy. And as the spider draws all out of its own bowels, so the hypocrite weaves all his confidence out of his own inventions and imaginations.

2dly. It resembles it in respect of its weakness; it is too fine spun to be strong. After the spider has used all its art and labour in framing a web, yet how easily is it broken, how quickly is it swept down! So after the hypocrite has wrought out a hope with much cost, art, and industry, it is yet but a weak, slender, pitiful thing. He does indeed by this get some name and room amongst professors; he does, as it were, hang his hopes upon the beams of God's house. But when God shall come to cleanse, and, as it were, to sweep His sanctuary, such cobwebs are sure to be fetched down. Thus the hypocrite, like the spider, by all his artifice and labour only disfigures God's house. A hypocrite in a church is like a cobweb in a palace—all that he is or does serving only to annoy and misbecome the place and station that he would adorn.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(3025.) To show yet farther how contemptible and vain a thing it is, we have the wise man emphatically comparing it to a candle, in Prov. xxiv. 20, where he tells us that "the candle of the wicked shall be put out." And what is a candle, but a diminutive, dwindling light at best, made only to burn for a little time, both shining and spending itself at once; so that although it should not be blown out, or extinguished by any violent accident, yet it would at length go out of its own accord, and that too with an offensive farewell left behind. In like manner, though God should not, by any severe and boisterous dispensation of judgments, forcibly tear the hypocrite's hope out of his heart; yet through its own native weakness, having lasted its term, and, like a candle, having consumed its little stock, it must die away of itself.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

13. Their wickedness.

(3026.) It is fearful for a man to bind two sins together, when he is not able to bear the load of one. To act wickedness, and then to cloak it, is for a man to wound himself, and then go to the devil for a plaster. What man doth conceal, God will not cancel. Iniquities strangled in silence will strangle the soul in heaviness.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3027.) The door of his mouth is swept and garnished, and strewed with green rushes; but in his heart is a whole legion of devils. The hypocrite, certainly, is a secret atheist; for if he did believe there was a God, he durst not be so bold as to deceive Him to His face. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3028.) Hypocrites are like the snake, which casts her coat, but keeps her poison: they keep the love of sin. —*Watson*, 1696.

14. Their punishment.

(3029.) "And whose trust shall be a spider's web" (Job viii. 14). The assurance of the hypocrite is rightly called like the webs of spiders, in that all the pains and labour they spend to acquire glory, the wind of mortality blows quite to shreds. For as they never seek the things of eternity, they lose together with time all temporal good things.

Moreover it is to be considered that spiders draw their threads in a regular order, for that hypocrites as it were regulate their works by the rule of discernment. The spider's web is woven with pains, but it is scattered by a sudden blast.

—*Gregory*, 545–604.

(3030.) The dissolute shall speed better than the hypocrite; and lukewarmness is more offensive to God's stomach than frost-coldness. The thistle in the forest shall not fare so ill as the barren fig-tree in the vineyard. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3031.) Bad men may keep up long, but when once they fall, they cannot rise again. They are like apples I have seen hanging from a tree, round and fair as they could be, but also inside as rotten as they could be. As long as they could swing upon their stem they did well enough, but when they had fallen and smashed upon the ground, I never heard of their being made good apples of afterwards. —*Beecher*.

(3032.) The meteor, if it once fall, cannot be rekindled. When those who once flashed before the eyes of the religious public with the blaze of a vain profession fall into open and scandalous sin, it is impossible to renew their glory. Once break the egg of hypocrisy, and who can repair the damage? —*Spurgeon*.

15. Do not disprove the existence of true piety.

(3033.) Will you say that there are no real stars, because you sometimes see meteors fall, which for a time appeared to be stars? Will you say that blossoms never produce fruit, because many of them fall off, and some fruit which appeared sound is rotten at the core? Equally absurd is it to say there is no such thing as real religion, because many who profess it fall away, or prove to be hypocrites in heart. —*Payson*.

(3034.) As to the insinuation of general hypocrisy, the wretched charge got up against all religion, when some specious professor stands unmasked before the world, how absurd it is!

Is there no sound grain in our barn-yards, because there is so much chaff?

Are all patriots—Wallace and Bruce, Tell, Russell, and Washington—deceivers and liars, because some men have villainously betrayed their country?

Is there no bright honour in our army, because some soldiers—the sweepings, probably, of our city streets—have deserted, left the lines, and leaped the trenches, and gone over to the enemy?

Is there no such virtue as integrity among British merchants, because now and then we hear of a fraudulent bankrupt?

Because some religious professors prove hypocrites, is therefore all ardent piety hollow hypocrisy?

—*Guthrie*.

JOY.

1. Is more than mirthfulness.

(3035.) True joy is a serene and sober motion; and they are miserably out that take laughing for rejoicing: the seat of it is within, and there is no cheerfulness like the resolutions of a brave mind, that has fortune under its feet.

—*Seneca, B.C.* 5—*A.D.* 65.

2. The transiency of worldly joys.

(3036.) Worldly joys are soon gone. Some may crown themselves with rose-buds, and bathe in the perfumed waters of pleasure, yet these joys which seem to be sweet are swift; like meteors, they give a bright and sudden flash, and then disappear. But the joys which believers have, are abiding; they are a blossom of eternity, a pledge and earnest of those rivers of pleasure which run at God's right hand for evermore. —*Watson*, 1696.

3. Is a duty of the Christian life.

(3037.) Christ takes no more delight to dwell in a sad heart, than we do to live in a dark house. Therefore, let in the light which sheds its beams upon thee from the promise, or else thy sweet Saviour will be gone. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3038.) I desire the dejected Christian to consider, that by his heavy and uncomfortable life, he seemeth to the world to accuse God and His service, as if he openly called Him a rigorous, hard, unacceptable Master, and His work a sad unpleasant thing. I know this is not your thoughts: I know it is yourselves, and not God and His service that offendeth you; and that you walk heavily not because you are holy, but because you fear you are not holy, and because you are no more holy. I know it is not of grace, but for grace that you complain. But do you not give too great occasion to ignorant spectators to judge otherwise? If you see a servant always sad, that was wont to be merry while he served another master, will you not think that he hath a master that displeaseth him? If you see a woman live in continual heaviness ever since she was married, that lived merrily before, will you not think that she hath met with an unpleasing match? You are born and new born for God's honour; and will you thus dishonour Him before the world? What do you (in their eyes) but dispraise Him by your very countenance and carriage, while you walk before Him in so much heaviness? The child that still cries when you put on his shoes doth signify that they pinch him, and he dispraiseth his meat that makes a sour face at it, and he dispraiseth his friend that is always sad and troubled in his company. He that should say of God, "Thou art bad, or cruel, and unmerciful," should blaspheme. And so would he that saith of holiness, "It is a bad, unpleasant, hurtful state." How then dare you do that which is so like to such blaspheming, when you should abstain from all appearance of evil? —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3039.) Much harm has been done by the idea that a certain gloom, and a restriction of the lively emotions, bear some relation to piety. These bear the same relation to it that rust does to the sword-blade—*they eat into it.* The command, "Be sober," does not mean, be unmirthful. —*Beecher.*

4. Its beauty.

(3040.) As sincerity is the soul of all graces and duties, so this delight is the lustre and embroidery of them. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

5. Its transforming power.

(3041.) Joy is not a fancy, or bred of conceit; but is rational, and ariseth from the feeling of some good, viz., the sense of God's love and favour. Joy is so real a thing, that it makes a sudden change in a person; it turns mourning into melody. As in the spring-time, when the sun comes to our horizon, it makes a sudden alteration in the face of the universe,—the birds sing, the flowers appear, the fig-tree puts forth her green figs; everything seems to rejoice and put off its mourning, as being revived with the sweet influence of the sun; so, when the Sun of Righteousness ariseth on the soul, it makes a sudden alteration, and the soul is infinitely rejoiced with the golden beams of God's love.

—*Watson*, 1696.

6. Should be continuous.

(3042.) Rejoice in God, "although the fig-tree blossom not," &c. (Hab. iii. 17, 18). Yea, rejoice in these hardest things as His doings. A heart rejoicing in Him delights in all His will, and is surely providing for the most firm joy in all estates. For if nothing can come to pass besides or against His will, then cannot that soul be vexed that delights in Him, and has no will but His, but follows Him at all times; not only when He shines bright on them, but when they are clouded. That flower that follows the sun, does so even in cloudy days; when it does not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it: so the soul that moves after God keeps that course when He hides His face, is content, yea, is glad at His will in all estates, or conditions, or events.

—*Leighton*, 1611–1684.

7. Its hindrances.

(3043.) The reason why many poor souls have so little heat of joy in their hearts, is that they have so little light of gospel knowledge in their mind. The further a soul stands from the light of truth, the further he must needs be from the heat of comfort. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3044.) Having once closed with Christ, thy guilt is gone, and this spoiled thy mirth before; all your dancing of a child will not make it quiet if a pin pricks it; well, now the pin of guilt is taken out, that robbed thee of the joy of life.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3045.) It is only where there is much faith and consequent love that there is much joy. Let us search our own hearts. If there is but little heat around the bulb of the thermometer, no wonder that the mercury marks but a low degree. If there is but small faith, there will not be much gladness. The road into Giant Despair's castle is through doubt, which doubt comes from an absence, a sinful absence, in our own experience, of the felt presence of God, and the felt force of the verities of His Gospel. —*Maclaren.*

8. Mistakes concerning it:

(1.) *It is not necessarily an immediate effect of conversion.*

(3046.) There be many persons who suppose, because Christianity is joy-producing, that when they become Christians they will necessarily be joyful. They suppose that they are to take it as they would

nitrous oxide gas, and that when they have sucked it in awhile, they will begin to experience the inspiration of joy, that they will be lifted up, and that they will feel delightfully. There are those who suppose that there is a divine magnificent intoxication which God gives to the souls of His children; and that when the flash strikes them they will break forth into rejoicings, and say, "Joy!" "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" "How happy I am!" There are some who have such an experience; but how long does it last? How quick does the sudden blaze become sudden ashes! —*Beecher.*

(2.) *It will not be experienced or continued unless the conditions of joy are fulfilled.*

(3047.) When you look at the actual lives of Christians—even of those who strive to live in accordance with the innermost meaning of the term *disciples of Christ*, do you find joy? I do not think that you find it in any such measure as to characterise them and discriminate them from other people. Was there, then, an impossible thing commanded? Was that commanded which could not take place? I think not.

Our florists make up packages of seeds, and send out for a dollar thirty kinds, or for two dollars eighty kinds; there are directions that go with them; and every package is labelled, "Gorgeous purple," "Exceedingly beautiful," "Remarkably fine," and so on, referring to the flowers. Now, let these seeds go into the hands of some clumsy person who perhaps has raised corn and potatoes, but who has never raised flowers; and let him plant them in cold, wet, barren soil, and at an untimely season. A few of them will sprout, and will come slowly up, pale and spindling, and will be neglected, and the weeds will overrun them; and when the time for blossoming comes there will be found here and there a scrawny plant with one or two stingy blossoms, and men will say, "Now we see the outcome of this pretence. Look at the labels on the specimens. It is all humbug. The man says, 'Gorgeous purple.' Here is what he calls *gorgeous purple!* He says, 'Exceedingly beautiful.' That is his idea of *beauty!* He says, 'Remarkably fine.' That is *remarkably fine*, is it?" So they go through the whole catalogue, and say, "There was the promise, and here is the fulfilment!"

But do you not perceive that the way in which you use the seed, the manner in which you plant it, the skill that you exercise in preparing the soil to receive it, and the season that you have to plant it in, have much to do with its successful growth? There are a hundred circumstances which will have a great deal to do in determining what you will actually get. It is true that beautiful plants might have been produced from those seeds. They were deserving of all the praise that was bestowed upon them. There was no deception practised concerning them. They might have been just what they were represented to be. But they were not what they might have been, for want of knowledge, for want of skill, and for want of the right adaptation of conditions to ends.

—*Beecher.*

(3048.) While, on the one hand, there is no more certain means of enjoying God than of humbly seeking to walk in the ways of His commandments, on the other hand, there is nothing more evanescent in its nature than the emotion of religious joy, faith, or the like, unless it be turned into a spring of action for God. Such emotions, like photographs, vanish from the heart unless they be fixed. Work for God is the way to fix them. Joy in God is the strength of work for God, but work for God is the perpetuation of joy in God. —*Maclaren.*

(3.) *Like all other feelings, it is not uninterrmittent.*

(3049.) Mark the same people that usually have the highest joys, and see whether at other times they have not the greatest troubles. This week they are as at the gates of heaven, and the next as at the doors of hell: I am sure, with many it is so. Yet it need not be so, if Christians would but look at these high joys as duties to be endeavoured, and mercies to be valued; but when they will needs judge of their state by them, and think that God is gone from them or forsaken them, when they have not such joys, then it leaves them in terror and amazement. Like men after a flash of lightning, that are left more sensible of the darkness. For no wise man can expect that such joys should be a Christian's ordinary state; or God should so diet us with a continual feast. It would neither suit with our health, nor the condition of this pilgrimage. Live, therefore, on your peace of conscience as your ordinary diet; when this is wanting, know that God appointeth you a fast for your health; and when you have a feast of high joys, feed on it and be thankful; but when they are taken from you, gape not after them as the disciples did after Christ at His ascension; but return thankfully to your ordinary diet of peace. And remember that these joys, which are now taken from you, may so return again. However, there is a place preparing for you, where your joys shall be full.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(3050.) There is a certain experience of joy narrated that I think is mischievous. I sometimes hear men speak in the most undiscriminating way in meetings (I do not mean in our own), where they say, "I used to be very unhappy, but since God shone on my soul, I have not seen a cloud. All day long, from morning till night, and from day to day, I am in an empyrean of joy." I do not believe it, in the first place. A man might just as well say to me, "I had my violin tuned fifty years ago, and it is in as good order now as it was then, and there has not been a string touched since." I do not believe it. I do not believe a cat-gut was ever made that did not shrink and lengthen by the stress of weather. If a man tells me that he has an uninterrupted and uniform experience of joy, I do not believe him. If he says he has come into a high state of joy, I am not disposed to doubt that; but however high that state of joy may be, it must have gradations, sometimes flaming up into glorious light and admirable beauty, at other times lingering in twilight, and at other times going out in darkness, so that for a period there is a total abstinence from joy. That is the normal, and that is the necessary experience of joy, where it is wholesome.

—*Beecher.*

(4.) *Perfect joy is not to be expected on earth.*

(3051.) As gold keeps the name in the leaf as well as in the wedge, in the coin as in the bullion; or as he that sees a beam or two shine through the crevice of a wall may say he sees the sun shine, as well as he that walks abroad: so neither are we so

destitute of all comfort, as because the earth is not our heaven, to make it therefore our hell; but we may say there is a leaf of joy, the tin-foil of it here in this life, some few glimpses that shine in upon us. As for the full, the solid, the jubilating joy, it must not be looked for in this valley of tears. There is joy, but not here; true joy, but not yet. Tarry till the harvest we must, but then we shall reap in joy, when heaven is our dwelling, the angels our partners, incorruption our change, immortality our garment. The earth is not the place for such joy, nor dull flesh the subject of it.

—*Duppa*, 1588–1662.

9. Christian joy is heaven begun.

(3052.) The joy, and the sense of salvation, which the pure in heart have here, is not a joy severed from the joy of heaven, but a joy that begins in us here, and continues, and accompanies us thither, and there flows on, and dilates itself to an infinite expansion (as, if you should touch one corn of powder in a train, and that train should carry fire into a whole city, from the beginning it was one and the same fire), though the fulness of glory thereof be reserved to that which is expressed in the promise, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they *shall see God!*" —*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(3053.) The noblest spirits are those which turn to heaven, not in the hour of sorrow but in that of joy; like the lark, they wait for the clouds to disperse, that they may soar up into their native element. —*Jean Paul Richter.*

JUDGMENT. THE DAY OF.

1. Its terrors.

(3054.) In final and extreme events, the multitude of sufferers does not lessen but increase the sufferings; and when the first day of judgment happened, that (I mean) of the universal deluge of waters on the old world, the calamity swelled like the flood, and every man saw his friend perish, and the neighbours of his dwelling, and the relatives of his house, and the sharers of his joys, and yesterday's bride, and the new-born heir, the priest of the family, and the honour of the kindred, all dying or dead, drenched in water and the Divine vengeance; and then they had no place to flee unto, no man cared for their souls; they had none to go unto for counsel, no sanctuary high enough to keep them from the vengeance that rained down from heaven; and so it shall be at the Day of Judgment, when that world and this, and all that shall be born hereafter, shall pass through the same Red Sea, and be all baptized with the same fire, and be involved in the same cloud, in which shall be thunderings and terrors infinite; every man's fear shall be increased by his neighbour's shrieks, and the amazement that all the world shall be in shall unite as the sparks of a raging furnace into a globe of fire, and shall roll on its own principle, and increase by direct appearances and intolerable reflections. He that stands in a churchyard in the time of a great plague, and hears the passing-bell perpetually telling the sad stories of death, and sees crowds of infected bodies pressing to their graves, and others sick and tremulous, and death dressed up in all the images of sorrow round about him, is not supported in his spirit by the variety of his sorrow: and at Doomsday, when the terrors are universal, besides that it is in itself so much greater, because it can affright the whole world, it is also made greater by communication and a sorrowful influence; grief being then strongly infectious, when there is no variety of state, but an entire kingdom of fear; and amazement is king of all our passions, and all the world its subjects; and that shriek must needs be terrible, when millions of men and women, at the same instant, shall fearfully cry out, and the noise shall mingle with the trumpet of the archangel, with the thunders of the dying and groaning heavens, and the crack of the dissolving world, when the whole fabric of creation shall shake into dissolution and eternal ashes.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

2. Its disclosures.

(3055.) "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, their sin is hid." Not that his sin was hid from God, but his sin is hid; that is, it is recorded, it is laid up against a day of reckoning. That this is the meaning, is clear by the foregoing words, his iniquity is bound up: as the clerk of the assizes binds up the indictments of malefactors in a bundle, and at the assizes brings out the indictments, and reads them in court, so God binds up men's sins in a bundle, and, at the Day of Judgment, this bundle shall be opened, and all their sins brought to light before men and angels. —*Watson*, 1696.

3. Our motives will determine our destiny.

(3056.) If we had eyes adapted to the sight, we should see, on looking into the smallest seed, the future flower or shrub or tree enclosed in it. God will look into our feelings and motives as into seeds; by those embryos of action He will infallibly determine what we are, and will show what we should have been, had there been scope and stage for their development and maturity. Nothing will be made light of. The very dust of the balances shall be taken into account. It is in the moral world, as it is in the natural, where every substance weighs something; though we speak of imponderable bodies, yet nature knows nothing of positive *levity;* and were men possessed of the necessary scales, the requisite instrument, we should find the same holds true in the moral world. Nothing is insignificant on which sin has breathed the breath of hell: everything is important in which holiness has impressed itself in the faintest characters. And accordingly "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known." However unimportant now, in the estimation of man, yet, when placed in the light of the Divine countenance, like the atom in the sun's rays, it shall be found deserving attention; and as the minutest molecule of matter contains all the primordial elements of a world, so the least atom of that mind shall be found to include in it the essential elements of heaven. —*Harris*, 1804–1856.

4. The law by which we shall be judged.

(3057.) Our sentence is already passed by the law. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day." A man that is to be examined and tried for life and death, would fain know how it would speed with him, and how matters shall be carried beforehand. God will not deal with you by way of surprise; He hath plainly told you according to what rule He will proceed. The sentence on our state, be it a good or evil one, is already passed. (See John iii. 18, Rom. viii. 1.)

—*Salter.*

5. Its present moral influence.

(3058.) The Romans, when the fear of Carthage, that aspired to a superiority in empire, was removed, presently degenerated from military valour and civil virtues into softness and luxury. So if men were absolved from the fear of judgment to come, no restraint would be strong enough to bridle the impetuous resolutions of his depraved will.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(3059.) Whether I eat or drink, or in whatever other action or employment I am engaged, that solemn voice always seems to sound in my ears, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." As often as I think of the Day of Judgment, my heart quakes, and my whole frame trembles. If I am to indulge in any of the pleasures of the present life, I am resolved to do it in such a way that the solemn realities of the future judgment may never be banished from my recollection. —*St. Jerome*, 340–420.

6. Why men are indifferent with regard to it.

(3060.) An object in itself great, and which we know to be so, will appear small to us if we view it from a distance. The stars, for example, in our view, are but as little specks or points of light; and the tip of a finger, if held very near to the eye, is sufficient to hide from us the whole body of the sun. Distance of time has an effect upon us, in its kind, similar to distance of space. It diminishes in our mind the idea of what we are assured is, in its own nature, of great magnitude and importance. If any of us were informed that we should certainly die before this day closes, what a sudden and powerful change would take place in our thoughts! That we all must die, is a truth, of which we are no less certain, than that we are now alive. But because it is possible that we may not die to-day, or to-morrow, or this year, or for several years to come, we are often little more affected by the thoughts of death, than if we expected to live here for ever. In like manner, if you receive the Scripture as a Divine revelation, I need offer you no other proof, that there is a day, a great day, approaching, which will put an end to the present state of things, and introduce a state unchangeable and eternal. Then the Lord will descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. The earth and all its works will be burnt up. The great Judge will appear, the tribunal be fixed, the books opened, and all the human race must give an account of themselves to God, and, according to His righteous award, be happy or miserable in a degree beyond expression or conception, and that for ever.

If we were infallibly assured that this tremendous scene would open upon us to-morrow; or if, while I am speaking, we should be startled with the signs of our Lord's coming in the air, what confusion and alarm would overspread the congregation! Yet, if the Scripture be true, the hour is approaching when we must all be spectators of this solemn event, and parties nearly interested in it. But because it is at a distance, we can hear of it, speak of it, and profess to expect it, with a coolness almost equal to indifference. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

7. Not the less certain because unexpected.

(3061.) It will be unexpected: every judgment-coming of Christ is as the springing of a mine. There is a moment of deep suspense after the match has been applied to the fuse which is to fire the train. Men stand at a distance, and hold their breath. There is nothing seen but a thin, small column of white smoke, rising fainter, and fainter, till it seems to die away. Then men breathe again: and the inexperienced soldier would approach the place thinking that the thing has been a failure. It is only faith in the experience of the commander, or the veterans, which keeps men from hurrying to the spot again—till just when expectation has begun to die away, the low, deep thunder sends up the column of earth majestically to heaven, and all that was on it comes crushing down again in its far circle, shattered and blackened with the blast.

It is so with the world. By God's word the world is doomed. The moment of suspense is past: the first centuries in which men expected the convulsion to take place at once; for even apostles were looking for it in their lifetime. We have fallen upon days of scepticism. There are no signs of ruin yet. We tread upon it like a solid thing fortified by its adamantine hills for ever. There is nothing against that, but a few words in a printed book. But the world is mined: and the spark has fallen; and just at the moment when serenity is at its height, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and the feet of the Avenger shall stand on the earth.

—*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

8. Importance of preparation for it.

(3062.) The uncertainty of this day bespeaks our preparedness. When the disciples asked Christ concerning the sign of His coming (Luke xxi. 7), He answers them with a *how*, not with a *when*. He describes the manner, but conceals the time: such signs shall go before. He does not determine the day when the judgment shall come after. Only He cautions them, with a "Take heed, lest that day come upon you unawares: for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth" (vers. 34, 35). The bird little thinks of the snare of the fowler, nor the beast of the hunter; this fearlessly rangeth through the woods, the other merrily cuts the air: both follow their unsuspected liberty, both are lost in unprevented ruin. Against public enemies we fortify our coasts; against private thieves we bar our doors, and shall we not against the irremediable fatality of this day prepare our souls? It is favour enough that the Lord hath given us warning: the day is sudden, the warning is not sudden. The old world had the precaution of six-score years, and that (we cannot deny) was long enough; but we have had the prediction of Christ and His apostles of above fifteen hundred years' standing; besides the daily sound of those evangelical trumpets, that tell us of that archangelical trumpet in their pulpits. When we hear the thunder, in a dark night on our beds, we fear the lightning. Our Saviour's gospel, premonishing of this day, is like thunder; if it cannot wake us from our sins, the judgment shall come upon us like lightning, to our utter destruction. But I will thank the Lord for giving me warning (Ps. xvi. 7). The thunder first breaks the cloud, and makes way for the lightning, yet the lightning first invades our sense. All sermons, upon this argument of the last day, are thunder-claps; yet such is the security of the world, that the sons of thunder cannot waken them, till the Father of lightning consume them. Thou hast given a sign to them that fear Thee, that they may flee from the face of the bow, saith that

royal prophet. The huntsman doth not threaten the deer, or terrify him; but watches him at a stand, and shoots him. But God speaks before He shoots; takes the bow in His hand and shows it us before He puts in the arrow to wound us.

St. Gregory hath a meditation, which, by way of similitude, doth well express this point:—Mariners have made their voyage, and are returning home; when on a sudden the winds rise, and the seas begin to be troubled. First they are set upon with lighter waves, then with fiercer billows: then little balls of fire are seen rolling on the face of the waters: now they labour with all their powers, and unlade the vessel of those precious merchandise, for which they made their unhappy voyage. But still the inexpiable rage of the sea ceaseth not, till it hath swallowed the ship: some sink with it, and others by help of a little bark get to shore. We are all put into the vessel of mortality; and all those signs preceding the Day of Judgment, are so many successive waves prognosticating this universal shipwreck. And now worldlings would throw overboard their unblest traffic; the covetous despiseth his riches, the voluptuous his pleasures, the ambitious his honours; they have ventured all their life for those sins, and now they would be rid of that venture with all their hearts. The main storm comes, the earth trembles, the ocean roars, the elements melt, the heavens dissolve, the huge fabric of the whole world perisheth. Those that have put all their fortunes and estate in that one uncertain vessel must perish with it: but the children of grace have a little pinnace, the Church of Christ; and this carries them safe through the fire, as Noah's ark bore him through the water, and lands them in heaven, where they are welcomed home with songs of triumph.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3063.) *The* Day of Judgment is remote, *thy* day of judgment is at hand, and as thou goest out in particular, so thou shalt be found in the general. Thy passing-bell and the archangel's trumpet have both one sound to thee. In the same condition that thy soul leaves thy body, shall thy body be found of thy soul. Thou canst not pass from thy death-bed a sinner, and appear at the great assizes a saint. Both in thy private sessions, and the universal assizes, thou shalt be sure of the same Judge, the same jury, the same witnesses, the same verdict. How certain thou art to die, thou knowest; how soon to die, thou knowest not. Measure not thy life with the longest; that were to piece it out with flattery. Thou canst name no living man, not the sickest, which thou art sure shall die before thee. Daily we follow the dead to their graves, and in those graves we bury the remembrance of our own death with them. Here drops an old man, and there a child; here an aged matron, there a young virgin: with mourning eyes we attend them to their funerals, yet before we lay the rosemary out of our hands, the thought of death hath vanished from our hearts. When a hog lies bound under the knife to be killed, he makes a hideous cry above any other creature: hereupon the other swine come running in, and they grunt, and whine, and keep a fearful noise; but as soon as the dying beast hath ceased, they also are silent, and return to the filthy mire as carelessly as if no harm had been done. When we lose a neighbour, a friend, a brother, we weep, and howl, and lament, as if, with Rachel, we could never be comforted; but the body once interred, and the funeral ceremonies ended, if we do not stay to inquire for some legacies, we run back with all possible haste to our former sins and turpitudes, as if there had been no such matter. Alas! that the farthest end of all our thoughts should be the thought of our ends! Death is but our apprehension, like the taking of a malefactor; but it sends us to the session, and that either to forgiveness or execution. Oh then, let us repent in life, that we may find comfort in death, and be acquitted at the Day of Judgment by Jesus Christ. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3064.) Men dealing in the world for riches, are but like scholars playing at dice for counters, which come and go; now the heap is on this side, by and by on that: on a sudden comes in the master, and he seizes all, both dice and counters; not without some just correction of the gamesters. Some men tug, and scramble, and wrangle for these paltry vanities, wealth and honours: this fountain dries, that cistern fills; one noble house withers, while another of low degree swells up to a lord: to-day this merchant hath the cash, to-morrow that; but the Lord's day confiscates all, and then who is the richer man? This world is like a broad table with a scant of narrow table-cloth; which every man is still drawing to his own side, though he pluck his neighbour's part from him: this day comes with a fatal voider, and takes away all, cloth, meat, table, and guests too. Thus far together, all are served alike; but then comes the difference. All men hope well, and think themselves good; but let me tell them of this day, as Moses did those rebellious Levites, "To-morrow the Lord will show who are His, and who are holy" (Numb. xvi. 5). A common hen, together with her own eggs, may hatch the eggs of eagles that are laid under her; but when they are grown up, while her own brood keep the base earth, those of a higher kind fly upwards. This world breeds us all, and is both to good and bad a common mother; but when that great day of separation comes, all they that are begotten of immortal seed shall leave their mother, and take after their Father; and while their kindred in the flesh sink down under their natural corruptions, these eagles that are sprung from above, shall mount up to the eternal nest of glory.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3065.) We should make preparations to meet Him, because when we are brought before Him it will be too late to do what is necessary to be done. The path up to the judgment-seat is not a way of preparation; nor at His bar is it a place to prepare for eternity. It is no time to prepare for battle when the enemy is in the camp; no time to make ready to meet a foe when he has broken open your door. There is such a thing as putting off preparation until it is too late. A man may neglect the care of his health, until it is too late. A student may suffer the proper time to prepare for a profession to glide away, until it is too late. A farmer may neglect to plough and sow, until it is too late. A man on a rapid stream near a cataract may neglect to make efforts to reach the shore, until it is too late. And so in religion. It is easy to put it off from childhood to youth; from youth to manhood; from manhood to old age, until it shall be too late. Beyond that interview with God, there is no preparation. Your eternity is not to be made up of a

series of successive probations, where, though you fail in one, you may avail yourself of another.
—*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

(3066.) We should make preparation, because we go there on a very solemn errand. We go there not as idle spectators; not to behold the glory of the Divine dwelling and throne; not as we often travel to other lands to see the works of nature, or the monuments of art; but we go on the final trial, and with reference to the irreversible doom of the soul. A man who is soon to be put on trial for his life feels that much must be done with reference to that important day in his existence; and makes the preparation accordingly. Everything about the kind of testimony on which he can rely; everything in the law, in the character of the judge and of the jury, becomes to him a matter of moment, and he looks it all over with most anxious solicitude. He who should have the prospect of such a trial before him, and who should evince the same unconcern on these points which the mass of men do in reference to their trial before God, would be regarded as a fool or a madman. Should we go into his cell and find him engaged in blowing up bubbles, or in some other trifling employment, manifesting the utmost indifference to all that we could say of the character of the judge or jury, or to the importance of being prepared for the arraignment, we should regard him as bereft of the characteristics of a rational being. On the issue of that interview with God depends everything that is dear to us hereafter. There will not be a moment in all that boundless eternity before us which will not be affected by the results of that day's investigation. To us it will be the most solemn moment of our existence—a period to be remembered in all the days of our future being—as it should be anticipated with anxious solicitude in all the days that precede it.
—*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

KNOWLEDGE.

I. *SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS.*

1. Is founded in faith.

(3067.) All knowledge, of whatsoever kind, must have a twofold groundwork of faith,—one *subjectively*, in our own faculties, and the laws which govern them:—the other *objectively*, in the matter submitted to our observations. We must believe in the being who knows, and in that which is known: knowledge is the copula of these two acts. Even scepticism must have the former. Its misfortune and blunder is, that it will keep standing on one leg; and so can never get a firm footing. We must stand on both before we can walk, although the former act is often the more difficult.
—*Guesses at Truth.*

2. The desire of knowledge.

(1.) *Is natural.*

(3068.) The desire of knowledge, though often animated by extrinsic and adventitious motives, seems on many occasions to operate without subordination to any other principle: we are eager to see and hear, without intention of referring our observations to a farther end: we climb a mountain for a prospect of the plain; we run to the strand in a storm, that we may contemplate the agitation of the water; we range from city to city, though we profess neither architecture nor fortification; we cross seas only to view nature in nakedness, or magnificence in ruins; we are equally allured by novelty of every kind, by a desert or a palace, a cataract or a cavern, by everything rude and everything polished, everything great and everything little; we do not see a thicket but with some temptation to enter it, nor remark an insect flying before us but with an inclination to pursue it.

This passion is, perhaps, regularly heightened in proportion as the powers of the mind are elevated and enlarged. —*Dr. S. Johnson*, 1709–1784.

(2.) *Is insatiable.*

(3069.) The desire of knowledge, like the thirst of riches, increases ever with the acquisition of it.
—*Sterne*, 1713–1768.

(3070.) Knowledge always desires increase; it is like fire, which must first be kindled by some external agent, but which will afterwards propagate itself.
—*Dr. S. Johnson*, 1709–1784.

3. How it may be best acquired.

(3071.) They who would advance in knowledge should lay down this as a fundamental rule, not to take words for things. —*Locke*, 1632–1704.

(3072.) The best way of acquiring most branches of knowledge is to study them, if possible, for some specific object or occasion. This will supply the curiosity with a powerful stimulus, and communicate to the search a practical character essentially beneficial. *W. B. Clulow.*

(3073.) In the pursuit of knowledge, follow it wherever it is to be found; like fern it is the produce of all climates, and like coin, its circulation is not restricted to any particular class. We are ignorant in youth, from idleness, and we continue so in manhood from pride; for pride is less ashamed of being ignorant, than of being instructed, and she looks too high to find that which very often lies beneath her. Therefore condescend to men of low estate, and be for wisdom that which Alcibiades was for power. He that rings only one bell will hear only one sound; and he that lives only with one class will see but one scene of the great drama of life. Mr. Locke was asked how he had contrived to accumulate a mine of knowledge so rich, yet so extensive and so deep: he replied, that he attributed what little he knew, to the not having been ashamed to ask for information; and to the rule he had laid down, of conversing with all descriptions of men, on those topics chiefly that formed their own peculiar professions or pursuits. I myself have heard a common blacksmith eloquent, when welding of iron has been the theme; for what we know thoroughly, we can usually express clearly, since ideas will supply words, but words will not always supply ideas. Therefore when I meet with any that write obscurely, or converse confusedly, I am apt to suspect two things; first, that such persons do not understand themselves; and, secondly, that they are not worthy of being understood by others.
—*Colton*, 1832.

4. If too easily gained, is soon lost.

(3074.) In common life a remark has become obvious, that the fortune which is bequeathed or acquired at an easy rate, is more likely to be dissipated than the fruits of laborious industry. It is

so likewise in learning. Ideas collected without any great effort, make but a slight impression on the memory or the imagination. The reflection, that they may be recalled at pleasure, prevents any solicitude to preserve them. But the remembrance, that the degree of knowledge already acquired has cost us dearly, enhances its value, and excites every precaution to prevent it from being lost. I would compare the learning acquired by the facilitating aids of modern invention, to the vegetables raised in a hot bed; which, whatever size or beauty they may attain in a short time, never acquire that firmness and durable perfection, which is gradually collected by the slow process of unassisted nature.

Knox, 1831.

5. How it is to be valued.

(3075.) Knowledge is to be valued (as all creatures are) according to its usefulness. As it is more honourable to know how to govern a kingdom, command an army or navy, or save men's lives, than to make a fiddle or a hobby-horse; so it is ten thousandfold more honourable, to know how to order our hearts and lives, and to walk with God, and obtain the everlasting glory, than to know how to get riches, and pleasures, and vain glory of the present world. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3076.) As a pound of gold more enricheth than many loads of dirt, so a little knowledge of great and necessary matters maketh one wiser than a great deal of pedantic, toyish learning. No man hath time and capacity for all things: he is but a proud fool, that would seem to know all, and deny his ignorance in many things.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3077.) What good will it do a man tormented with the gout, or stone, or by miserable poverty, to know the names of various herbs, or to read the titles of the apothecaries' boxes, or to read on a sign-post, "Here is a good ordinary"? And what good will it do a carnal, unsanctified soul that must be in hell for ever, to know the Hebrew roots or points, or to discourse of "Cartesius's Materia Subtilis," and "Globuli Ætherei," &c.? Or of "Epicurus and Gassendus Atoms," or to look on the planets in Galileus' glasses, while he casteth away all his hopes of heaven by his unbelief, and his preferring the pleasures of the flesh? Will it comfort a man that is cast out of God's presence, and condemned to utter darkness, to remember that he was once a good mathematician, or logician, or musician, or that he had wit to get riches and preferments in the world, and to climb up to the height of honour and dominion? It is a pitiful thing to hear a man boast of his wit, while he is madly rejecting the only felicity, forsaking God, esteeming vanity, and damning his soul: the Lord deliver us from such wit and learning!

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3078.) To avoid mistakes and cavils, remember, that I take no true knowledge as contemptible. And when I truly say that he knoweth nothing as he ought to know, that doth not know and love his God, and is not wise to his duty and salvation, yet if this fundamental knowledge be presupposed, we should build all other useful knowledge on it to the utmost of our capacity: and from this one stock may spring and spread a thousand branches, which may all bear fruit. I would put no limit to a Christian's desires and endeavours to know, but that he desire to know only useful and revealed things. Every degree of knowledge tendeth to more: and every known fruit befriendeth others; and like fire, tendeth to the spreading of our knowledge, to all neighbour truths that are intelligible. And the want of acquaintance with some one truth among a hundred, may hinder us from rightly knowing most of the rest, or may breed a hundred errors in us. As the absence of one wheel or particle in a watch, or the ignorance of it, may put all the rest into a useless disorder. What if I say that wisdom lieth more in knowing the things that belong to salvation, to public good, to life, health and solid comfort, than in knowing how to sing, or play on the lute, or to speak or carry ourselves with commendable decency, &c. It doth not follow that all these are of no worth at all; and that in their places these little matters may not be allowed and desired: for even hair and nails are appurtenances of a man, which a wise man would not be without; though they are small matters in comparison of the animal, vital, and nobler parts. And indeed he that can see God in all things and hath all this sanctified by the love of God, should above all men value each particle of knowledge, of which so holy a use may be made; as we value every grain of gold.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

6. Should be the object of life-long pursuit.

(3079.) He that would make a real progress in knowledge must dedicate his age as well as youth —the latter growth as well as the first-fruits—at the altar of truth. —*Berkeley*, 1684–1753.

(3080.) It is no more possible for an idle man to keep together a certain stock of knowledge, than it is possible to keep together a stock of ice exposed to the meridian sun. Every day destroys a fact, a relation, or an inference; and the only way of preserving the bulk and value of the pile is by constantly adding to it. —*Sydney Smith.*

7. Is continually enlarging.

(3081.) In a seeing age, the very knowledge of former times passes but for ignorance in a better dress. —*South*, 1633–1716.

8. Yet at the best is very limited.

(3082.) There is not so contemptible a plant or animal that does not confound the most enlarged understanding. —*Locke*, 1632–1704.

9. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

(3083.) Pride and self-conceitedness is like the barm in the drink that seems to fill up the vessel, but indeed works it all over: this is the knowledge that puffeth up (2 Cor. viii. 1), like the pot that by boiling seemeth to be filled, that was half empty before, but it is empty in the bottom, and presently boils over, and is emptier than before. So is it with the self-conceited, that have a superficial knowledge, while they are empty at the bottom, and by the heat of pride, that little they have boileth over to their loss. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3084.) Though in some sensible matters it is easy to convince men of a total ignorance, yet when they know anything, it is hard to convince them what more is to be known, and to keep them from false and hasty conclusions. A man that cannot read at all is easily convinced that he cannot read; but he that can read a little, is apt to

think that he readeth rightly when he doth not. A man that never heard of physic is easily convinced that he hath no skill in it; but if he have read, heard of, and tried a few medicines, he is apt to grow conceited and venture men's lives upon his skill. A man that never saw building, navigation, or any art or manufacture, is easily convinced that he is ignorant of it; but if he have got some smattering knowledge, he is ready to think that it is more than it is, because he knoweth not what he wants. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3085.) Some men, of whom I wish to speak with great respect, are haunted, as it seems to me, with an unreasonable fear of what they call superficial knowledge. Knowledge, they say, which really deserves the name, is a great blessing to mankind, the ally of virtue, the harbinger of freedom. But such knowledge must be profound. A crowd of people who have a smattering of mathematics, a smattering of astronomy, a smattering of chemistry, who have read a little poetry and a little history, is dangerous to the commonwealth. Such half-knowledge is worse than ignorance. And then the authority of Pope is vouched: Drink deep, or taste not; shallow draughts intoxicate: drink largely; and that will sober you. I must confess that the danger which alarms these gentlemen never seemed to me very serious; and my reason is this: that I never could prevail on any person who pronounced superficial knowledge a curse and profound knowledge a blessing to tell me what was his standard of profundity. The argument proceeds on the supposition that there is some line between profound and superficial knowledge similar to that which separates truth from falsehood. I know of no such line. When we talk of men of deep science, do we mean that they have got to the bottom or near the bottom of science? Do we mean that they know all that is capable of being known? Do we mean even that they know in their own especial department all that the smatterers of the next generation will know? Why, if we compare the little truth that we know with the infinite mass of truth which we do not know, we are all shallow together; and the greatest philosophers that ever lived would be the first to confess their shallowness. If we could call up the first of human beings, if we could call up Newton, and ask him whether, even in those sciences in which he had no rival, he considered himself as profoundly knowing, he would have told us that he was but a smatterer like ourselves, and that the difference between his knowledge and ours vanished when compared with the quantity of truth still undiscovered, just as the distance between a person at the foot of Ben Lomond and at the top of Ben Lomond vanishes when compared with the distance of the fixed stars. —*Macaulay*, 1800–1859.

10. Why it should be sought.

(3086.) The mistaking or misplacing of the last or farthest end of knowledge is the greatest error of all the rest: For men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation: and sometimes to enable them to obtain the victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession;—but seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men: As if there were sought in knowledge, a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground for strife and contention; or a shop for profit or sale;—and not a rich store-house for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man's estate.

—*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(3087.) Seldom was ever any knowledge given to keep, but to impart: the grace of this rich jewel is lost in concealment. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3088). [*On the sight of a dark lantern.*]

There is light, indeed; but so shut up, as if it were not: and when the side is most open, there is light enough to give direction to him that bears it, none to others; he can discern another man, by that light which is cast before him; but another man cannot discern him.

Right such is reserved knowledge: no man is the better for it but the owner. There is no outward difference betwixt concealed skill and ignorance: and when such hidden knowledge will look forth, it casts so sparing a light, as may only argue it to have an unprofitable being; to have ability, without will to do good; power to censure, none to benefit. The suppression or engrossing of those helps, which God would have us to impart, is but a thief's lantern in a true man's hand.

O God, as all our light is from Thee, the Father of Lights, so make me no niggard of that poor rush-candle Thou hast lighted in my soul: make me more happy, in giving light to others, than in receiving it into myself. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

11. An important caution for those engaged in its pursuit.

(3089.) The knowledge we acquire in this world, I am apt to think, extends not beyond the limits of this life. The beatific vision of the other life needs not the help of this dim twilight; but, be that as it will, I am sure the principal end why we are to get knowledge here, is to make use of it for the benefit of ourselves and others in this world; but if by gaining it we destroy our health, we labour for a thing that will be useless in our hands; and if by harassing our bodies (though with a design to render ourselves more useful) we deprive ourselves of the abilities and opportunities of doing that good we might have done with a meaner talent, which God thought sufficient for us, by having denied us the strength to improve it to that pitch which men of stronger constitutions can attain to, we rob God of so much service, and our neighbour of all that help which in a state of health, with moderate knowledge, we might have been able to perform. He that sinks his vessel by overloading it, though it be with gold and silver and precious stones, will give his owner but an ill account of his voyage.

—*Locke*, 1632–1704.

12. It makes men humble.

(3090.) It is an empty knowledge, and falsely so called, that puffs up; as the empty ears of corn are pert, and raise up themselves; but those which are big and full, droop and hang down their heads; so it is only ignorance that is proud, and lifts men up; but true knowledge makes men humble.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

II. *RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.*

1. In what it consists.

(3091.) I heard two persons on the Wengern Alp talking by the hour together of the names of ferns; not a word about their characteristics, uses, or habits, but a medley of crack-jaw titles, and nothing more. They evidently felt that they were ventilating their botany, and kept each other in countenance by alternate volleys of nonsense. Well, friend, they were about as sensible as those doctrinalists who for ever talk over the technicalities of religion, but know nothing by experience of its spirit and power. Are we not all too apt to amuse ourselves after the same fashion? He who knows mere Linnæan names, but has never seen a flower, is as reliable in botany, as he is in theology who can descant upon supralapsarianism, but has never known the love of Christ in his heart.

"True religion's more than doctrine,
Something must be known and felt."

—*Spurgeon.*

(3092.) Says the apostle, "Add to your faith, or in your faith, virtue; in other words, develop out of your faith virtue—that is, practical godliness; and in your virtue, or from out of your virtue, develop knowledge." By this is not meant, evidently, that knowledge which we gather by our senses—scientific knowledge, ideas, facts; but a higher knowledge—that subtle intuition of truth which men have who live high and noble lives. A man of great conscience has a sense, a knowledge, of principle which is higher than any law or custom can point out. A man who cultivates his taste has a finer sense and knowledge of beauty than a man who does not. A man who dwells largely in figures and mathematics has a sense of numbers and proportions which does not belong to other men. The knowledge which is spoken of here is that knowledge which is in the nature of moral intuition.

—*Beecher.*

2. Is not naturally desired by men.

(3093.) It is the peculiar nature of the inestimable treasure of Christian truth and religious knowledge, that the more it is withheld from people, the less they wish for it; and the more is bestowed upon them, the more they hunger and thirst after it. If people are kept upon a short allowance of food, they are eager to obtain it; if you keep a man thirsty, he will become the more and more thirsty; if he is poor, he is exceedingly anxious to become rich; but if he is left in a state of spiritual destitution, he will, and still more his children, cease to feel it, and cease to care about it. It is the last want men can be trusted (in the first instance) to supply for themselves. —*Whately*, 1787–1863.

3. How it is to be acquired.

(1.) *By diligent study.*

(3094.) Study hard and search diligently and deeply, and that with unwearied patience and delight. Unpleasant studies tire and seldom prosper. Slight running thoughts accomplish little. If any man think that the Spirit is given to save us the labour of hard and long studies, Solomon hath spent so many chapters in calling them to dig, ay, search, labour, wait for wisdom, that if that will not undeceive them, I cannot. They may as well say, that God's blessing is to save the husbandman the labour of ploughing and sowing, and that the Spirit is given to save men the labour of learning to read the Bible, or to hear it, or to think of it, or to pray to God. Whereas the Spirit is given us to provoke and enable us to study hard, and read, and hear, and pray hard, and to prosper us herein.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2.) *By systematic and orderly study.*

(3095.) In common matters, you can see that you must learn and do things in their due order, or else you will but make fools of yourselves. Will you go to the top of the stairs or ladder without beginning at the lower steps? Will you sow your ground before you manure or plough it? or can you reap before you sow it? Will you ride your colt before you break him? Will you rear a house before you frame it? Or will you teach your children Hebrew and Greek and Latin before they learn English? or to read the hardest books before they learn the easiest? Or can they read before they learn to spell, or know their letters? No more can you learn the difficult controversies in divinity (as about the exposition of obscure prophecies, or doctrinal doubts) till you have taken up before you those many great and necessary truths that lie between. It would make a wise man pity them, and be ashamed to hear them, when young, raw, self-conceited professors will fall into confident expositions of Daniel, the Revelations, or the Canticles, or such like, or into disputes about free-will, or predestination, or about the many controversies of the times, when, alas! they are ignorant of a hundred truths (about the covenants, justification, and the like) which must be known before they can reach the rest! —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3.) *By giving our closest and most constant attention to the most important truths.*

(3096.) You must grow into a higher esteem of truths. All this you have to do besides your growing in the number of truths. And I must tell you, that as it was the essentials of Christianity that were the instrumental causes of your first conversion, and more needful and useful to you than ten thousand others, so it is the very same points that you must always live upon, and the confirmation and growth of your souls in these, will be more useful to you than the adding of ten thousand more truths, which yet you know not. And, therefore, take this advice, as you love your peace and growth; neglect not to know more, but bestow many and many hours in labouring to know better the great truths which you have received, for one hour that you bestow in seeking to know more truths which you know not; believe it, this is the safe and thriving way. . . . If you had already a hundred pounds in gold, and not a penny of silver, it will more enrich you to have another purse full of gold, than a purse full of silver. Trading in the richest commodities, is likelier to raise men to greater estates, than trading for matters of a smaller rate. They that go to the Indies for gold and pearls, may be rich if they get but little in quantity; when he may be poor that brings home ships laden with the greatest store of poor commodity. That man that hath a double measure of the knowledge of God in Christ, and the clearest, and deepest, and most effectual apprehensions of the riches of grace and the glory to come, and yet never heard of most of the questions in Scotus, or Ockam, or Aquinas's sums is far richer in know-

ledge, and a much wiser man, than he that hath those controversies at his finger's ends, and yet hath but half his clearness and solidity of the knowledge of God and Christ, of grace and glory. Those be not the wisest men that can answer most questions; but those that have the fullest intellectual reception of the infinite wisdom. You will confess that he is a wiser man that hath wisdom to get and rule a kingdom, than he that hath wit enough to talk of a hundred trivial matters, which the other is ignorant of. That is the wisest physician that can do most to save men's lives; and not he that can best read a lecture of anatomy, or is readiest in the terms of his art. Knowledge is to be esteemed according to the use of it, and the dignity of its object, and not according to the number and subtlety of notions. And, therefore, I beseech you all, that are young and weak in the faith, take much more pains to grow in the fuller acquaintance with that same faith which you have received, than to be acquainted with smaller controversial truths which you never knew. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. Should be ever increasing.

(3097.) Rest not in thy present knowledge; 'tis like thou know'st much to what once thou didst, but thou know'st little to what thou mayest. Some books are learnt at one reading, but the gospel is a mystery that will take up more than thy life-time to understand it. Mysteries are here sown thick; thou diggest where the springs rise faster upon thee, the further thou goest. God tells not all His secrets at once; "here a little and there a little;" "men shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." The merchant's ship takes not in all her lading at one port, but sails from one to another for it; neither doth the Christian enrich himself with this heavenly treasure all at one time, or in one ordinance. The true lover of learning gives not over his chase and pursuit for a little smattering knowledge he gets, but rather having got the scent how sweet learning is, puts on with fuller cry for what he wants. The true doctor studies harder than the fresh-man, because as he knows more of learning, so by that knowledge he understands his own deficiency better; for the higher he ascends the hill of learning, the more his prospect enlargeth, while the other standing at the bottom, thinks he knows all in his little. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3098.) The tree that does not thrive will soon rot, and the tradesman that does not increase his stock will soon be out at heels, and he that does not improve his knowledge will prove a spiritual bankrupt. And such a wilful darkness which men bring upon themselves by their perversity, is but one step from destruction. The plague of darkness upon the Egyptians did immediately precede the slaying of their first-born, and the destruction of the flower of their militia in the Red Sea.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3099.) Let us increase the knowledge of whole God and whole Christ. View all the perfections of God. Be not only intent upon some of the first magnitude, but on those that seem the lesser sparks, which have an influence one time or other upon the souls and lives of men. He is not worthy of the name of an astronomer, who gazes only upon one or two planets, with a neglect of the rest, which have their particular excellency as well as the other heavenly bodies. As there is nothing in the heavens, so there is nothing in God and Christ but is worthy of our understanding and consideration, and affords matter of instruction and matter of consolation one time or other. Let us not satisfy ourselves with a knowledge of God in the mass; a glance upon a picture never directs you to the discerning the worth and art of it. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3100.) All true knowledge is alluring. The first sight of a mystery is transporting, and also alluring to a further inquiry. "A wise man will hear and will increase learning;" he will arise to more sublime thoughts and discoveries. He will be adding, as in arithmetic, figure to figure till he comes to a just sum, deducing one rule from another till he come to the utmost; as the branch grows from the body of the tree, and one branch from another. It is the nature of all true knowledge to sharpen the mind far more. He that has found a mine will follow the vein till he masters it. The scholar that has a taste of any curious learning will not leave the pursuit till he has pierced into the bowels of it, and by turning over books, and stretching his thoughts, has increased his stock. It is also the nature of spiritual knowledge to put an edge upon the appetite, and open the understanding wider, that it may be filled with more. The voice of it is that of the grave, Give, give. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3101.) We find persons acquainted with the fundamental doctrines of religion, and we are glad. But a year afterwards we converse with them again, and find them just the same. Two years elapse, and we come into contact with them again, but still no progress can be perceived, till at length the sight of them reminds us of a piece of wood-work carved in the form of a tree, rather than a living production of nature; for there are no fresh shoots, nor any new foliage to be seen: on the contrary, the very same modes of speech, the same views and sentiments upon every point, and the same limited sphere of spiritual conception; no enlarged expansion of the inward horizon; not a single addition to the treasury of Christian knowledge. —*Salter*.

(3102.) It is melancholy to observe how content certain followers of the Saviour are with the "first principles of the oracles of God." They stop at the alphabet of theology. The barest elements in the glorious science of Christian doctrine are all that they have, and with these, strange to say, they are perfectly satisfied. They look upon the Bible as a shallow, small pond, which they have netted and dragged to such an extent as to have exhausted it of its treasures. Is that a fair representation of God's word? It is rather like the great Atlantic, fathomless in some parts, and containing more than has ever been brought out of it. It is a "mountain of the Lord" whose summit is far from us, whose loftiest heights we have not reached.

"Upward we press, the air is clear,
And the sphere-music heard;
The Lord hath yet more light and truth
To break forth from His word."

However long we may have studied the Scriptures, there is much still for us to discuss. When Michael Angelo was an old man he was found by a cardinal walking in the Coliseum, solitary amidst its ruins. When asked what he was doing, the aged sculptor replied, "I go yet to school, that I may continue to learn." Even so, however advanced in

life we may be, there is something for us still to learn in the Coliseum of revelation.

—*T. R. Stevenson.*

5. Should be reduced to practice.

(3103.) The end of all arts and sciences is the practice of them. And as this is to be confessed in all other arts, so it cannot be denied in divinity and religion, the practice whereof doth in excellency surmount the knowledge and theory, as being the main end whereunto it tends. For to what purpose do men spend their spirits and tire their wits in discerning the light of truth, if they do not use the benefit of it to direct them in all their ways?

Why do they rise betimes to see the sun, if they mean to sit idly still and do nothing, which better suits with palpable and Egyptian darkness?

Why do they with such care and labour heap up these rich treasures of learning and knowledge, if, miser-like, they only look upon them, and never make use of them for the benefit of themselves and others?

Why do they spend their whole lives in sowing the seed, and never reap the crop? Or having brought in the harvest and filled their barns and granaries, what good will all this do them, if they let it there must and mould, and never eat the fruit of their labours? —*Downame*, 1642.

(3104.) How vain is their practice who spend all their strength in polemical disputes, to evince error, and find out the truth, if, when they have found it, they will not walk in this light, nor let it be the guide of their lives! Like herein to foolish boys who strive for a ball, which when they have gotten with much sweat, and have no competitor to contend further for it, they cast into a corner with careless neglect; or having fought even unto blood to beat others off a mole-hill, as from a fort of strength, make no further use of it when they have gotten quiet possession. —*Downame*, 1642.

(3105.) Hearty obedience will not only show that your religion is deeper than mere opinion, but it will also advance it to a greater purity, and root it more deeply than it was before. A man that hath studied the art of navigation in his closet, may talk of it almost as well as he that hath been at sea; but when he comes to practise it he will find that he is far to seek; but let this man go to sea, and join practice and experience to his theory, and then he may have a knowledge of the right kind. So, if a man that hath only read over military books, would be a true soldier; or a man that hath only studied physic, would be a true physician, what better way is there, than to fall to practice? And so you must, if you would have a religion that shall save your souls, and not only a religion that will furnish you with good opinions and expressions.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3106.) Knowledge and practice do mutually promote one another. Knowledge prepares and disposeth for practice, and practice is the best way to perfect knowledge in any kind. Mere speculation is a very raw and rude thing in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by practice and experience. The most exact skill in geography is nothing compared with the knowledge of that man, who, besides the speculative part, hath travelled over and carefully viewed the countries he hath read of. The most knowing man in the art and rules of navigation is nobody in comparison of an experienced pilot and seaman. Because knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere speculation, as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For men may easily mistake rules, but frequent practice and experience are seldom deceived. Give me a man that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfy me that he knows how to do it. That saying of our blessed Saviour, "If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," is a clear determination of this matter, namely, that they understand the will of God best who are most careful to do it. And so likewise the best way to know what God is, is to transcribe His perfections in our lives and actions, to be holy, and just, and good, and merciful as He is.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(3107.) How vain is knowledge without practice! as if one should know a sovereign medicine and not apply it. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3108.) What is it to hear one's duty, and not do it? As if a physician write a good prescription but the patient doth not take it.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(3109.) Many a man's knowledge is a torch to light him to hell. Thou who hast knowledge of God's will, but doth not do it, wherein dost thou excel an hypocrite? Nay, wherein dost thou excel the devil, "who transforms himself into an angel of light?" —*Watson*, 1696.

(3110.) In the region of revealed truth, increasing knowledge will not always be increasing conviction, unless that knowledge be progressively reduced to practice. If knowledge be merely speculative, in extending it a man may only "increase sorrow;" for it is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness," and it is to the "doers" of His Father's will that the Saviour promises assuring knowledge of His own "doctrine." The mind needs tonics. For the body, next to wholesome food, the best toning is vigorous exercise; and if long cradled in a luxurious repose, the penalty is paid at last in so many imaginary ills as constitute a real one. And just as the child of sloth is haunted by visionary fears, as he dreads that his pulse will stop or the firmament fall in: so the man who arrests his moral activities and lets his fancy wander at its will; the man who is doing no service to God and no good in the world will soon become an intellectual hypochondriac.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(3111.) Beware of letting the head grow at a great rate while the arm is shrivelled. Knowledge involves a responsibility which will end in many stripes for disobedience. It is treason for a commander to be well versed in military tactics, and to be great in arms, and yet to refuse to defend his country and suffer the empire to go to ruin. Practical Christianity alone is true Christianity.

—*Spurgeon.*

6. Divorced from experience and practice is worthless.

(3112.) The thoughtless man, even if he can recite a large portion (of the law), but is not a doer

of it, has no share in the priesthood, but is like a cowherd counting the cows of others.

—*Buddha.*

(3113.) It is well known that the great doctors of the world by much reading and speculation attain to a great height of knowledge, but seldom to sound wisdom, which has given way to that common proverb, "The greatest clerks are not always the wisest men." It is not the studying of politics that will make a man a wise counsellor of state, till his knowledge is joined with experience, which teaches where the rules of state hold, and where they fail. It is not book-knowledge that will make a good general, a skilful pilot, no not so much as a cunning artisan, till that knowledge is perfected by practice and experience. And so surely, though a man abound never so much in literal knowledge, it will be far from making him a good Christian, unless he bring precepts into practice, and by feeling experience apply that he knows to his own use and spiritual advantage. —*Joshua Shute*, 1629.

(3114.) As he is not rightly called a rich man that can tell how and by what means a man may be exceeding rich, but he that hath riches of his own: so he is not a good Christian that can, according to knowledge, dispute and reason of virtue and godliness, and can describe and define the same; but he that is endued with virtue and possessed with true godliness, and doth most willingly practise the same in the whole course of his life.

—*Cawdray*, 1598–1664.

(3115.) You read of the heathens, when they sacrificed to their gods, they were wont to hang a garland upon the head of the beasts, and to crown them with roses; so they were led on to sacrifice. Many may have garlands upon their heads, ornaments of knowledge, yet are going on to destruction.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3116.) Experimental knowledge is the true ballast of the soul, when mere sound and air is a rolling and moveable thing. Mere head professors are as light as a cork dancing upon every dash of water. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3117.) Desire after God springs not from a bare speculation, but a strong impression, a spiritual taste; for a bare speculation has no more strength to make a motion in the will than the poetical descriptions of far countries can persuade a potent prince to take a long voyage for the conquest, or a merchant to venture his stock thither for a trade.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3118.) A knowledge of God by revelation the Jews had in the Old Testament, who yet rejected the Son of God; a knowledge of Christ many learned men professing Christianity have, who know Christ in the bark of the letter, not in the sap of the spirit: as the Jews know Him under the veil of types, but were ignorant of His person when He came among them. This is such a knowledge which men have of a beautiful picture, or a comely person with whom they have no acquaintance; or as an astronomer knows the stars without receiving any more special influence from them than other men, or the inanimate creatures.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3119.) A man may be theologically knowing and spiritually ignorant. Nicodemus was none of the lowest sect, a Pharisee, nor of the lowest form among them, a ruler among them, had the knowledge of the law above the vulgar, yet was ignorant of the design of the Messiah, and the mystery of the new birth. A man may be excellent in the grammar of the Scripture, yet not understand the spiritual sense of it. As a man may have so much Latin as to construe a physician's bill, and tell the names of the plants mentioned in it, yet understand nothing of the particular virtues of those plants, or have any pleasure in the contemplation of them; so we may discourse of God, and the perfections of God, and the intendments of the great things of Christ, without a sense of them. Though this be a good preparatory to a spiritual knowledge, yet is insufficient of itself without some further addition. It does not heal the soul's eye, nor chase away the spiritual darkness. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3120.) The highest rational knowledge of God cannot profit without the knowledge of faith. This general and common knowledge of Christ is but a knowing after the flesh, not in the power of His Spirit, and can no more advantage than the Jews knowing Him, or Judas his living with Him, did them or him without believing. In the Scripture, Christians are not called knowing persons, but believers. It is a pleasure to a physician to consider the nature of a medicine, and pierce into the quality of each ingredient in it; but if he be invaded by the disease for which that medicine is proper, all his knowledge of it and delight in it will be no support to his body, unless he takes it and joins it in a close contest with the distemper. All the pleasure he has had in the search and contemplation of it, and the experience of the strength of it upon his patients, will not check the malady of his vitals, or stop the rage of the humour, though his knowledge were as large as Solomon's, without application of the remedy. Christ is the remedy for our spiritual diseases, faith is the application.

A man is no more a Christian by knowing the nature of God and Christ in a notional way, or being able to unfold the mysteries of redemption in generous strains, than a philosopher, who can discourse accurately of the nature of metals and jewels, can be said to be rich, when he has never a penny in his purse. The knowledge entitles him to a natural wisdom, but the possession to wealth. If he were a slave in the galleys, the riches of his knowledge would never strike off the weight of his chains. One jewel in possession to pay for his redemption would be of more value than all his philosophy. And just such a person is he that delights in the knowledge of his bags and quantity of gold, but makes not application of it to his present indigences; it is as if he had none, but were the poorest beggar that craves an alms from door to door. There is as great difference between this notional and fiducial knowledge as there is between the knowledge of an angel, who comes under the wing of Christ for his confirmation in his happy estate, and the knowledge of a devil.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3121.) Unholy knowledge is but a carcass, a shadow, the activity of a vain mind, or a means without the end, and unfit to attain it. A map is not a kingdom, nor doth it much enrich the owner. The names of meats and drinks will not nourish you: and to know names and notions, giveth you

no title to the things so named. You may as well think to be saved for being good musicians, physicians, or astronomers, as for being learned divines, if your knowledge cause not holy love; it may help others to heaven, but it will be but vanity to you; and you be as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." You glory in a lifeless picture of wisdom; and hell may shortly tell you, that you had better chosen anything to play the fool with, than with the notions and words of wisdom mortified.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3122.) The bare knowledge of God's will is inefficacious, it doth not better the heart. Knowledge alone is like a winter sun, which hath no heat or influence; it doth not warm the affections, or purify the conscience. Judas was a great luminary, he knew God's will, but he was a traitor.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(3123.) Young is, of all other men, one of the most striking examples of the disunion of piety from truth. If we read his most true, impassioned, and impressive estimate of the world and of religion, we shall think it impossible that he was uninfluenced by his subject. It is, however, a melancholy fact—that he was hunting after preferment at eighty years old, and felt and spoke like a disappointed man. The truth was pictured on his mind in most vivid colours. He felt it, while he was writing. He felt himself on a retired spot; and he saw Death, the mighty hunter, pursuing the unthinking world. He saw redemption—its necessity and its grandeur; and, while he looked on it, he spoke as a man would speak whose mind and heart are deeply engaged. Notwithstanding all this, the view did not reach his heart! Had I preached in his pulpit with the fervour and interest that his "Night Thoughts" discover, he would have been terrified. He told a friend of mine, who went to him under religious fears, that he must go more into the world!
—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(3124.) Belief is not intellectual but moral: "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," so that religion is not a question of mere notions, but the expression of the entire spiritual life. It would be as logical to contend that a man is going a journey because he can explain the construction of an engine as to contend that a man is going to heaven because he can correctly answer theological questions.
—*Parker*.

7. Its present imperfection.

(3125.) Our knowledge is but in part, and imperfect; the most of what we know, is the least of what we do not know. The Gospel is as a rich piece of arras, rolled up; this God hath been unfolding ever since the first promise was made to Adam, opening it still every age wider than other; but the world shall sooner be at an end, than this mystery will be fully known. Indeed as a river (which may be breaks forth at first from the small orifice of a little spring) does widen its channel, and grows broader, as it approacheth nearer to the sea; so the knowledge of this mystery doth spread every age more than other, and still will, as the world draws nearer to the sea of eternity, into which it must at last fall. The Gospel appeared but a little spring in Adam's time, whose whole Bible was bound up in a single promise; this increased to a rivulet by Abraham's time, and this rivulet enlarged itself into a river in the days of the prophets; but when Christ came in the flesh, then knowledge flowed in amain; the least in the Gospel-state is said to be greater than the greatest before Christ: so that in comparison of the darker times of the law, the knowledge Christians now have, is great; but compared with the knowledge they shall have in heaven, 'tis little, and but peep of day.
—*Gurnall*.

(3126.) Man's knowledge is but as the rivulet; his ignorance as the sea.
—*Eliza Cook*.

8. Its future perfectness.

(3127.) "Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (1 Cor. xiii. 8). Although it be no marvel that prophecies and tongues should fail, that knowledge shall be done away, this is what may cause some perplexity. What then? are we then to live in ignorance? Far from it. Nay, then specially it is probable that our knowledge is made more intense. Wherefore also he said, "Then shall I know, even as also I am known." For this reason, if you mark it, that you might not suppose this to be done away equally with the prophecy and the tongues, having said, "Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away," he was not silent, but added also the manner of its vanishing away, immediately subjoining the saying, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." It is not therefore knowledge that is done away, but this circumstance, that our knowledge is in part. For we shall not only know as much, but even a great deal more. But that I may also make it plain by example; now we know that God is everywhere, but how, we know not. That He made out of things that are not the things that are, we know; but of the manner we are ignorant. That He was born of a virgin, we know, but how, we know not yet. But then shall we know somewhat more and more clearly concerning these things.
—*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

(3128.) The cessation of our present mode of knowing, is but the cessation of our ignorance and imperfection: as our wakening endeth a dreaming knowledge, and our maturity endeth the trifling knowledge of a child: for so saith the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. xiii. 8–12). Love never faileth, and we can love no more than we know; but whether there be prophecies they shall fail (that is, cease); whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, notional and abstractive, such as we have now, it shall vanish away: "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass (*per speciem*) darkly," as men understand a thing by a metaphor, parable, or a riddle, "but then face to face;" even creatures intuitively as in themselves naked and open to our sight. "Now I know in part (not *rem sed aliquid rei*; in which sense Sanchery truly saith, *nihil scitur*), "but then I shall know even as I am known; not as God knoweth us:" for our knowledge and His must not be so comparatively likened; but as holy spirits know us both now and for ever, we shall both know, and be known by immediate intuition.

If a physician be to describe the parts of a man, and the latent diseases of his patient, he is fain to search hard, and bestow many thoughts of it besides his long reading and converse, to make him capable

of knowing; and when all is done, he goeth much upon conjectures, and his knowledge is mixed with many uncertainties, yea, and mistakes; but when he openeth the corpse, he seeth all, and his knowledge is more full, more true, and more certain; besides that it is easily and quickly attained, even by a present look. A countryman knoweth the town, the fields, and rivers, where he dwelleth, yea, and the plants and animals, with ease and certain clearness, when he that must know the same things by the study of geographical writings and tables, must know them but with a general, an unsatisfactory, and oft a much mistaking kind of knowledge. Alas! when our present knowledge hath cost a man the study of forty or fifty or sixty years, how lean, how poor, how doubtful and unsatisfactory is it, after all! But when God will show us Himself and all things, and when heaven is known as the sun by its own light, this will be the clear, pure, and satisfactory knowledge: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v.). "And without holiness none can see Him" (Heb. xii. 14). This sight will be worthy the name of wisdom, when our present glimpse is but philosophy, a love and desire of wisdom. So far should we be from fearing death, through the fear of losing our knowledge, or any of the means of knowledge, that it should make us rather long for the world of glorious light, that we might get out of this darkness and know all that with an easy look, to our joy and satisfaction, which here we know with troublesome doubtings, or not at all. Shall we be afraid of darkness in the heavenly light, or of ignorance, when we see the Lord of glory?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

9. The sources of knowledge will never be exhausted.

(3129.) The thought occurred to some that if, as the Scriptures appear to intimate, we learn more rapidly in the future than in the present life, and are to have our existence prolonged through eternity, a time will come when the sources of knowledge will be exhausted, and the enjoyments of heaven, having lost the charm of novelty, will in consequence become insipid. There would be reason in this thought, were it not that we have to become acquainted with a boundless universe, and a God of infinite perfections. It is said "that the traveller who ascends slowly the steep side of the Andes, when, stage after stage, he looks beneath and around him, and gazes at each advance upon a wider horizon than before, convinces himself that he is actually attaining a great elevation above the common level of earth whence he started. And yet, when he looks upward to the starry vault, and sees it now in all its amplitude and through a more translucent medium, so as that, more distinctly than before, he is conscious of the vastness and distance of the heavenly system, his impression is not that he is getting nearer to the stars; but rather that, though actually he rises, they are drawing back to a greater remoteness, and contemning his feeble efforts to climb on high." Just so will it be with our knowledge in the future state. Though sensible of a constant progression, when we look to the untrodden heights which lie beyond us, they will appear the vaster the higher we ascend. Our augmented knowledge will make us more sensible of our own ignorance. The more we learn of God, the more shall we be convinced that we cannot comprehend His infinitude. Thus, my brethren, provision is made for our eternal improvement. And though what we shall ultimately become does not yet appear, cannot yet appear, the thought of what we may be after millions of years are past, is enough to thrill you with emotions of delight, and to make the heart bound within you, enough to gratify the loftiest ambition, and to satisfy the most enlarged desires. —*Landels.*

III. *THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.*

1. Its importance.

(3130.) First know God and then serve Him. He can never shoot right that takes his aim contrary. The understanding directs all the inferior powers of the soul; if that is infected with error, the affections must necessarily move out of order. A blind horse may be full of mettle, but it is ever and anon apt to stumble; and therefore, "without knowledge the heart is not good."

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3131.) Knowledge of God is a necessary preface to a spiritual joy in Him (Ps. civ. 34). First, by a sweetness tasted in meditation, and then a delight in God, the object of it; and according to the apprehension we have of the object, are the degrees of our delight in it. It is all one to a blind man, be he in a palace richly furnished, or a dungeon hung with cobwebs. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3132.) The brightest needles move quickest, and stick fastest to the loadstone. The clearer our knowledge, the closer our adherence. He that spiritually knows God and Christ, will rest upon God's bare word with more steadfastness than if he had the strongest assurances of all the princes in the world for a great estate.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3133.) Whatsoever other knowledge a man may be endued withal, he is but an ignorant person who doth not know God, the author of his being.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(3134.) We must know God's will before we can do it; knowledge is the eye to direct the foot of obedience. The papists make ignorance the mother of devotion, but Christ makes ignorance the mother of error (Matt. xxii. 29). "Ye err, not knowing the Scripture." We must know God's will before we can do it aright, there is no going to heaven blindfold. In the creation, light was the first thing that was made; so it is in the new creation: knowledge is the pillar of fire that goes before us, and lights us into the heavenly kingdom. It is light must bring us to the "inheritance of the saints in light." —*Watson*, 1696.

(3135.) Will you reject knowledge because some abuse it? Why, that is as ridiculous as to say, Because many die, who have both food and physic, and plenty of means for preserving life: therefore, I will use no means, for preserving of my life at all. They that have food and physic may die; but they that have none of them cannot live; so, whoever perish, ignorant persons, that slight the means, are sure to perish. —*Erskine*, 1683–1752.

(3136.) When St. Columban said to Lucinus, concerning his ardent devotion to learning, "My child, many out of undue love of knowledge have shipwrecked their souls," "My father," replied the

boy with deep humility, "if I learn to know God I shall never offend Him, for they only offend Him who know Him not." —*F. W. Farrar.*

2. Its insufficiency.

(3137.) Knowledge gives us a sight, and love gives us a possession; we find God by knowledge, but we enjoy Him by love. Let us improve our knowledge of Him for inflaming our affections to Him, that we may be prepared for the glory of our eternal life. The understanding is but the door of the heart; to let God and Christ stick there, and not bring them into the heart, is to give a cold entertainment to that which deserves the best.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

3. Its delightfulness.

(3138.) It is a durable delight when all others wither. Other knowledge is as a rainbow, pleasant to behold but quickly vanishing, like the sound of music in the ear, which pleases and expires.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3139.) A Christian rejoices in the knowledge of God. What music is to the sensitive and susceptible ear, what beauty is to the eye, what health is to the frame and sweetness to the taste, all this, and more than this, the knowledge of God, through apprehension of the everlasting gospel, is to the true Christian. —*Cumming.*

4. Should be progressive.

(3140.) It is a progressive knowledge, still aiming at more knowledge and more improvements of it. Though the knowledge of God be at first infused into us by the inspiration of the Spirit, yet neither that in the head, nor grace in the heart, have their full strength at their first birth, but attain their stature gradually. Natural knowledge, which is a common work of God upon men, arrives not at its growth in a moment, but in a tract of time. He that first found out the inclination of the loadstone to the pole did not presently apprehend all the virtues of the loadstone, nor was able to sail about the world by it, though this afterwards grew up from the first invention. We go up a mountain step by step. Christ does not perform all the parts of His prophetical office at once; there is a further declaration of the name of God to succeed the first. "I have declared Thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them." —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

5. Is impossible to the inconstant.

(3141.) Light and inconstant spirits have not the knowledge of God, any more than running water can receive the force of a sunbeam, which glides away from one after another, and remains under the power and force of none. You can never set a stamp upon a floating cork till you take it out of the water. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

6. Its humbling effects.

(3142.) Suppose a man be highly advanced in the knowledge of Christ, surely the more knowledge he hath, the more doth he see into himself, and the more corruption will he see in himself than he saw before: as by the bright sun that shines in at the window, we will see those motes fly up and down, that we cannot see by the clear daylight. The more light, the more a man sees into himself, and so the more corruption does he find in him, than before he thought of. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

IV. *SAVING KNOWLEDGE.*

1. Its nature.

(3143.) The knowledge of God and Christ, which is saving, differs not from other knowledge in regard of the object, but the manner of knowing and the effects of knowledge. One knows by a natural understanding, and knows God in the Scripture as he would know a thing written in any other book: the other knowledge is by an understanding opened to take in more fully what is presented. The shutters which barred out the light are pulled down, whereby the light breaks into the room more clearly: "Then opened He their understandings" (Luke xxiv. 45). Two may behold the same picture, the object is the same; but one having a more piercing eye, and exacter judgment, will better discern the lineaments and beauty of the work, which the other cannot perceive, though he views the same object. Suppose a beast that knows his master and the servants that give him food, were changed into a man, and endued with a rational soul, he would have the same objects of knowledge; but he would know them in another manner, with an understanding given; whereas he knew before only by a customary sight, a strength of imagination.

And another kind of knowledge in the effects. A child of a year old may know his parents, his father, mother, and the servants; but when he grows up, though there is no change of the objects, yet there is in the effects of his knowledge. He knows them with more reverence, with more rational affections, with expressions of duty. So the knowledge of God differs in a sound Christian from the knowledge others have under the preaching of the Gospel; he knows God and Christ in a clearer manner, with a spiritual eye, and brings forth affectionate and practical fruits of that knowledge. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3144.) Other knowledge discovers other things, but not a man's self; like a dark lantern, which shows us other persons and things, but obscures ourselves from the sight of ourselves; but the knowledge of God is such a light whereby a man beholds himself, as well as the way wherein he is to walk.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3145.) There is as great difference between the common knowledge of God in an unbelieving scholar and a believing Christian, as between the knowledge that a gardener has of plants and flowers in his master's garden: he knows how to dress them, knows the names and nature of every particular plant, and flower there; but though the knowledge of the owner of it does not extend to all those particularities, yet he knows it to be his, conveyed to him, and of right belonging to him. Another man delights in a beautiful field and garden, pleases himself with the variety of the flowers and pleasures of the walks; the owner delights in it upon this account too, loves to consider the nature of the trees and plants; but he has a knowledge of it, and delight in it above the others; because of his property, he knows the possession of it, and the commodities arising from it to be his.

This knowledge is always with some glimmering of hopes that God and Christ are his, according to the tenor of the covenant. Though there be not a full assurance, the title and evidence is not clear to him, and may seem to have some flaw in it which he has not yet overcome, yet all true faith has

something of comfort and hope with it, for it is wrought by the Spirit as a comforter, convincing of the sufficiency as well as the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, upon which the soul in this saving knowledge flings itself, and follows this glimmering, till he comes to a greater light, whereby to read his own interest in Christ, as Paul did; "Who loved me, and gave himself for me."

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3146.) It differs from the knowledge of others, as the sight of a ship by an unskilful eye from that of the shipwright or pilot, who understands all the parts of the workman's skill; or the sight of a picture by a limner, and one ignorant of the art. One sees the hidden pieces of art, the other the outward figure and composure.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3147.) It is a firm knowledge. Some have a floating knowledge of God. Truth in their mind does dance as the image of the sun or stars in a pail, according to the motion of the water. Truth and error are like a pair of scales, sometimes up and sometimes down. But as true faith, so saving knowledge, is steadfast like a needle, sticking to the loadstone without wavering (Col. ii. 5).

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

2. Can be imparted to us only by the Spirit of God.

(3148.) The greatest part of the world, whether learned or unlearned, think that there is no need of purging and purifying of their hearts for the right knowledge of Christ and His Gospel: but though their lives be never so wicked, their hearts never so foul within, yet they may know Christ sufficiently out of their mere systems and bodies of divinity; although our Saviour prescribes His disciples another method to come to the right knowledge of Divine truths, by doing of God's will. "He that will do my Father's will (saith He), shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." He is a true Christian, indeed, not he that is book-taught, but he that is God-taught; he that has "an unction from the Holy One" that teaches him all things: he that has the Spirit of Christ within him that searcheth out the deep things of God: "for as no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

Ink and paper can never make us Christians, can never beget a new nature, a living principle in us; can never form Christ, or any true notions of spiritual things, in our hearts. Cold theorems and maxims, lean syllogistical reasonings, could never yet of themselves beget the least glimpse of true heavenly light, the least sap of saving knowledge, in any heart. All this is but the groping of the poor dark spirit of man after truth, to find it out with his own endeavours, and feel it with his own cold and benumbed hands. Words and syllabies, which are but dead things, cannot possibly convey the living notions of heavenly truths to us. The secret mysteries of a Divine life, of a new nature, of Christ formed in our hearts, they cannot be written or spoken; language and expressions cannot reach them; neither can they be ever truly understood, except the soul itself be kindled from within, and awakened into the life of them. A painter that could draw a rose, though he may flourish some likeness of it in figure and colour, yet he can never paint the scent and fragrancy; or if he would draw a flame, he cannot put a constant heat into his colours: he cannot make his pencil drop a sound, as the echo in the epigram mocks at him—

Si vis similem pingere, pinge sonum.

All the skill of cunning artisans and mechanics cannot put a principle of life into a statue of their own making. Neither are we able to enclose in words and letters the life, soul, and essence of any spiritual truths, and as it were to incorporate it in them. —*Cudworth*, 1617–1688.

3. Its blessedness.

(3149.) Speculative knowledge is as the light of torches, guiding, not heating; this is as the sun, which both directs and warms; a fire felt as well as seen; truth known, and truth used as a compass to sail by. When the knowledge of the nature of God is impressed upon us for imitation, and is, as the conference of Christ with His disciples, inflaming the heart (Luke xxiv. 32), and driving away the cold affections towards God; when righteousness is understood as well as judgment, and that as a path, and a good path to walk in; when we are not only directed to the path, but are pleased with the goodness of it, and the approving wisdom enters into the heart, and the knowledge of it becomes pleasant to the soul (Prov. ii. 9, 10); when there is not only a knowledge of God, but a liking to retain it; a sight of the sun, and a delight in its beams; a knowledge of the fire, and approach to its heat; a mighty pleasure in God and Christ, as a sweet ointment poured forth; when God is known and embraced as the chief good and ultimate end; Christ known and embraced as the way to be at peace with God, and an honourer of Him: such a knowledge as is not only like animal spirits in the brain, but vital spirits in the heart enabling for action; not like a cloud hanging in the air, but distilling in fruitful showers for the assistance of the earth.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3150.) This kind of knowledge is necessary to happiness, for without it we can have no clear nor worthy notions of God, but more likely disparaging ones; as a man that never saw the stateliness of London, or any city like it, cannot mount higher in his conceptions of it than that it may be a little better than the best market town which he has seen in his country, but he is not like to have conceits of it according to the greatness of the place, the magnificence of the buildings, the gallantry of the people. When he once comes to behold it, he will find his former conceptions of it to be vastly short of the beauty of the place. He would scarce be convinced of it without a sight. Indeed, this knowledge of God is imperfect here because of our present state. But some experience there is here answering to the vision hereafter, as a map of that which the soul is travelling to a sight of. This kind of knowledge of God is banished from the unclean spirits; they have lost the savour of what they knew of God, and feel nothing but the power of His wrath. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3151.) There is an excellency in Divine knowledge that cannot be discovered by the tongues of men or angels; an experience and spiritual sensation renders a man more intelligent than all discourses can. As the natural sense best judges of sensible

objects, so does the spiritual sense of divine. He that has tasted honey has a more lively knowledge of it than the most learned man that never tasted the sweetness, or felt the operations of it. Nor can any conceive so clearly of the excellency of the sun, by the discourses of the richest fancies, as by seeing its glory and feeling the warmth of its beams. A man's own sense will better inform him of the beauty of the heavens than the elevated reasonings of philosophers. Divine truth acted upon the heart, and felt in its influence, is more plainly known than by discourse and reason.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3152.) A speculative knowledge is like that of the Queen of Sheba at a distance; an experimental is like her sight of the order and glory of Solomon's court, that left no more spirit in her.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

4. By whom it is possessed.

(3153.) Experience giveth us a far more satisfactory manner of knowledge, than others have that have no such experience. To know by hearsay, is like the knowing of a country in a map; and to know by experience, is like the knowing of the same country by sight. An experienced navigator, or soldier, or physician, or governor, hath another manner of knowledge than the most learned can have without experience; even a knowledge that confirmeth a man, and makes him confident.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3154.) The truths of Christ crucified are the Christian's philosophy, and a good life is the Christian's logic—that great instrumental introductive art that must guide the mind into the former. And where a long course of piety, and close communion with God, has purged the heart, and rectified the will, and made all things ready for the reception of God's Spirit, knowledge will break in upon such a soul, like the sun shining in his full might, with such a victorious light, that nothing shall be able to resist it.

If now at length some should object here, that from what has been delivered, it will follow, that the most pious men are still the most knowing, which yet seems contrary to common experience and observation, I answer, that as to all things directly conducing, and necessary to salvation, there is no doubt but they are so; as the meanest common soldier, that has fought often in an army, has a truer and better knowledge of war, than he that has read and writ whole volumes of it, but never was in any battle.

Practical sciences are not to be learned but in the way of action. It is experience that must give knowledge in the Christian profession, as well as in all others. And the knowledge drawn from experience is quite of another kind from that which flows from speculation or discourse. It is not the opinion, but the "path of the just," that the wisest of men tells us, "shines more and more unto a perfect day." The obedient, and the men of practice, are those sons of light, that shall outgrow all their doubts and ignorances, that shall ride upon these clouds, and triumph over their present imperfections, till persuasion pass into knowledge, and knowledge advance into assurance, and all come at length to be completed in the beatific vision, and a full fruition of those joys, which God has in reserve for them, whom by His grace He shall prepare for glory. —*South*, 1633–1716.

5. How its possession is to be proved.

(3155.) There is a *caro* and a *spiritus*, a flesh and a spirit, a body and a soul, in all the writings of the Scriptures. It is but the flesh and body of Divine truths that is printed upon paper; which many moths of books and libraries do only feed upon; many walking skeletons of knowledge, that bury and entomb truths in the living sepulchres of their souls, do only converse with; such as never did anything else but pick at the mere bark and rind of truths, and crack the shells of them. But there is a soul and spirit of Divine truths that could never yet be congealed into ink, that could never be blotted upon paper, which by a secret traduction and conveyance, passes from one soul into another, being able to dwell or lodge nowhere, but in a spiritual being, in a living thing, because itself is nothing but life and spirit. Neither can it, where indeed it is, express itself sufficiently in words and sounds, but it will best declare and speak itself in actions; as the old manner of writing among the Egyptians was, not by words, but things. The life of Divine truths is better expressed in actions than in words, because actions are more living than words. Words are nothing but dead resemblances and pictures of those truths, which live and breathe in actions; and the kingdom of God consists not in word, but in life and power. Sheep do not come and bring their fodder to their shepherd, and show him how much they eat; but inwardly concocting and digesting it, they make it appear by the fleece which they wear upon their backs, and by the milk which they give. And let not Christians affect only to talk and dispute of Christ, and so measure our knowledge of Him by our words; but let us show our knowledge concocted into our lives and actions; and then let us really manifest that we are Christ's sheep indeed, that we are His disciples, by that fleece of holiness which we wear, and by the fruits that we daily yield in our lives and conversations: for "herein," says Christ, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; *so* shall ye be my disciples."

—*Cudworth*, 1617–1688.

LAW.

I. *THE EXTENT AND BLESSEDNESS OF HER SWAY.*

(3156.) Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage,—the very least as feeling her care, the greatest as not exempted from her power; both angels and men and creatures, of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.

—*Hooker*, 1553–1600.

(3157.) Since the time that God did first proclaim the edicts of His law upon the world, heaven and earth have hearkened unto His voice, and their labour hath been to do His will. "He made a law for the rain;" He gave His "decree unto the sea, that the waters should not pass His commandment." Now, if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were for a while, the observation of her own laws, if these principal

and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which they now have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads, should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it may happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now, as a giant, doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were, through a languishing faintness, begin to stand, and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of her heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away, as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them relief;—what would become of man himself, whom these things do now all serve? See we not plainly, that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world?

—*Hooker*, 1553–1600.

II. *HUMAN LAWS.*

1. Their foundations.

(3158.) In reality there are two, and only two, foundations of law; and they are both of them conditions without which nothing can give it any force: I mean equity and utility. With respect to the former, it grows out of the great rule of equality, which is grounded upon our common nature, and which Philo, with propriety and beauty, calls the mother of justice. All human laws are, properly speaking, only declaratory; they may alter the mode and application, but have no power over the substance, of original justice. The other foundation of law, which is utility, must be understood, not of partial or limited, but of general and public, utility, connected in the same manner with, and derived directly from, our rational nature; for any other utility may be the utility of a robber, but cannot be that of a citizen,—the interest of the domestic enemy, and not that of a member of the commonwealth. —*Burke*, 1728–1797.

2. Are needful for the weak and the wicked.

(3159.) When the state is most corrupt, then the laws are most multiplied. —*Tacitus.*

(3160.) Laws are simply aids to weak folks, to tell them where to go, to help them to go, and to make them remember the next time if they do not go. Laws are men's servants; and they are servants which serve them in that way. But if a man has a direct inspiration of God; or if his culture has gone so high that he does not need these external stimulants; or if he has another sphere of influences which lead him to the same things from a higher point of view, the lower ones drop, not because they are wrong, but because the man is doing the same things better by a different set of instruments. Therefore it is, that there is no law to some men. A man who needs a law is yet a child.

There is not one man in a hundred who ever does live by the laws of the land that he is in. We do not live by the laws of our land. You do not know one quarter of the laws that are on our statute books. A virtuous and honest man does not need to know what the laws are. The greatest proportion of men live and die without hearing once in all their life a tenth or a hundredth part of the laws that pertain to good conduct. They do right of their own accord, and therefore the law has no force on them. So it is in respect to true manly living. As far as a real, upright man goes, he goes voluntarily. He does from spontaneity and from choice what men lower down do from necessity, or from fear of punishment. The consequence is, that men live toward freedom in proportion as they live toward fidelity. —*Beecher.*

(3161.) A principle is better than a rule; yet we are not to despise rules, for they are leading-strings intended to bring us along the path of life to principles. A rule is like a mould. You pour in the wax; and when it is pressed, it comes out, and the mould is left behind. The end of a rule is to bring the man out from the rule. Rules are like sepals around a rose-bud—good to keep the bud through its first stages; but when it opens, and comes to the perfect flower, then they fall off, and are useless. The highest type of character is that which is made up of feelings so luminous that the man takes a more elevated path than he could ever do if he were bound down to rules and precedents.

—*Beecher.*

3. Are not the standard of righteousness.

(3162.) To say that there is nothing just or unjust except what laws expressly enjoin or forbid, is the same as if we were to maintain that all radii were not equal before the circumference of the circle had been traced.—*Montesquieu*, 1689–1755.

4. How they are to be estimated.

(3163.) They are the best laws by which the king hath the justest prerogative and the people the best liberty. —*Lord Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(3164.) A law is valuable, not because it is law, but because there is right in it; and because of this rightness it is like a vessel carrying perfume—like the alabaster enclosure of a lamp. —*Beecher.*

5. Should not be too minute and restrictive.

(3165.) The framers of preventive laws, no less than private tutors and schoolmasters, should remember, that the readiest way to make either mind or body grow awry, is by lacing it too tight.

—*S. T. Coleridge*, 1772–1834.

(3166.) Laws are like grapes, that being too much pressed, yield a hard and unwholesome wine.

—*Eliza Cook.*

6. Should be carried into effect.

(3167.) A good law without execution is like an unperformed promise.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

7. "Going to law."

(3168.) To go to law *for revenge* we are simply forbidden, that is, to return evil for evil; and therefore all those suits which are for *vindictive sentences*, not for reparative, are directly criminal.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(3169.) To go to law is for two persons to kindle a fire at their own cost to warm others, and singe themselves to cinders; and because they cannot agree as to what is truth and equity, they will both agree to unplume themselves, that others may be decorated with their feathers. —*Fellthan.*

III. *THE LAWS OF NATURE.*

1. Some of their characteristics:—

(1.) *They are enduring.*

(3170.) The Author of Nature has not given laws to the universe which, like the institutions of men, carry in themselves the elements of their own destruction. He has not permitted in His works any symptom of infancy or old age, or any sign by which we may estimate either their future or their past duration. He may put an end, as He no doubt gave a beginning, to the present system at some determinate period of time: but we may rest assured that this great catastrophe will not be brought about by the laws now existing, and that it is not indicated by anything which we perceive.

—*John Playfair.*

(2.) *They are inexorable and indiscriminating.*

(3171.) Law is not only inexorable, but blind and pitiless. It is affected neither by age, ignorance, or knowledge. It wrings to the last pang its penalty out of every violator. Law does not lessen its penalty because its violator is a child, or its violation is involuntary or in ignorance. Poison is not a whit less poisonous because it was taken ignorantly or by mistake. If my arm is broken it makes no difference whatever in the physical result, whether it was effected in justifiable defence of my own person and property, or in a criminal assault upon the person and property of another. If I am beheaded, the physical result is the same whether my name is haloed with the glory of a martyr, or branded with the infamy of a culprit.

The general laws of nature march straight on, without discrimination in the execution of their purposes, whether they bear upon man, woman, or the child that knows not its right hand from its left. In the awful catastrophe that overwhelmed Pompeii and Herculaneum, in the terrible plague that converted London into a charnel-house, in the famines and pestilences that have blighted whole lands, was there any discrimination between innocence and guilt, between maturity and infancy? Did the terrible earthquakes of South America, that gorged themselves with tens of thousands of human beings, make any distinction? Do the destructive, irresistible hurricanes that sweep the ocean discriminate between the pirate and the merchantman, the privateer and the transport? —*Chapman.*

(3.) *They are irresistible.*

(3172.) Submits to no permanent modification. There may seem to be exceptions to this. In the vegetable world, for example, life, whatever this may be, lays hold on matter, takes it out from under the control of law, draws it to itself, combines it in new forms and quantities, and thus seems to suspend, violate, bid defiance to law. But this is only briefly and apparently so. Gravitation never lets go its hold upon a single particle of matter, however used by life, and the laws of chemical action never suspend their operation. For a while, and within certain fixed limits, their action is modified. Vegetable life will lift matter aloft in the tree; but gravitation contests every inch, and keeps perpetually pulling upon it. Briefly, life seems to have the best of it. But wait, and you will find that that law will drag down to the earth the loftiest and most stalwart tree of the forest, and the laws of chemical action will reduce it to its original condition and elements, and these will be scattered as they were before life seized upon them. And thus law will demonstrate its permanent sovereignty over matter. It never lets go its hold, never admits any lasting interference with its reign.

Man may briefly control the action of the laws of his physical system. The remedial agencies that are at his command, and the self-repairing power of his body, neutralise the action of the law of dissolution and hold it in abeyance. Remedial agencies aid in arresting or modifying the results of the violation of *some* physical laws, but only for a while. The time will come when no remedial agency will even for one moment stay or modify the action of law, when law will laugh to scorn the profoundest skill of science and the most potent virtues of medicine. The vital force may for a while succeed in withstanding the ravages of law, and yet at last it must yield, and law have its full satisfaction. For a time life is constantly building up the system, and law tearing it down. For years life builds faster than law can take down. But then life will soon begin to falter in the unequal contest, grow weary and weakly, and law obtain the ascendency and reduce the system to dust.

—*Chapman.*

2. They are merely modes of Divine operation.

(3173.) The laws of nature are the rules according to which effects are produced; but there must be a cause which operates according to these rules. The rules of navigation never steered a ship, nor the law of gravity never moved a planet.

—*T. Reid*, 1710-1796.

(3174.) Let it be granted that everything in the universe, from the rain-drop to a rolling world, is controlled by the laws of nature, we have still to ask by whom these laws were ordained, and are sustained and enforced. "Nature," what is that? Is it that which gives laws, or that which obeys them? It is a law of nature that fire shall burn: how did it come to be so? Did fire at some far off time consult with itself and resolve how it would act through all coming ages? Fire burns as intensely to-day as it did a thousand years ago: does it do so of set purpose, and that it may be always consistent with itself? In accordance with a law of nature, autumn has now succeeded summer: who enforced that law? Is the universe a vast clock, with countless wheels and infinite complications, that goes on for ever without needing to be wound up? All this talk about the laws of nature is in plain truth nothing but an attempt to evade the denial or recognition of the being and agency of God. The laws of nature are simply so much as we have discovered of God's method of working. By Him they were ordained, and by Him they are sustained and enforced. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all." "Praise ye Him, all ye stars of light. Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for He commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling His word."

—*R. A. Bertram.*

(3175.) Speaking correctly and philosophically, the general laws of nature are just rules which God

has laid down for the regulation of His own procedure. It is not that, as a Being omnipresent and omnipotent, ever watchful and ever active, He needs those helps which man requires in consequence of his infirmities. The Almighty can never be weighed down under the burden of His government. He adopts the mode of procedure by general laws, not for His own convenience, but for that of His intelligent creatures. —*M'Cosh.*

(3176.) The half-learned man is apt to laugh at the simple faith of the clown or savage, who tells us that rain comes from God. The former, it seems, has discovered that it is the product of certain laws of air, water, and electricity. But truly the peasant is the more enlightened of the two, for he has discovered the main cause, and the real Actor; while the other has found only the second cause, and the mere instrument. It is as if a friend were to send us a gift of ingenious and beautiful workmanship, and just as our gratitude was beginning to rise to the donor, some bystanders were to endeavour to damp it all, by telling us that the gift is the product of certain machinery he had seen.

"I call," says Sir Thomas Browne, "the effects of nature the works of God, whose hand and instrument she only is; and therefore to ascribe His actions unto her, is to devolve the honour of the principal agent upon the instrument, which if with reason we may do, then let our hammers rise up and boast that they have built our houses, and our pen receive the honour of our writings."

It is surely possible for us so to expand our minds as to discover both the agent and the instrument—to discover the goodness of God in the blessing sent, and the wisdom of God in the means, so adapted to our state, through which the blessing comes.

—*M'Cosh.*

3. Their regularity is a reason for thanksgiving.

(3177.) It is the regularity of the laws of nature which leads us to put confidence in them, and enables us to make profitable use of them. Without such order and uniformity man could have no motive to industry, no incentive to activity. Disposed to action, he would ever find action to be useless, for he could not ascertain the tendency, and much less the exact effect of any step taken by him, or course of action adopted. Suppose that, instead of rising regularly at a known time, the sun were to appear and disappear like a meteor, no one being able to say where, or when, or how, all human exertion would cease in a feeling of utter hopelessness. If, instead of returning in a regular manner, the seasons were to follow each other capriciously, so that spring might be immediately succeeded by winter, and summer preceded by autumn, then the labour of the husbandman would be at an end, and the human race would perish from the earth. In such a state of things mankind would not have sufficient motive to do such common acts as to partake of food, for they could not anticipate that food would support them. With such a system, or rather want of system, pervading the world, suspicion and alarm would reign in every breast; man would sink into indolence, with all the accompanying evils of reckless audacity and vice; "fears would be in the way," and he would dread the approach of danger from every quarter; feel himself confused as in a dream, or lost as in darkness; or rather, after leading a brief and troubled existence, he would disappear from the earth.

How unreasonable, then, as well as ungrateful, the conduct of those who fail to discover the presence of God in His works, and that because of these laws, so beautiful in themselves, and benignant in their aspect towards us. Every person sees that the blessings which God lavished upon the Hebrews, in that desert which now supports but four thousand of a population, but was made to support upwards of two millions and a half for a period of forty years, were not the less, but all the more the gifts of God, from the circumstance that they were bestowed in a somewhat regular manner. No one will affirm that the manner was the less bountiful proof of the care of God, because, in order to suit the convenience of the Israelites, it did not fall irregularly, but at periodical intervals, and was gathered every morning, that those who partook of it might be strengthened for the journey of the day. And will any one maintain that our daily food is less the gift of God, because it is sent not at random, but in appointed ways, and at certain seasons, that we may be prepared to receive it? Was the water of which the Israelites drank less beneficent because it followed them all the way through the wilderness? No one will affirm that it was: and yet there are persons who feel as if they did not require to be grateful for the water of which they drink, because it comes to them from the clouds of heaven, and the fountains which gush from the earth.

We condemn the Hebrews when we read of their ingratitude, and yet we imitate their conduct. When the manna first fell, and they saw abundance of food on the previously bare face of the desert, gratitude heaved in every breast; but how short a time elapsed till they began to look upon the manna in much the same light as we look upon the dews of the evening, or the crops in harvest—as something regular and customary, the denial of which might justify complaint, but the bestowal of which was not calculated to call forth thankfulness! Because the water flowed with them through all their journey, so that the heat of a burning sun could not exhale it, nor the thirsting sand of the desert drink it up, just because it continued all the time as fresh and as cool as when it leapt from its parent rock, they came to regard it with as little wonder as we do the stream which may run past our dwelling. The pillar of cloud hung continually before them, so that the rays of a meridian sun could not dissipate it, nor the winds of heaven drive it away; and they came at last to be no more grateful for it, than we usually are for the light of the sun returning every morning. Just because this pillar of cloud was kindled into a pillar of fire every evening, they became as familiar with it as we are with the stars which God lights up nightly in the firmament. The younger portion of the people, born in the desert, and long accustomed to these wonders, may have come to look upon them as altogether natural, and would no more be surprised at the sight of the fiery pillar casting its lurid glare upon the sands, than we are with the meteor that flashes across the evening sky. Does it not appear as if it were the very frequency of the gift, and the regularity of its coming, which lead mankind to forget the Giver? It is as if a gift were left every morning at our door, and we were at length to imagine that it came alone without being sent. It is as if the widow whose meal and oil were blessed

by the prophet, had come at length to imagine that there was nothing supernatural in the transaction, just because the barrel of meal did not waste, and the cruse of oil did not fail. —*M'Cosh.*

4. Their relation to Providence.

(3178.) We are not jealous of the introduction and widest extension of general laws; for in their harmonious adjustment, they acquire a plastic power which enables them to fulfil each of the providences of an all-wise God. While the fixed nature of the laws gives to providence its firmness, the immense number and nice adaptation of these laws, like the innumerable rings of a coat-of-mail, give to it its flexibility, whereby it fits in to the shape and posture of every individual man.

A vessel is launched on the ocean, fitted, so far as human sagacity can discover, to reach its destination. But when it has reached a particular place, a great rarefaction of the air is produced by heat in a particular region of the world; the wind rushes in to fill up the vacuum, lashes the ocean into fury, bears down upon the vessel, and hurrying it furiously along, dashes it upon a rock which is in the way, and scatters the whole crew upon the wide waste of waters. The greater number perish; but some two or three are able to lay hold of portions of the floating wreck, and are borne to the rock, where they find refuge till another ship, opportunely passing by, picks them up, at the very time when they were ready to die of hunger. Now, it is surely conceivable that an all-wise and an omnipotent God might have every link in this long and complicated chain adjusted, with the special view of bringing about each of these ends—the drowning of some, and the saving of others, after having designedly exposed them to danger. Nor in all this would there be any violation of the sequences of nature, nor any suspension of general laws; there is merely such a skilful disposition as to secure the special ends which God from the first contemplated.

—*M'Cosh.*

5. Their relation to prayer.

(3179.) A question has been sometimes started: how specific answers to prayer can comport with the regularity of Providence, and the government of the world by appointed laws. Unquestionably, this is one of the deep secrets passing our limited knowledge, and belonging to an Infinite mind. It is no deeper, nor harder to reconcile, than a hundred other facts in the Divine economy, which yet we must admit, or deny sense and faith both; such, for example, as the fact that we are all free to choose how we shall act, and yet are completely bound in the hands of Omnipotence; that God is almighty and all-good, and yet leaves His children liberty to do wrong. These are transcendent mysteries, simply because they are the doings of a transcendent being—God. In the end we shall find, I suppose, that there is no more contradiction between a fixed order of laws and special answers to our asking, than there is between a general household arrangement for their children's good, on the part of earthly parents, and their daily favours granted in answer to particular requests.

—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(3180.) The intervention of a higher intelligence does not interfere with the existence or the action of laws already enacted. Put a new agent into contact with any machinery, and you may direct and modify it, but you do not therefore destroy and supersede it. When an intelligent will, however limited the power of that will, comes into connection with mere matter and the laws of matter, it cannot but influence and act upon them. The arm, which lifts a weight, modifies the law of gravity. The physician, who ministers medicine, modifies the law of life, and arrests the law of dissolution. The lightning-rod, which draws off the electricity, uses one power of nature to direct the force of another.

And if we acknowledge that, besides the finite intelligences with which we visibly have to do, there be in the universe, and interested in its progress, other and higher beings, why should we think it unreasonable, that other and higher agencies should sometimes be at work? If even our own forethought can often guard us against dangers, which we cannot but encounter, if we can by care neutralise the poison of infected airs, or restore health to a diseased frame, or protect lofty buildings from the lightning and the thunderbolt; why should we question but that, without miraculously suspending His own laws, the great Mind, which pervades and governs all things, may shelter where He willeth from the storm and tempest, may ward off the arrow that flieth by day and the pestilence that walketh in the darkness, may strike down the blasphemer in his blasphemy, or make a high road for His redeemed through the sea?

There is indeed another view of this subject, on which some have reasoned, which seems, but perhaps only seems, opposed to a Providential government. If God foresees all things, and formed all things from the first according to His foreknowledge, how can we suppose, that He would ever interfere to remedy defects in His own ordinances, which must in all things have been perfect, and which could never fail? Is it not more true to say, that from the beginning He so planned the whole scheme and mechanism of the universe, so knit together the purposes of predestination, that everything should turn out as it is meet it should, that every need should but precede its supply, every emergency should already be anticipated, every foreseen prayer should find an answer waiting for it, and that no new intervention should be needed to make all things work together after the good pleasure of His will? Let it be so. Practically it can matter nothing to us, whether our prayers were anticipated and their petitions answered before God laid the foundation of the deep: or whether there be an Ear ever open in Heaven, and a mighty Hand ever ready upon earth. —*Harold Browne.*

(3181.) We are told that the uniformity of the laws of nature forbids us to expect any answer to prayer — that the universe is governed by undeviating laws, and that no alteration in the movement of the great machine is possible. But natural laws are merely the resemblances we trace in the phenomena of nature: and these are the works of God. Laws themselves have no power to work. God works—but is He so bound by the methods which He has generally adopted, that even His Omnipotence cannot act in any other way? Is not the Creator greater than the creation— the Ruler than His laws? Is He shut out from the work of His own hands? Will philosophers limit the Almighty? He did actually interfere at the Creation. The world is not eternal. It indicates successive acts of intervention. All things have not continued

as they were from the beginning. He who has interposed already may assuredly interpose again. Why, then, may He not so far interpose as to "deliver us" when we "call upon Him in the day of trouble"?

It is sometimes said that intervention on the domain of natural laws is a miracle, and that as miracles do not take place now, if they ever did, there can be no intervention. But is this principle sound? Do we not ourselves interpose in connection with the operation of natural laws, and yet perform no miracle? We say that it is by gravitation this book falls thus upon the desk. Yet when next it falls I may, by an exercise of will, stretch forth my hand and stop it—thus. It is a natural law that bodies at rest remain at rest. Yet by my volition I move this hand which moves this book. Thus my will has intervened in the operation of natural laws—yet without a miracle. Cannot the Creator intervene?

Your child is falling from a window. By the action of a natural law he will be killed. But he cries out for help—"Father! father!" Hearing his call, in this his day of trouble, you rush forth and catch him in your arms. Your child is saved. Natural law would have killed him, but you interposed, and, without a miracle, saved him. And cannot the great Father of all do what an earthly parent does? And if in the day of adversity we, while falling, cry to Him for succour, can He not deliver us? You are ill. The disease, unchecked, will cause death. Natural law, unless interfered with, must be your destruction. But you call in a physician, and he, by his skill, by his volition, interposes with his remedies, and the disease is cured. Cannot God do what man does? Is the Great Physician more limited than His creatures? And when we call on Him in the day of the sickness of ourselves or of our friends, can He not in like manner, and without a miracle, help and heal us? —*Newman Hall.*

(3182.) This everlasting twaddle of infidelity about fixed natural laws is simple foolishness.

I should like to know, now, if man even has not as much power over natural laws wherever they touch him, as natural laws have over him. True, God says to man, in one place, "Obey," but in other places He says, "Command!"

Nature can work roughly and coarsely in generalities; but she needs men's intellect and will to give effect to what she does. Through hundreds and thousands of years she tried her hand at making apples, and they were but crab-apples at last. Man said, "I will help you;" and by his industry and wisdom, the sour, miserable fruit soon covered all the hills with luscious apples.

I have power over nature's laws to make them work for my own and my children's good. I can make the lightning my amanuensis and my messenger. I can make the sun himself my artist; but when did ever the unassisted sun paint a picture? Man whispers to him, "Come down here, and I will tell thee something that thou knowest not," and the sun obeys. "Go through there," says man, and the sun goes through, and finds himself painting pictures. I should like to see him try to do that alone. I can say to the sea, "Wait on my will," and it obeys me; to the stream, "Thou lazy thing, flow no longer down hill, but up," and it flows up. When I turn it into a machine, I say to the water, "Grind," and it grinds my food. Natural laws are God's horses, and He says to man, "Vault," and he who can ride them is their master. By working them according to their nature, we can make them to do a million things that they could never do without us. By obeying, we command. They are the blind giants which our will and wisdom guide. Is not this true? Have I perplexed you with metaphysics? Have I not rather showed you plain facts, which you can follow out to almost any extent?

Remember, the question between me and the infidel naturalist is not, "Does God disturb natural laws in order to answer the prayers of His people?" or, "Does He do violence to nature that He may do any man good?" but it is this, "Is it or is it not likely that He is able to do for those who call upon Him and whom He loves as well as man can do by means of natural law for those dear to him?" In other words, "Is it likely that one who has given to His creatures such wonderful power over laws of His own creating, should be Himself so bound and hampered by them that there should be with Him no possibility of any modification of their working to suit circumstances?" The idea is absurd, and they are fools who indulge it. —*Beecher.*

6. Their relation to human activity.

(3183.) Human activity bears the same relation to natural laws that the rider does to the horse. It is the horse that performs. It is the rider that steers and guides him. Natural laws, of themselves, are brute forces, wandering wide, and doing little. It is not until great natural laws, if I may say so, are inspired by human volition and human intelligence, that they become productive of good—that they know how to converge and co-operate so as to multiply blessings upon the earth. Without natural laws man is utterly helpless. Without men natural laws are largely useless. —*Beecher.*

IV. *THE MORAL LAW.*

1. Is the only standard of righteousness.

(3184.) The laws of men are not our rule. 'Tis too narrow and short to commend us to God, to be punctual to the laws of men and no more. Men make laws as tailors do garments, to fit the crooked bodies they serve for, to suit the humours of the people to be governed by these laws: surely they are not a sufficient rule to convince us of sin, and to guide us to true happiness. It is God's prerogative to give a law to the conscience, and the renewed motions of the heart. Human laws are good to establish converse with man, but too short to establish communion with God; and therefore we must consult with the rule which is the law of the Lord, that we may not come short of true blessedness.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

2. The loftiness of its standard.

(3185.) Every one of God's commandments enjoins more than man, in his native state of infirmity, can accomplish: nay, many of them enjoin far more than man, when he first bears them, can even understand or conceive. An infant will stretch out its little hand to lay hold on the stars: the uneducated fancy they are stuck in the blue vault, a few miles off over their heads! and only by the researches of science carried on for century after century have we been able to discover their enormous

distance, and that each little speck of light is a world. So it is with God's law. Some of its commandments are within the reach of all: there are some that all may keep; and by keeping them we find out how many there are that we have not kept, and cannot keep: the further too we advance in any part of it, the further the horizon recedes before us. *Hare*, 1796–1855.

3. Why so high a standard is set before us.

(3186.) But here some man may object and say: "Is any man able to do this that God requires? and if he be not, why then does God command us that which we cannot perform?" Herein Almighty God deals with us, as a father deals with his children. If a man have a son of seven years of age, he will furnish him with bow and arrows, and lead him into the fields. He sets him to shoot at a mark that is twelve score paces off, promising to give him some goodly thing if he hit the mark. And though the father knows that the child cannot shoot so far, yet he will have him aim at a mark beyond his reach, thereby to try the strength and forwardness of the child. And though he shoot short, yet the father will encourage him. Even so Almighty God has furnished us with judgment and reason, as it were with certain artillery, whereby we are able to distinguish between good and evil, and sent us into this world, as it were into the open fields, and sets His law before us as a mark, as David speaks, promising to give us the kingdom of heaven, if we hit the same. And albeit He knows that we cannot hit this mark, that is, keep the law which He has set before us; yet for the exercise of our faith, and for the testifying of our duty and obedience towards Him, He will always have us be aiming at it. And though we come short of that duty and obedience which He requires at our hands, yet doth He accept and reward our good endeavour. —*Henry Smith*, 1560–1591.

4. Its sacredness.

(3187.) The apostle St. James says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." This seems hard measure—to make a man offender for a word—to treat him for breaking one commandment as one that had broken all the ten. It looks at first sight as if the unprofitable servant who hid his master's talent in a napkin, had some reason for speaking of him as an "austere" man. How do we justify that? We might leave God to justify Himself? We might ask, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And leaving this and many other mysteries to be solved at the last day, or in that world where, with eyes purified from the mists of sin, we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known, we might answer with St. Paul, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing made say to Him who made it, Why hast thou made me thus?" But the case is not without a parallel in our own judicial proceedings; and as done in our courts of law, who thinks the practice wrong? A witness is giving evidence in a case where a man is on trial for his life. He states many, as lawyers say, damning facts, and makes out a case against the accused clear as daylight. What need of further witnesses? The jury lay down their pens, the judge throws himself back in his seat, and the spectators, turning to the poor, pale wretch at the bar, look on him as a dead man, feeling as sure that he will be hanged as that the sun shall rise to-morrow. And yet he is not hanged—the tables are turned an instant. The witness whose evidence had brought him to the scaffold, and to the very brink of ruin, tells a lie—one clear, deliberate falsehood. It may be on a very small point; it does not matter. All his other evidence may be true as the gospel—it does not matter; that one lie nullifies all his other testimony. Convicted of perjury on one point, his evidence is dealt with as if he had been guilty of perjury in all; and that for this good reason—that one capable of swearing to a single lie, is capable of swearing to twenty. Even so—though you may start at the bold assertion, and when you think of some gross and horrid sins may be ready to exclaim, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do such a thing?" the man who is capable of breaking one of God's commandments is capable of breaking them all, in mind and spirit; "he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all."

There are degrees, no doubt, of guilt, as there are degrees of glory. Still there is no degree of guilt but is fatal; sin is a poison of which the smallest drop kills; the law is so sacred, that one offence, one breach of any of its commandments, exposes us to the wrath of God as certainly as a thousand. The case finds its apt illustration in yonder arch which spans the waters that reflect its bending, beautiful form—drive out not ten stones, but one, and the whole pile tumbles into a mass of ruins. Or to vary the figure, a woman's virtue is certainly lost by one fall as by twenty; and he is as certainly a thief who steals a penny as he who steals a pound—who filches but a farthing from a ragged beggar, as he who plunders a bank of its gold, or robs a king of his crown. "He who offendeth in one point is guilty of all." —*Guthrie.*

5. Is inexorable.

(3188.) God's law is His manifested will for the government of His creatures. It is the reflection cast down on earth of His own holiness. It is holy, and just, and good; it is perfect as its Author; it knows of no compromise; it cannot bend, by a hair's-breadth, to keep a whole world of human kind from sinking into everlasting perdition.

Observe the steadfastness of God's laws, as applied to material things. The ocean is under law to God, and by that law it would engulf the whole human race, without swerving from its even course, if they were cast upon it without protection. It is God's law, and His laws are all sure; they are not "yea, yea, and nay, nay."

His moral law, ruling spirits, is as inexorable as His physical law, ruling matter. It knows of no yielding, no compunction.

The ocean would submerge a million of men, and the next moment its waves would roll and play in the same regular succession as before; there would be no staggering of resolution, no change of purpose. He who made the sea may miraculously walk on the waves and stretch out His hand to the perishing; but the sea's law is changeless and pitiless. If another million should be thrown upon the water, they would be swallowed up in the same way.

Such also is God's law for moral beings; it has no softness for indulged sins. Yourselves may have a partiality for them, and think it hard that wrath should come upon them to the uttermost; but the

law of God does not participate in that tenderness for favourite lusts. It meets you there like the ocean: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It never changes, and never repents. If you sin and perish, its waves roll over you unchanged, to meet the next comer with the same demand: "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*"

The law never saved a sinner; if it did, it would be no longer a law. If it softened and yielded at any one point, it were absolutely annulled. If any sin or any sinner is allowed to pass, where is the justice of punishing any sin or any sinner? To bend any commandment for the accommodation of a defaulter is to blot out the law. The law, by its very nature, can have no partialities and no compunctions. It never saves those who transgress; and never weeps for those who perish. It is hard for a man with warm life in his body to sink beneath the waves, and struggle a while, and be choked, and die in the deep unseen; yet though the case is pitiable, no one expects that the sea will become pitiful, and shrink back refusing to be the executioner. So God's other law knows no relenting; transgressors are reckoning without their host when they expect to escape by its softness in "*that day.*"

—*Arnot.*

6. Is binding even on fallen man.

(3189.) Righteousness is a debt the creature, as a rational creature, owes to God, and cannot refuse the payment of it without a crime. Who deprived him of the power of paying? Himself. Should this voluntary embezzlement prejudice God's right of exacting that which the creature cannot be excused from? A debtor, who cannot pay, remains under the obligation of paying. The receipt of a sum of money brings him into the relation of a debtor, and not his ability to pay what he has received. Such a doctrine would free all men who were unable to pay from being debtors, though the sums they owed were never so vast. That judge would be unjust that would excuse a prodigal debtor because he could not pay when sued by his creditor. No doubt the devils are bound to serve God and love Him, though by their revolt they must have lost will to obey Him. If because we have no present power, our obligation to turn to God and obey Him ceased, there would be no sin in the world, and consequently no judgments. Who will say, that if a prince had such rebellious subjects that there were little hopes to reclaim them, he should be therefore bound not to command them to return to their duty and obedience? If it be reasonable in a prince, whose rights are limited, shall it not be reasonable in God to exact it, who has an unbounded right over His creature? Either God must keep up His law or abrogate it; or, which is all one, let it lie in the dust. His holiness obliges Him to keep up His law; to abrogate it, therefore, would be against His holiness. To declare a willingness that His creature should not love Him, should not obey Him, would be to declare that which is unjust, because love is a just debt to an amiable object and the chief good, and obedience, to a sovereign Lord. Must God change His holiness because man has changed his estate? —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3190.) Though weakened through the flesh, God may justly command His fallen creatures to keep His commandments diligently. If we have lost our power, there is no reason God should lose His right. If your servants should fall into habits of drunkenness, would you admit this for a plea for neglecting your business, or coming short in it? At such times he is unable to do his master's work, but he is bound to it. It is altogether unreasonable that another should suffer through my default.

—*Salter.*

7. In what sense it is "the occasion of sin."

(3191.) To call the law impotent would oftentimes express a part of the mischief whereof it was the occasion. The commandment coming, would not seldom of itself stir up the opposition which was slumbering before, awake up for the first time a rebellious principle in the heart of man, so that the very forbidding him to do the thing should arouse in him the desire to do it. This, the irritating power of the law, provoking by a spirit of contradiction the very evil which itself forbade,—just as a rock flung into the bed of some headlong stream, would not arrest the stream, but only cause it, which ran swiftly yet silently before, now furiously to foam and fret round the obstacle which it found in its path,—this irritating power of the law, itself a most fearful testimony of the depth of man's fall, St. Paul often dwells on, above all in the seventh chapter of the Romans: "I was alive," he says there, "without the law once," counted myself alive, was not conscious of the deep antagonism between my will and the will of God: "but when the commandment came, sin revived," started up from its seeming trance into fierce activity, into an open rebellion, "and I died." So, too, in another place, "The motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." —*Trench.*

8. Its ministration of condemnation.

(3192.) As a looking-glass doth neither wash nor make him fair that looketh therein, but giveth him occasion either to seek for water or else for some other thing that may make him fair and clean: even so the law showeth unto us our sins, and maketh known unto us our miserable estate and wretchedness, and how that there is nothing good in us, and that we are far off from all manner of righteousness, and so driveth us of necessity to seek righteousness in Christ.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(3193.) Let a boy who is unskilled in the use of tools take a board and try to plane it straight, and then let him take a straight-edge and lay it on. A rat could run between that edge and the board in a dozen places! A man seems all right to himself while he measures himself by conceit and self-love; but let him take God's law as a straight-edge, and lay it alongside of his faculties, and according to that test every one of them is crooked—not one of them is straight. —*Beecher.*

(3194.) "By the law is the knowledge of sin." In delineating his spiritual life, in all its struggling and victories, through all the phases which moral being could assume, the apostle gives us to understand how law operated in the settlement of his convictions and duties: "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

The simplest of illustrations shall bring the meaning of the assertion, that law defines and limits liberty, within the comprehension of a child. For a length of time you have been in the habit of

regarding certain fields as common property; again and again you have struck your course across them to shorten or vary a journey. You were totally indifferent as to their proprietorship. The idea that you were trespassing never occurred to you. So far as you knew, there was no law whatever in the case. In process of time, however, the proprietor determines to assert his right to his own land. With this end in view, he gives public intimation that all persons found upon his property will be dealt with as trespassers. He proclaims a law. He sets up in his field a ministration of condemnation. From that hour the whole question of your liberty undergoes a fundamental change. The altered circumstances compel all who have been in the habit of traversing the land with impunity to say, in effect, "In this case we had not known transgression, except the law had said, Thou shalt not trespass." —*Joseph Parker.*

(3195.) Let me suppose that as heads of houses you had not for a long time felt the necessity of requiring all the members of your households to be at home by a fixed hour. Had they returned at seven, eight, or nine, they would have been received with equal cordiality. In the working of your family life, however, you find it necessary to determine an hour at which every child shall be with you. To that effect you proclaim your law. In the process of events, I further suppose, one of your children is a mile off when the well-known hour strikes. What is the consequence in his own experience? He hears stroke after stroke without alarm, until, alas! the legal hour is pealed off. How that stroke shakes him! how harsh the vibration: how reproachful the shivering tone! A week before, he could have heard the same hour strike, and could have sung to it. Nothing would have alarmed him. No ghostly accuser would have been upon his track. He now feels that the law is "the ministration of condemnation." He says, "I am late; I should have been at home; my father's eye will reprove me: I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known irregularity in time, except the law had said, Thou shalt be punctual." —*Joseph Parker.*

9. Is terrible only to transgressors.

(3196.) To the unrenewed man the law comes to condemn and to slay, and no man can see beauty in his executioner. The poignard that is lifted up to strike us dead may be beautifully chased. Its hilt may be one blaze of precious stones. It may be wielded by a stalwart hand. But the deadly point of the thing fascinates us. The chasing and the jewellery are all lost upon us. So it is with the man whom the law approaches only to condemn and to slay. He sees the dart; he hears the threat; he is conscious of the uplifted arm; all the beauty is hid from his fascinated vision. But the renewed man not only has the faculty by which beauty is perceived restored to active exercise: his relation to the law is so rectified that his mind can calmly take in the whole impression of it. The beauty of the law is spread out before him—the beauty of the Law of God. —*Alexander Hannay.*

(3197.) "Your appearance is very formidable," said the Drum to the great Gun upon the ramparts.

"I am made of stern metal," replied the Gun.

"It is very terrible to hear your voice sometimes," the Drum remarked.

"I can speak in words of thunder when necessary," answered the great Gun.

"True—when necessary," said the Drum.

"In case of rebellion, and to foes, I carry destruction and death," it replied; "but towards all others my disposition is quite pacific, and I am perfectly harmless."

"I am the more sensible of my own utter helplessness in your presence," said the Drum with humility.

"You need, however, entertain no fears, seeing we are alike the liege subjects of the same sovereign," replied the great Gun.

The Law of God is the declaration of His holiness, truth, and justice, which was given to govern the world, and will inflict death upon all the disobedient. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." The law is peaceful toward sinners only in Christ Jesus. We have all rebelled against God by our sins; but the Gospel reveals the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of all that believe. The Law is therefore on our side if believers, and we have nothing to fear from its power. —*Bowden.*

10. In what sense it is a restraint.

(3198.) God's Word is certainly a restraint; but it is such a restraint as the irons which prevent children from getting into the fire.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(3199.) The liberty of the subject could never be preserved in a lawless state of society, but violence and tyranny would reduce to a slavish obedience the weak and the timid. The palladium of civil liberty is law; law well defined, excluding the fluctuations of caprice on one side, and of aggression on the other; law rigorously executed also, for the best code is a dead letter if it be not accompanied by a living and firm executive. So the liberty of the believer is secured by the law of God, when brought under its guidance and government. While living under the misrule of his fallen nature, he is the sport of every capricious imagination, and successively the slave of his predominant passions (Rom. vi. 16). But let Christ's government be set up, and he becomes Christ's *freeman;* "sin has no longer dominion over him;" he is no longer its wretched captive, but is under gracious law, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

—*Salter.*

11. Has its source in love.

(3200.) It is worthy our observation, that all the virtues that God requires us to exercise, which respect ourselves, are not only pleasing to Him, but are profitable and conducive to our present well-being and tranquillity; such as temperance, chastity, meekness, contentedness, &c. And all the vices He has forbidden have a direct tendency to our ill-being and disquiet; such as gluttony, drunkenness, anger, envy, &c.

—*T. Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3201.) The spring of the law is love. With its "Thou shalt not do this," and "Thou shalt not do that," the law presents rather an ungracious aspect. We like ill to be bidden, but worse to be forbidden. But does Love never forbid? A mother, does she never forbid her child; but, on the contrary, indulge every caprice and grant all its wishes? How disastrous the fate and brief the life of a child denied

nothing, indulged in everything—allowed to play with fire, or fire-arms; to devour the painted but poisonous fruit—to bathe where the tide runs like a racehorse or the river rushes roaring into the black swirling pool. And he who frets against the restraints of God's holy law because it forbids this and the other thing, is no wiser than the infant who weeps, and screams, and struggles, and perhaps beats the kind bosom that nurses it, because its mother has snatched a knife from its foolish hands.

—*Guthrie.*

12. Is not burdensome to those who love God.

(3202.) To a saint, Christ's laws are no more burdensome than wings are to a bird.

—*Watson*, 1696.

13. Insufficiency of its work.

(1.) *It reveals true bliss, but does not enable us to attain it.*

(3203.) Like as if a man should show a needy body a bag of gold upon the top of a high tower, and yet not lend him a ladder wherewithal he might climb up to the top and fetch down the bag: even so doth God's law only point men to the sovereign good, without showing us how we may come by it, seeing that no man fulfilleth the law.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2.) *It reveals sin, but does not save the sinner.*

(3204.) A rock at mid-channel of a river, protruding above the surface, reveals the current by opposing it. An obstruction makes known both the direction and the velocity of the river's flow. But the rock that detects the movement did not produce it. Such is the relation between sin in the soul, and the law which reveals it. Life is rolling downward like a river,—one great volume of enmity against God. Because all is sin, the self-deceived man does not notice that there is any. When the law of God gets a footing within, a commotion round the point of contact suddenly makes it known that hitherto the whole life has been "without God in the world."

Further: as the rock in the river's bed did not cause, neither is it able to reverse, the current. It can only show that there is a stream, giving some indication of its direction and its speed. Although impeded and chafed into foam at the spot, the river rises to the difficulty, and rushes down more rapidly than before. It is thus with the commandment when it opposes sin in a human heart. If it remain alone, although it has power to disturb, it has not power to renew. —*Arnot.*

(3205.) Though the law, like flaming fire and stormy winds, becomes God's messenger to run His errands of mercy, yet the saved owe their salvation all to Christ.

I awake from a swoon, alone. The fathomless sea is beneath me, the fathomless sky above me, and I am clinging convulsively to some broken bits of wood. The burning, sinking ship—the shrieking, drowning crowd,—I can scarcely be said to remember: a dim, faintly-outlined image of them hovers like mist about my troubled brain. The sky grows dark, the wind grows stormy, the waves leap higher, the little raft is rending; I am sink—sinking in the sea alone. Will these terrors drive me from my frail resting-place? In these extremities will I let my failing foothold go? Yes, if I see the life-boat bearing down upon me, and feel a line from her bows falling athwart my body, and hear a brother's shout above the storm, "Hold fast by this and you are safe!" The storm above, the waves around, the rending beneath me, will not drive me off my bits of broken wood, unless the life-boat is by my side. Although I know my standing to be unsafe, although I feel it going asunder, I will cling to it and perish with it, if nothing better is within my reach.

If I am saved to-day, I owe much to the law which taught me that I was lost, but more to Christ who became my Saviour. —*Arnot.*

(3.) *It terrifies and deters, but does not renew.*

(3206.) If the ice be broken but over night by the husbandman, when he comes the next day he finds it frozen up again; but let the sun dart on it his warm beams, and then it runs down in streams: so the breaking of the heart by the terrors of the law, is but like the breaking of the ice with a pole by the husbandman to give the cattle drink; but when the love of God comes to the heart, then the corruptions of the heart dissolve, even as the ice dissolves when the warm beams of the sun rest upon it. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(3207.) A legally-convinced person would only be freed from the pain, an evangelically-convinced person from the sin, the true cause of it. Like swine, they would not have the cudgel, but they would have the mire; would have a freedom from the lash of the law, but hate to come under the yoke of Christ. They hate the iron that is come into their side, but not the crime, as a malefactor does the gaol or a thief the gibbet. Such a one had rather have a rotten heart than a painful rack; he had rather have a putrified than a deep incision. The one cries for a plaster to ease his conscience, the other for an axe to be laid to the root of his sin.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3208.) A legal conviction does not of itself soften, but rather harden; an evangelical is melting and submissive. The making a fleshy heart and disposing it to such a frame, is the incommunicable property of the covenant of grace, and was never within the verge and compass of the law. The law, like a cannon, thunders only bullets and cursing, not a word of a promise but to perfect righteousness; therefore a legal conviction cannot be attended with any melting fruit. It is like a hammer that may break a stone in pieces, yet every part retains its hardness. After a mere legal conviction, the heart is commonly harder, as water, if it grow cold after it is heated, freezes harder than it would have done if it had retained its native cold without the interruption of a contrary quality. All those strivings of the Spirit with the old world abated nothing of those evil imaginations which lodged in the heart continually. And it is observed, that though the Israelites heard the thunder, saw the lightning, the mountain burning with fire, the blackness, darkness, and tempest, as a preparation for giving the law, which made them tremble, yet before forty days were over, they had not only forgotten that law, but they sin against that God whose power they feared, renounced God and His power over them, and make themselves a golden calf (Exod. xxxii. 1, 4). The scorching of the law makes the burned place more brawny after the fire

is out. The understanding may be soundly convinced, yet the heart not melted; the one is from the undeniable evidence of truth, the other is from the kindly influence of the Spirit. But when the Spirit convinces the heart in a spiritual method, it shines like the sun in the heavens, which thaws the cold and frozen earth, and makes a man to be as melting wax before God.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3209.) Though the course of sin may be repelled for a season by the dispensation of the law, yet the spring and fountain of it is not dried up thereby. Though it withdraws and hides itself for a season, it is but to shift out of a storm, and then to return again. As a traveller in his way meeting with a violent storm of thunder and rain, immediately turns out of his way to some house or tree for his shelter, but yet this causes him not to give over his journey,—so soon as the storm is over he returns to his way and progress again; so it is with men in bondage unto sin. They are in a course of pursuing their lusts; the law meets with them in a storm of thunder and lightning from heaven, terrifies and hinders them in their way. This turns them for a season out of their course; they will run to prayer or amendment of life, for some shelter from the storm of wrath which is feared coming upon their consciences. But is the course stopped? are their principles altered? Not at all; so soon as the storm is over, so that they begin to wear out that sense and the terror that was upon them, they return to their former course in the service of sin again. This was the state with Pharaoh once and again.

In such seasons sin is not conquered, but diverted. When it seems to fall under the power of the law, indeed it is only turned into a new channel; it is not dried up. If you go and set a dam against the streams of a river, so that you suffer no water to pass in the old course and channel, but it breaks out another way, and turns all its streams in a new course, you will not say you have dried up that river, though some that come and look into the old channel may think, perhaps, that the waters are utterly gone. So is it in this case. The streams of sin, it may be, run in open sensuality and profaneness, in drunkenness and viciousness; the preaching of the law sets a dam against these courses,—conscience is terrified, and the man dares not walk in the ways wherein he has been formerly engaged. His companions in sin, not finding him in his old ways, begin to laugh at him, as one that is converted and growing precise; professors themselves begin to be persuaded that the work of God is upon his heart, because they see his old streams dried up; but if there has been only a work of the law upon him, there is a dam put to his course, but the spring of sin is not dried up, only the streams of it are turned another way. It may be the man is fallen upon other more secret or more spiritual sins; or if he be beat from them also, the whole strength of lust and sin will take up its residence in self-righteousness, and pour out thereby as filthy streams as in any other way whatever. So that, notwithstanding the whole work of the law upon the souls of men, indwelling sin will keep alive in them still. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(4.) *The reason of its inability to sanctify us.*

(3210.) To the law there belongs a native power and efficiency, in all its lessons and all its enforcements, which is admirably fitted to work out a righteousness on the character of those to whom it is addressed. For this purpose, there is no want of force or of fitness in the agent; but there may be a want of fitness in the subject upon which it operates. It is no reflection on the penmanship of a beautiful writer, that he can give no adequate specimen of his art on the coarse or absorbent paper which will take on no fair impression of the character that he traces upon its surface. Nor is it any reflection on the power of an accomplished artist, that he can raise no monument thereof from the stone that crumbles at every touch, and so is incapable of being moulded into the exquisite form of his own faultless and finished idea. And so of the law, when it attempts to realise a portrait of moral excellence on the groundwork of our nature. It is because of the groundwork, and not of the law, that the attempt has failed; and so when Paul tells us of what the law could not do, lest we should be left to imagine that this was from any want of force or capacity in the law, he adds, "In that it was weak through the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3.)

—*Chalmers*, 1780–1847.

V. *THE MOSAIC LAW.*

1. Its benevolence.

(3211.) Men criticise the law in the Old Covenant which bids put out "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth;" and straightway they insult and say, "Why, how can He be good who speaks so?"

What, then, do we say in answer to this? That it is the highest kind of philanthropy. For He made this law, not that we might strike out one another's eyes, but that fear of suffering by others might restrain us from doing any such thing to them. As, therefore, He threatened the Ninevites with overthrow, not that He might destroy them (for had that been His will He ought to have been silent), but that He might by fear make them better, and so quiet His wrath; so also has He appointed a punishment for those who wantonly assail the eyes of others, that if good principle dispose them not to refrain from such cruelty, fear may restrain them from injuring their neighbour's sight.

And if this be cruelty, it is cruelty also for the murderer to be restrained, and the adulterer checked. But these are the sayings of senseless men, and of those that are mad to the extreme of madness. For I, so far from saying that this comes of cruelty, should say, that the contrary to this would be unlawful, according to men's reckoning. And whereas thou sayest, "Because He commanded to pluck out 'an eye for an eye,' therefore He is cruel;" I say, that if He had not given this commandment, then He would have seemed, in the judgment of most men, to be that thou sayest He is.

For let us suppose that this law had been altogether done away, and that no one feared the punishment ensuing thereupon, but that license had been given to all the wicked to follow their own disposition in all security, to adulterers, and to murderers, to perjured persons, and to parricides; would not all things have been turned upside down? Would not cities, market-places, and houses, sea and land, and the whole world, have been filled with unnumbered pollutions and murders? Every one sees it. For if, when there are laws, and fear, and threatening, our evil dispositions are hardly

checked; were even this security taken away, what is there to prevent men's choosing vice? and what degree of mischief would not then come revelling upon the whole of human life?

The rather, since cruelty lies not only in allowing the bad to do what they will, but in another thing quite as much; to overlook, and leave uncared for, him who has done no wrong, but who is without cause or reason suffering it. For tell me, were any one to gather together wicked men from all quarters, and arm them with swords, and bid them go about the whole city, and massacre all that came in their way, could there be anything more like a wild beast than he? And what if some other should bind and confine with the utmost strictness those whom that man had armed, and should snatch from those lawless hands them who were on the point of being butchered, could anything be greater humanity than this?

Now then, I bid thee transfer these examples to the law likewise; for He that commands to pluck out "an eye for an eye," has laid the fear as a kind of strong chain on the souls of the bad, and so resembles him who detains these assassins in prison; whereas he who appoints no punishment for them, all but arms them by such security, and acts the part of that other, who was putting the swords in their hands, and letting them loose over the whole city.

Seest thou not, how the commandments, so far from coming of cruelty, come rather of abounding mercy? —*Chrysostom*, 347-407.

(3212.) Now, what does the law say about revenge? Does it allow it? Does it approve it? Does it exhort men to exact an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth? Not at all; just the contrary.

The law does indeed speak about exacting an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but this was to be done *by the magistrate*, and *as the extreme penalty of the law*. This very enactment was directed against private and indiscriminate vengeance. It no longer left men to be judges in their own causes and fixed the extreme limit of the punishment. The English statute-book says that burglary is punishable with transportation, but this does not mean that every convicted burglar must be transported. It means that he *may* be transported, and that he *must not be hanged*. So in the Mosaic statute-book, "a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye," means that the judge might exact that penalty, but nothing more. —*R. A. Bertram.*

(3213.) The law of Moses, with its strict commands and stern punishments, was not an organised tyranny over the consciences of men: it was the means of bringing them back to a sane state, to a complete consciousness. It set up and kept before them the claims of God and of conscience. When once they had confessed that sin was in them, and that the wages of sin is death, then the work for which the law was appointed was done. It was a great system, having for its one object to bring men to confess. But that act of confession restored men to themselves, gave them back their own nature; reminded them of three words which they were too pleased to forget,—of God, of duty, of hereafter. The physician that sees upon a patient the symptoms of a perilous disease, of which the patient knows nothing, that sees him eating the most baneful food, and courting the airs that are to such an ailment most destructive, does well to lay his hand upon his arm, and tell him, though the sufferer's cheek grow white before him, that the poison is there, undermining his life. He is not a malignant enemy for whispering, "The path you are walking on leads to sure death." If the tidings, harsh as they are, give the man a sense of his real position, if they save him from acting like a madman, and set him thinking upon the means of recovery, they are the words of a friend. And such a friend to man was the law of Moses. —*Archbishop Thomson.*

2. Its suitableness for its season.

(3214.) God was pleased for a long time to dispense the Covenant of His grace to the Church of the Jews by many ceremonies, types, and figures, because this kind of teaching was the more fit for that infantine, puerile state of the Church. They were to be instructed by the sight of their eyes as well as by the hearing of their ears. It has been God's method to carry on His Church gradually from a lesser degree of light to a greater degree (Heb. i. 1). Children are taught first the letters, then to spell, and afterwards to read. God would have His Church to begin with the spelling-book of types and ceremonies, and so to be brought on to a higher form, and to a more spiritual way of teaching. When little children are taught to go, their mothers or nurses first lead them by the arms, get standing stools for them, that so they may afterwards go of themselves. God was pleased to use this method to the Church of the Jews; He provided the standing stool for them as being most suitable to their puny state. The apostle gives this reason for this way of teaching the Church (Gal. iv. 1-3): the Church was not then come to its full age, it was in its long coats, and therefore it was kept in bondage under those worldly rudiments, as the young heir is under tutors and governors, until he come to a perfect man. —*Robinson*, 1599.

3. A preparation for Christianity.

(3215.) You may perhaps, by examining, be able to find a stalk of wheat that has but a single kernel. Now the stately growth of straw, the beautiful form of the head, the closely-packed array of husk, are all for the sake of the kernel within. The head of the wheat shoots out into beauty, and almost in a day attains a perfect form. But closely enveloped in the very centre of the ear, if you dissect it, you will find the smallest bulb, a mere point, discoverable only by careful search, and yet that bulb is the only important thing in the whole; that is the child of promise; all else to be thrown away; by that the life of the world is to be sustained. Nevertheless, the husk is for weeks of the utmost importance; it is to protect the kernel, wrap it up as a mother does a child, from evening damps, from noon-day heats, from drenching rain, from withering frosts. Here, then, are two counter processes. The husk springs at once to full life, but soon enters on its period of decay; the parts are early detached from each other; it loses its beauty of form, loses utility, and in harvest is rudely torn off and scattered as worthless chaff. The kernel begins in feebleness, on the summit of which it is lodged, but it increases while the husk decreases; it grows to a fulness and rotundity that crowds off its swaddling clothes, and in its maturity it is garnered with the most scrupulous care, while its pretentious and gay envelopment is left to be trodden under foot, having accom-

plished its mission in bringing to perfection the modest and concealed grain that nestled within its folds.

This counter process, one part increasing as the other decays, one perfect when the other is at its point of greatest imperfection, is a process found in all the works of nature, and in all the providential arrangements of the universe. It seems to be the universal method of the divine working. In no part of revelation, however, is this method more obvious than in the two laws which God has ordained, known as the ceremonial law and the moral law. These two laws are one. The former was for the sake of the latter. It was the husk in which the rule of morals and the law of love came to perfection.

At Mount Sinai God ordained certain imposing ceremonies, after a pattern shown to Moses in the mount. The symbols of a mysterious religion were arrayed in stately forms, to arrest the eye and captivate the imagination. There was the tabernacle, wrapped in gorgeous curtains, and scarlet, and purple, and fine-twined linen, wrought with cherubim and cunning work; there were curtains of goat's hair; and badger's skins dyed red like flowing robes adown its sides and along the ground; there was an entrance vail to conceal the sanctuary from all vulgar gaze; there was a partition vail to secure the most holy place from even priestly eyes; there was a golden candlestick, with its seven unquenchable fires; there was a table of shew-bread; there was an ark, and a mercy-seat with cherubim upon it, and the visible Shechinah, the fiery presence of God; there was the court of the tabernacle, an enclosure for the Israelites within fine-wrought curtains, hanging upon bars and posts of precious wood joined by sockets of silver; there was an altar of sacrifice, on which victims to the Divine Ruler sent up the propitiation of life offered for sin; there were instituted imposing forms of priestly pomp, and long-stoled officials with teraphim, phylactery, and ephod moved grandly through their appointed functions, fulfilling a mission appointed them of heaven. We can but look on all this array with admiration—silver and gold, purple and scarlet, the burning oil and the lives of oxen, sheep, and goats, and the orders of consecrated priests were not too gorgeous or too costly an envelope in which to convey to after ages God's message of love to men.

But within the most holy place, concealed in an ark, externally of great beauty and expense, overlaid with gold, were two tables of stone, written over with a few brief sentences by the finger of God. Thus closely enveloped from view was the kernel which was to grow to maturity, and become the food of the world. It seemed the barest point now, hardly a speck within its gorgeous husk. The world would have looked on the revelation of God, and not have noticed this as a part of it. The Jews were delighted with their ritual, and did not know which part was to decay, which is to come to maturity, and be the fruit, the bread of God, that came down from heaven. They were right in looking on all this as one revelation, but they found the value in the husk, while it was the ten commandments hidden in the ark that were the substance and the soul of the divine teaching.

Through all the discipline of the Jews the law ruling over the heart, the law of morals, was continually making its worth felt. The prophets and the Psalmist soon learned to believe it of more importance than ritual service; to do justice and love mercy they learned to estimate as of more value than thousands of sacrifices, and ten thousands of rivers of oil; the husk was slowly, gradually disengaged from its content; the age of its decay began; the effects of age were visible; Judaism was falling in contempt, when suddenly there emerged from the golden ark, the law in its full maturity—Jesus Christ—the law drawn out in living characters. He burst the shell of formalism. He scattered the swathing bands of religion as chaff in the wind. He stood forth Himself, as the only real revelation, the fruit that had been so long coming to maturity, the bread of God that descended from heaven. The ten commandments were the point toward which all God's revelation centered; they were the salient point from which God's power in the earth went forth, and round which His revelation ensphered itself, forming a body, yet a spiritual body—Jesus Christ the Righteous. Henceforth Jesus Christ is our revelation and our religion; all we can know of God centres in Him; from Him you may go, by a direct line of connection, to all that is divine in the world: "Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

—*G. N. Boardman.*

4. Compared with Christianity.

(3216.) The new law is better than the old. You may compare these two laws or covenants in this way. Think of a city which has been the scene of great outbreaks and tumults, so that soldiers are sent there, and martial law proclaimed, and the very first token of disaffection is most severely punished. Men are not allowed to wear certain colours in their dress, nor to play the tunes of certain songs, nor to be abroad late at night, because suspicion attaches to all these things. Such a condition is a hard one, and yet a useful and beneficent one. It is hard, because it is full of suspicion and repression, and because its rules are vexatious and its punishments prompt and inexorable. But it is useful too, because the worst evil in a city is disorder, and that is checked, and the well-disposed can pursue their callings, and rapine and murder dare not show their face. Now that is like the Mosaic law. It is a sore burden in one point of view, because its rules are many and troublesome, so that no man can keep them all: and they are checks to our free action, and we would rather be free from them altogether. But the law was also holy and good; yes, precious beyond all precious things that God had yet given His creatures; because it showed that over our tumultuous race there was still a living Jehovah, and that He hated disorder, which is sin, and would not suffer it to endure. It did not make the Jews holy, or well-affected towards their great King. But it did wonders for them in that respect, when you set them beside other nations. Others hewed idols out of every tree and every quarry, and studied sensual wickedness with an abstruse and hideous ingenuity. Amongst the Jews was ever present a true, and a prevailing witness for the one God, and against the sins which He abhorred, and they were saved thereby from idolatry and from infinite excess. But now imagine that in that city, with its silent streets and watchful sentries, there is a happy home, where a kind and wise father governs his children by the mere force of love. None of them wishes to

conceal a thought from their father; they have no fear of him; they ask his advice in all things; they love the room where he sits; they are ashamed when they have done anything that brings a look of pain into his face. In that house, though there reigns far more peace than in the city without, no one thinks that there is any law. Love is the life of that happy dwelling; love is its light; love has driven out of it corruption of morals and slavish fear. It wants no other law. That house, my friends, is an image of the kingdom of God. The law did much in preventing crime and idolatry, but to earnest souls there was an incurable void in it. The more they looked into and saw God's perfection, the more did they feel their own misery and deformity. It was like a poor, ragged leper, with his scales and blotches, standing in the doorway of a banqueting hall, and seeing all the fair and splendid apparel, all the noble and beautiful guests, and shrinking back miserable into the outside darkness, knowing that if he entered all would fall back in terror and disgust from him. The earnest man would say, "The law bids me to all that is good—would raise me to great heights of goodness, if I could love it and observe it. Unhappily, I cannot love it, and so fail to observe it." "Oh, wretched man that I am!" (these are St. Paul's words on the subject) "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" St. Paul knew the answer, he only asks the question on purpose to answer it. The Lord had told him. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Come unto me, that is, you in whom conscience has began to work and struggle, and to try to deliver herself from the load of sin that sits on her bowed neck. "I will give you rest." I give you comfort in feeling that even sin is not too great for me to deal with. They should know Him as the divine Son, and yet their friend. They should feel that He had taken them by the hand and admitted them to all the love and the peace of the family of God. Jews brought near their divine Law-giver shook with terror. "If we hear the voice of the Lord God any more, we shall die." Christians, full of affection for their Lord, cling to Him in their trouble, and say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." —*Archbishop Thomson.*

LIFE. HUMAN.

1. Its emblems.

(1.) *A voyage.*

(3217.) We are like vessels tossed on the bosom of the deep; our passions are the winds that sweep us impetuously forward; each pleasure is a rock, the whole of life is a wide ocean. Reason is the pilot to guide us; but often it allows itself to be led astray by the storms of pride.

—*Metastasio.*

(2.) *A pilgrimage.*

(3218.) If men have been termed pilgrims, and life a journey, then we may add that the Christian pilgrimage far surpasses all others in the following important particulars:—in the goodness of the road—in the beauty of the prospects—in the excellence of the company—and in the vast superiority of the accommodation provided for the Christian traveller when he has finished his course. —*Salter.*

(3219.) Here thou art but a stranger travelling to thy country; it is therefore a huge folly to be afflicted because thou hast a less convenient inn to lodge in by the way.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(3). *A drama.*

(3220.) In a hundred years the world will still subsist in its entirety; there will be the same theatre, and the same decorations; there will no longer be the same actors. All who have been gladdened by some favour, or saddened and thrown into despair by a refusal, will have vanished from the scene. At this moment there are entering upon the theatre of life other men, who are going to play in a similar piece the same characters, they will vanish in their turn, and those who are not yet in existence will also be no more; new actors have taken their place. What a mere mummer in a comedy is man! —*La Bruyère.*

(4.) *A rainbow.*

(3221.) Life is like the rainbow; it is a thing of sunshine, and it is a thing of showers.

2. Its limitations.

(3222.) "Nothing new under the sun." I compare life to a little wilderness, surrounded by a high dead wall. Within this space we muse and walk in quest of the new and happy, forgetting the insuperable limit, till, with surprise, we find ourselves stopped by the *dead wall:* we turn away, and muse and walk again, till, on another side, we find ourselves close against *the dead wall.* Whichever way we turn—still the same.

—*John Foster*, 1770–1843.

3. Is divinely ordered.

(3223.) Our life is a web woven by the hand of God, the thread reaching from our birth unto our death. The woof is trouble, but still runs with it a weft of interwoven comforts.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3224.) If the architect of a house had one plan, and the contractor had another, what conflicts would there be! How many walls would have to come down, how many doors and windows would need to be altered, before the two could harmonise! Of the building of life, God is the architect, and man is the contractor. God has one plan, and man has another. Is it strange that there are clashings and collisions? —*Beecher.*

(3225.) At an artist's reception one day I saw a picture of a mountain sunrise, and I wondered at its marvellous depths, richness, and splendour of shade and colour, till the artist told me how he had toned down the picture and softened its colouring into its subdued harmony of tint; and I thought how often our life was growing to be like that picture of a mountain sunrise. God's unseen hand is before the easel, sketching here and shading there. The life-picture looks to us unfinished, fragmentary, and imperfect now, but each new joy-light, each sorrow-shade is toning it down through all its gloom and glory into harmony with God's great ideal. He will frame it at last in such a setting of events as He chooses, and we shall find in that great gallery above, that the light has been in the right place, and the shadow too.

(3226.) What do the Scriptures show, but that

God has a particular care for every man, a personal interest in him, and a sympathy with him and his trials, watching for the uses of his one talent as attentively and kindly, and approving him as heartily, in the right employment of it, as if He had given him ten; and, what is the giving out of the talents itself, but an exhibition of the fact that God has a definite purpose, charge, and work, be it this or that, for every man.

They also make it the privilege of every man to live in the secret guidance of God; which is plainly nugatory, unless there is some chosen work, or sphere, into which he may be guided, for how shall God guide him, having nothing appointed or marked out for him to be guided into? no field opened for him, no course set down which is to be his wisdom?

God also professes in His word to have purposes pre-arranged for all events; to govern by a plan which is from eternity even, and which, in some proper sense, comprehends everything. And what is this but another way of conceiving that God has a definite place and plan adjusted for every human being? And, without such a plan, He could not even govern the world intelligently, or make a proper universe of the created system; for it becomes a universe only in the grand unity of reason, which includes it. Otherwise, it were only a jumble of fortuities without counsel, end, or law.

Turning now from the Scriptures to the works of God, how constantly are we met here by the fact, everywhere visible, that ends and uses are the regulative reasons of all existing things. This we discover often, when we are least able to understand the speculative mystery of objects; for it is precisely the uses of things that are most palpable. These are uses to God, no doubt, as to us, the significance of His works. And they compose, taken together, a grand reciprocal system, in which part answers actively to part, constructing thus an all-comprehensive and glorious whole. And the system is, in fact, so perfect, that the loss or displacement of any member would fatally derange the general order. If there were any smallest star in heaven that had no place to fill, that oversight would beget a disturbance which no Leverrier could compute; because it would be a real and eternal, and not merely casual or apparent disorder. One grain more or less of sand would disturb or even fatally disorder the whole scheme of the heavenly motions. So nicely balanced, and so carefully hung are the worlds, that even the grains of their dust are counted, and their places adjusted to a correspondent nicety. There is nothing included in the gross or total sum, that could be dispensed with. The same is true in regard to forces that are apparently irregular. Every particle of air is moved by laws of as great precision as the laws of the heavenly bodies, or, indeed, by the same laws; keeping its appointed place, and serving its appointed use. Every odour exhales in the nicest conformity with its appointed place and law. Even the viewless and mysterious heat, stealing through the dark centres and impenetrable depths of the worlds, obeys its uses with unfaltering exactness, dissolving never so much as an atom that was not to be dissolved. What, now, shall we say of man, appearing, as it were, in the centre of this great circle of uses. They are all adjusted for him; has he, then, no ends appointed for himself? Noblest of all creatures, and closest to God, as he certainly is, are we to say that his Creator has no definite thoughts concerning him, no place prepared for him to fill, no use for him to serve which is the reason of his existence.

There is, then, I conclude, a definite and proper end or issue, for every man's existence; an end, which, to the heart of God, is the good intended for him, or for which he was intended; that which he is privileged to become, called to become, ought to become; that which God will assist him to become, and which he cannot miss, save by his own fault.

—*Bushnell.*

4. Importance of starting well.

(3227.) It is of vast moment to be "just right" when starting. At Preston, at Malines, at many such places the lines go gently asunder, so fine is the angle that at first the paths are almost parallel, and it seems of small moment which you select. But a little further on one of them turns a corner or dives into a tunnel, and now that the speed is full, the angle opens up, and, at the rate of a mile a minute, the divided convoy flies asunder; one passenger is on the way to Italy, another to the swamps of Holland; one will step out in London, the other in the Irish Channel. It is not enough that you book for the better country; you must keep the way, and a small deviation may send you entirely wrong. A slight deflection from honesty, a slight divergence from perfect truthfulness, from perfect sobriety, may throw you on a wrong tack altogether, and make a failure of that life which should have proved a comfort to your family, a credit to your country, a blessing to mankind.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

5. Should not be dissipated in the pursuit of trifles.

(3228.) They who are most weary of life, and yet are most unwilling to die, are such who have lived to no purpose,—who have rather breathed than lived. —*Earl of Clarendon*, 1608–1673.

(3229.) There are some pursuits which do not deserve to be called a business. Æropus was the king of Macedonia, and it was his favourite pursuit to make lanterns. Probably, he was very good at making them; but his proper business was to be a king, and therefore the more lanterns he made, the worse king he was. And if your work be a high calling, you must not dissipate your energies on trifles, on things which, lawful in themselves, are still as irrelevant to you as lamp-making is irrelevant to a king. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(3230.) You may be very earnest in a pursuit which is utterly beneath your prerogative as an intelligent creature, and your high destination as an immortal being. Pursuits which are perfectly proper in creatures destitute of reason may be very culpable in those who not only have reason but are capable of enjoyments above the range of reason itself.

We this instant imagined a man retaining all his consciousness transformed into a zoophyte. Let us imagine another similar transformation: fancy that, instead of a polypus, you were changed into a swallow. There you have a creature abundantly busy, up in the early morning, for ever on the wing, as graceful and sprightly in his flight as he is tasteful in the haunts which he selects. Look at him zigzagging over the clover-field, skimming the limpid lake, whisking round the steeple, or dancing

gaily in the sky. Behold him in high spirits, shrieking out his ecstasy as he has bolted a dragon-fly, or darted through the arrow-slits of the old turret, or performed some other feat of hirundine agility; and notice how he pays his morning visits, alighting elegantly on some house-top, and twittering politely by turns to the swallow on either side of him, and after five minutes' conversation, off and away to call for his friend at the castle. And now he has gone upon his travels, gone to spend the winter at Rome or Naples, to visit Egypt or the Holy Land, or perform some more *recherché* pilgrimage to Spain or the coast of Barbary. And when he comes home next April, sure enough he has been abroad;—charming climate—highly delighted with the cicadas in Italy, and the bees on Hymettus;—locusts in Africa rather scarce this season, but upon the whole much pleased with his trip, and returned in high health and spirits.

Now, dear friends, this is a very proper life for a bird of the air, but is it a life for you? To flit about from house to house; to pay futile visits, where, if the talk were written down, it would amount to little more than the chattering of a swallow; to bestow all your thoughts on graceful attitudes and nimble movements and polished attire; to roam from land to land with so little information in your head, or so little taste for the sublime or beautiful in your soul, that, could a swallow publish his travels, and did you publish yours, we should probably find the one a counterpart of the other; the winged traveller enlarging on the discomforts of his nest, and the wingless one on the miseries of his hotel or his chateau; you describing the places of amusement, or enlarging on the vastness of the country and the abundance of the game, and your rival eloquent on the self-same things. Oh! it is a thought, not ridiculous, but appalling. If the earthly history of some of our brethren were written down; if a faithful record were kept of the way they spend their time; if all the hours of idle vacancy or idler occupancy were put together, and the very small amount of useful diligence deducted, the life of a beast of the field or a fowl of the firmament would be a truer one—more worthy of its powers and more equal to its Creator's end in forming it. Such a register is kept. Though the trifler does not chronicle his own vain words and wasted hours, they chronicle themselves. They find their indelible place in that book of remembrance with which human hand cannot tamper, and from which no erasure save one can blot them out. They are noted in the memory of God. And when once this life of wondrous opportunities and awful advantages is over—when the twenty or fifty years of probation are fled away—when mortal existence, with its facilities for personal improvement and serviceableness to others, is gone beyond recall—when the trifler looks back to the long pilgrimage, with all the doors of hope and doors of usefulness past which he skipped in his frisky forgetfulness—what anguish will it move to think that he has gambolled through such a world without salvation to himself, without any real benefit to his brethren, a busy trifler, a vivacious idler, a clever fool!

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(3231.) The mere lapse of years is not life. To eat, and drink, and sleep—to be exposed to darkness and the light,—to pace round in the mill of habit, and turn thought into an implement of trade,—this is not life. In all this but a poor fraction of the consciousness of humanity is awakened; and the sanctities will slumber which make it worth while to be. Knowledge, truth, love, beauty, goodness, faith, alone can give vitality to the mechanism of existence. The laugh of mirth that vibrates through the heart; the tears that freshen the dry wastes within; the music that brings childhood back; the prayer that calls the future near; the doubt which makes us meditate; the death which startles us with mystery; the hardship which forces us to struggle; the anxiety that ends in trust; are the true nourishment of our natural being.

—*James Martineau.*

6. Should be devoted to great purposes according to a settled plan.

(3232.) The end of life is to be like unto God; and the soul following God will be like unto Him; He being the beginning, middle, and end of all things. —*Socrates*, B.C. 469–39.

(3233.) No life can be low where great ends are followed; and the spirit that will not work its mission within the trammel of circumstance will never be a true servant of that Master who came to found a kingdom of heaven upon earth, and who had to associate with Him in the work men of another spirit than His own, and even the traitor who sold away His life. —*J. H. Thorn.*

(3234.) Men do not go on a journey aimlessly. No man goes out walking that he does not follow his thought. No man ever travels, and then ascertains where he has travelled to during the day. A traveller is one that marks out for himself the object for which he seeks. He selects a destination, and then travels with a distinct purpose toward it. No man ever builds accidentally, taking here a stone, and there a brick, and putting them down with the trowel and mortar by chance, and then looking to see what the sum of all his separate acts amounts to. It would amount to a confused heap, and to no building. One selects a place, he chooses a plan, he lays the foundation according to a prescribed idea, and then builds tier upon tier definitely and purposely.

And as it is with the industrial avocations of life, so it is with character and condition. Men ought not at least to live aimlessly, as travellers that follow their own footsteps, and not a plan that guides their footsteps; nor as builders that build chancedly, and not after a prescribed form. Men should have before them a distinct idea of character, of what it shall be, and of how it shall be formed. They should have a settled purpose of life.

—*Beecher.*

(3235.) A man's purpose of life should be like a river, which was born of a thousand little rills in the mountains; and when at last it has reached its manhood in the plain, though, if you watch it, you shall see little eddies that seem as if they had changed their minds, and were going back again to the mountains, yet all its mighty current flows, changeless, to the sea. If you build a dam across it, in a few hours it will go over it with a voice of victory. If tides check it at its mouth, it is only that when they ebb it can sweep on again to the ocean. So goes the Amazon or the Orinoco across a continent—never losing its way or changing its

direction for the thousand streams that fall into it on the right hand and on the left, but only using them to increase its force, and bearing them onward in its resistless channel. —*Beecher.*

(3236.) In plan, include the whole: in execution, take life day by day. Men do not know how to reconcile the oppugnant directions that we should live for the future, and yet should find our life in fidelities to the present; but the last is only the method of the first. True aiming, in life, is like true aiming in marksmanship. We always look at the fore-sight of a rifle through the hind-sight.
—*Beecher.*

(3237.) It is no small thing for a man to have a rule in his mind by which to judge every part of his life, even though every part of his life may not always conform to that rule.

If you have stood by the pilot of a ship, and watched him as he steered it, you know that such is the build of the ship, such its equipoise, and such is the unequal motion given to it by the waves and winds, that no man can hold it exactly to its course. No sooner is it brought into steering line than it is carried to the right or to the left. One minute it is too far inland. The next minute it is too far in the opposite direction. The pilot is obliged to be constantly turning the wheel to meet the various forces that oppose him. The steering of a ship is marked by a succession of imperceptible zigzags; a man's life certainly is whether a ship's steering is or not; but where the voyage is as wide as the breast of the Atlantic, where it is the whole of our earthly existence, and where a man has a definite purpose which constitutes his steering line, and he comes to that in the end, it amounts to a straight voyage.

We see the same thing demonstrated in daily life. We see supreme purposes which men have formed running through their whole career in this world. A young man means to be a civil engineer. That is the thing to which his mind is made up: not his father's mind, perhaps, but his. He feels his adaptation to that calling, and his drawings toward it. He is young, forgetful, inexperienced, accessible to youthful sympathies, and is frequently drawn aside from his life-purpose. To-day he attends a picnic. Next week he devotes a day to some other excursion. Occasionally he loses a day in consequence of fatigue caused by overaction. Thus there is a link knocked out of the chain of this week, and a link knocked out of the chain of that week. And in the course of the summer he takes a whole week, or fortnight, out of that purpose. Yet, there is the thing in his mind, whether he sleeps or wakes. If you had asked him a month ago what he meant to be in life, he would have replied, "I mean to be a civil engineer." And if you ask him to-day what has been the tendency of his life, he will say, "I have been preparing myself to be a civil engineer." If he waits and does nothing, the reason is that he wants an opportunity to carry out his purpose. That purpose governs his course, and he will not engage in anything that would conflict with it.

Now, this sovereign purpose of a man to live for certain great moral principles and moral ends; this sovereign purpose of a man to live for the eternal world; this realisation by a man of God's existence and God's government; this determination of a man to be governed by God's law—this is itself a settling of the soul in a way that lays the foundation for satisfaction and for peace. It gives singleness, simplicity, sincerity—for these three words cluster around the same central idea. It brings the whole life to aim at one thing; it brings the whole mind under one government; and however much the separate parts may rebel, it yet holds a man to one direction, and reduces all things to simple tests of right or wrong by a given and acknowledged standard; but as age advances, victories are gained, education ripens into fixed habits, the very conflict ceases, and the whole body is full of light!
—*Beecher.*

(3238.) What are you living for? You are hurrying and whirling forward at a tremendous rate, your brain teems with conceptions, your hand hardly knows a moment's rest, you pursue the bubble, you jostle and compete and envy, you flatter and are flattered, you hoard and you dispense. What does it all mean? Who sketched the map by which you regulate your pilgrimage? What account can you give of yourself to those who ask the name of your guiding spirit? Take the subject in the light of everyday affairs, and the singular absurdity of not knowing on whose business you are engaged will instantly appear. You meet a traveller who is professedly in business; you ask him what is his business, and he cannot answer; you ask him whose interests he represents, and no reply is forthcoming; you ask him whether he is bound, and he returns the inquiry with a look of vacancy;—to what conclusion can you come respecting such a person? You instantly feel that the man is a child, and that the child has gone astray. The same thing holds true in the deeper and vaster concerns of life; and he who is wisely and profoundly anxious to know on what basis he is proceeding in commercial transactions, should look beyond the mere detail, and face the great question —upon what principle is my intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual life proceeding?
—*Joseph Parker.*

(3239.) We very often miss the end of life by having no object before us. Years ago—when we were a boy, a pupil in an old frame schoolhouse by the foot of a hill to the south of the village—we went with a number of boys one afternoon in winter to have some sport. A meadow was distant half a mile away. A light snow had fallen, and the company desired to make the most of it. It was too dry for snow-balling, and was not deep enough for coasting. It did very well to make tracks in.

It was proposed that we should go to a tree, near the centre of the meadow, and that each one should start from the tree, and see who could make the straightest track—that is, to go from the tree in the nearest approach to a straight line. The proposition was assented to, and we were all soon at the tree. We ranged ourselves around it with our backs toward the trunk. We were equally distant from each other. If each had gone forward in the right line, the paths we made would have been like the spokes of a wheel, the tree representing the nave. We were to go till we reached the boundaries of the meadow, when we were to retrace our steps to the tree.

We did so. I wish I could give a map of our

tracks. Such a map would not present much resemblance to the spokes of a wheel.

"Whose is the straightest?" asked James Alison of Thomas Saunders, who was at the tree first.

"Henry Armstrong's is the only one that is straight at all."

"That's a fact," said James. "They look more like snake tracks than straight lines."

"How could we all contrive to go so crookedly when the ground is so smooth, and nothing to turn us out of the way?" said Jacob Small.

"How did you come to go so straight, Henry?" said Thomas.

"I fixed my eye on that tall pine-tree on the hill yonder, and never looked away from it till I reached the fence."

"I went as straight as I could, without looking at anything but the ground," said James.

"So did I," said another.

"So did I," said several others. It appeared that no one but Henry had aimed at a particular object.

We attempted to go straight without any definite aim. We failed. So it will be with men for ever, who have no mark in view. General purposes, general resolutions, will not avail. Multitudes of Christians go through life without having led one single soul to Christ, and all because they never had a single aim to His glory.

7. The importance of having and maintaining an ideal standard of excellence.

(3240.) There are those that ridicule these conceptions, and ridicule every attempt of the young to live a higher life than the average life of those by whom they are surrounded. Why, yes, I see now how the woodbine is clasping and clinging and clambering over every object within its reach. Wherever it can find some old and unsightly tree, how it shoots toward it, and throws itself a generous cloak around about it; and from every branch clear to the top it holds out a thousand little flags of leaves, and rejoices in its triumphs and achievements. About the root, there is an old mullen, that stands laughing at the woodbine, and saying, "You are a brave climber; but as for myself, I do not pretend to airs. I stand here a good, plain, sensible mullen; and you will not find me mounting to such dangerous heights." There is that fence. It was bare last year, and it is bare this year, and it would be bare to all eternity, for anything that a mullen would do to cover its nakedness. But a generous vine cannot see a stump, or a stake, or a tree, but that it mounts upon it, and begins to spread its beauty all over it. Do not let the mullen give counsel to the vine. The vine is right. These tendrils, that represent yearnings, and this outputting nature and prodigality of growth, are right. Let the things that must needs hover on the surface of the ground grow according to their nature; but let no man laugh you out of your ideals by calling them sentimentalisms. —*Beecher.*

(3241.) There are those who have a clear conception of the possibilities of human development, and who bring enough of reason with their imagination to give definiteness and purpose to their ideals. In this class we all should seek to be found. They use imagination conjointly with reason, not merely to make fancy-pictures, but to draw rules and standards and conceptions after which they strive, seeking to fill up the whole mosaic of their lives—for, as in the old Byzantine churches, the artists drew upon the fresh wall the outline of glorious and gorgeous pictures, and then took bits of coloured glass, and, with long patience, filled up the picture, until at last the mosaic set and solidified in its bed. They brought out the lines and lineaments of saints and angels, and of divinity itself; so men that have sketched in the future some bright outline should occupy themselves with the details of life in filling it up, and forming the glorious mosaic.

—*Beecher.*

(3242.) Do not suppose, when you have formed an ideal, that you have then fulfilled the main purposes of life. Be sure of one thing—that, of all vexatious masters, a worthy ideal is the most uncomfortable one to live with. It never flatters you. It never praises you. It is always rebuking you. It put spurs into your side. It lays the whip upon you. It never says, "Well done." That is to be said in the other life. It is a piteous thing to see how men try, in the midst of adverse circumstances, to follow their ideal.

In a dark and stormy night a ship sees, afar off, the shining of the lighthouse, which, as it plunges beneath the wave, is lost; and as, struggling and rolling the water off from its deck, it comes trembling up again on the refluent wave, it gets a glimpse once more, only to lose it. So, in this world, men that propose bright aims to themselves in the midst of the turmoils of passion, the strivings of pride, and the biasses of self-interest, in all the whirls of sympathy, and in the discordances of human example, find that they sometimes forget and sometimes violate their ideals; and the fight to maintain our ideals is almost as much as life itself is worth. You must frame your ideal; but after you have done that, you are like a man that makes a voyage. When you have marked the harbour, your work is not done. You have yet to bear hardness as good soldiers. Putting on your armour, you are to aim at things high and noble. And you must fight your way toward them through ten thousand hindrances. And only then shall you be crowned and laurelled when your victory is won, and you stand in Zion and before God. —*Beecher.*

(3243.) Let me beseech of you not to run upon one rock that is fatal to nobility. Because you have broken your purpose, do not allow it to go unmended. Even the heathen with so base a conception of divinity as Dagon was, when Dagon fell to the ground, lifted him up again and put him in his place. When, not your idol, but your bright ideal, falls to the ground, though its head and its feet be broken, lift it up and put it in its place again. Because you have broken faith and fealty to that which you meant to be, and meant to do, it is no reason why you should not swear again, and again go forward. There are those that begin life nobly, generously, purely; but that, as they experience the throes, and mischances, and pressures, and exigencies of life, and find that they cannot get along according to their ideals, resort to various expedients, the most fatal of which is to say, "I have set my mark too high. There is no such thing as disinterested benevolence. There is no such thing as living for spiritual ends. There is no such thing as purity with success." Men lower their ideal of life, their ideal of thought and feeling and

character, and say, "I need not be so generous; I need not live according to such high precepts and maxims." But when a man lowers his ideal, you may be sure that the process of corruption is going on fast. "Let God be true, but every man a liar," is one of the sayings of Scripture. Let your ideal stand high and bright and pure, though by it every one of you is condemned, and cast down, as it were, to the very bottom of condemnation. Save that. Even though a man forsakes his purpose, though he is recreant to his ideal, though he through months and years goes knowingly wrong, let not his star set. If only there shines his polar star, when reason comes again, and the films of passion begin to clear away, he can take his observation once more, and resume his journey. But if his star has fallen he has nothing to steer by, and his voyage must end in shipwreck and disaster. Do not let your ideal go down. Keep that, like a star, bright, and pure, and high above the horizon; and then, though your voyage, though your labour, may intermit, you have that by which you can begin it again, and at whose sacred light you can kindle the quenched torch of your purposes. —*Beecher.*

8. How nobility of life is to be attained.

(3244.) Every man's life lies within the present; for the past is spent and done with, and the future is uncertain. —*Antoninus.*

(3245.) Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindnesses and small obligations, given habitually, are what win and preserve the heart, and secure comfort. —*Sir H. Davy*, 1778-1829.

(3246.) Every man is to himself what Plato calls the Great Year. He has his sowing time and his growing time, his weeding, his irrigating, and his harvest. The principles and ideas he puts into his mind in youth lie there, it may be, for many years apparently unprolific. But nothing dies. There is a process going on unseen, and by the touch of circumstances the man springs forth into strength, he knows not why, as if by a miracle. But, after all, he only reaps as he had sown.

—*J. A. St. John.*

(3247.) A noble and honourable life is not necessarily made up of great efforts—stupendous and exhausting attempts to achieve some dazzling victory—but of little acts of consideration, well-timed smiles of encouragement and hope, gentle words of sympathy, and generous interpretations of conduct. The sun does not wait until he can blaze forth in the pomp and glory of mid-day. First, the herald streak; the shaping off and fringing of the slumberous clouds; the purple beauty; the multiplying and conquering fire; until noon is king, and day has forgotten night. —*Joseph Parker.*

(3248.) Life is *all* great. . Life is great because it is the aggregation of littles. As the chalk cliffs in the south, that rear themselves hundreds of feet above the crawling sea beneath, are all made up of the minute skeletons of microscopic animalculæ, so life, mighty and awful, with its eternal consequences, life that towers beetling over the sea of eternity, is made up of trifling duties, of small tasks; and if thou art not "faithful in that which is least," thou art unfaithful in the whole.

—*Maclaren.*

(3249.) See to it that each hour's feelings and thoughts and actions are pure and true; then will your life be such. The mightiest maze of magnificent harmonies that ever a Beethoven gave to the world, is but single notes, and all its complicated and interlacing strains are resolvable into individualities. The wide pasture is but separate spears of grass; the sheeted bloom of the prairies, but isolated flowers. —*Beecher.*

(3250.) We sleep, but the loom of life never stops; and the pattern which was weaving when the sun went down is weaving when it comes up to-morrow. He who is false to present duty breaks a thread in the loom, and will find the flaw when he may have forgotten its cause.

—*Beecher.*

(3251.) You think that one hour buries another; but it is not so. You think that you have parted for ever from the things which have passed by you. No, you have not. There is much in your life that you think has gone which you never shall part from. It has stepped behind you; and there it waits. That which you have done is with you to-day; and that which you have done will be with you to-morrow. When the mason carries up the wall, the course of brick which he laid yesterday is the foundation on which he is laying another course to-day. And all that you do to-day on the structure which you are building will remain as a basis for that which you do to-morrow. —*Beecher.*

9. "Seeing life."

(3252.) Those that are thoroughly arted in navigation do as well know the coasts as the ocean; as well the flaws, the sands, the shallows, and the rocks, as the secure depths in the most unperilous channel. So I think that those that are perfect men (I speak of perfection since the Fall) must as well know bad, that they may obtrude it, as the good, that they may embrace it. And this knowledge we can neither have so cheap, or so certain, as by seeing it in others with a pitiful dislike. Surely, we shall know virtue the better by seeing that which is not she. If we could pass the world without meeting vice, then the knowledge of virtue only were sufficient. But it is not possible to live and not encounter her. Vice is as a god in this world; whither can we go to fly it? It has a ubiquity, and rules too. I wish no man to know it, either by use or by intrusion; but being unwittingly cast upon it, let him observe for his own more safe direction. Thou art happy when thou makest another man's vices steps for thee to climb to heaven by. The wise physican makes the poison medicinable. Even the mud of the world, by the industrious Hollander, is turned to a useful fuel. If I light on good company, it shall either induce me to a new good, or confirm me in my liked old. If I light on bad, I will, by considering their dull stains, either correct those faults I have, or shun those I might have. As the mariner that has sea-room, can make any wind serve to set him forward in his wished voyage, so a wise man may take advantage from any company to set himself forward to virtue's region. —*Fellthan*, 1668.

(3253.) As there is no feat of activity so difficult, but, being once done, a man ventures on it more freely the second time; so there is no sin at first so hateful, but, being once committed willingly, a man

is made more prone for a reiteration. For there is more desire of a known pleasure, than of that which only our ears have heard report of. So far is ignorance good, that in a calm it keeps the mind from distraction; and knowledge, as it breeds desire in all things, so in sin. Bootless, therefore, shall ever be that cunning fetch of Satan, when he would induce me once to make a trial of sin, that I might thereby know more, and be able to fill up my mouth with discourse, my mind with fruition; bearing me in hand. I may at my pleasure give it the hand of parting, and a final farewell. Too often, alas! have I been deceived with this beguiling persuasion, of a power to leave, and a will to return at my will. Henceforth shall my care be to refrain from once. If I grant that, stronger persuasions will plead for a second action: it is easier to deny a guest at first, than to turn him out having stayed a while. Thou knowest not, senseless man, what joys thou losest when thou fondly lashest into new offences. The world cannot repurchase thee thy pristine integrity: thou hast hereby lost such a hold of grace, as thou wilt never again be able to recover. A mind not conscious of any foul enormities is a fair temple in a dirty street; at whose door sin, like a throng of rude plebeians, knocks incessantly: while the door is shut, it is easy to keep it so, and them out: open that, but to let in one, thousands will rush in after him, and their tramplings will for ever soil that unstained floor. While thy conscience is unspotted, thou hast that can make thee smile on the rack and amid flames; it is like Homer's Nepenthe, that can banish the sadness of the mind; but when thou woundest that, thou buriest thy joys at once, and throwest a jewel from thee that is richer than the wealth of worlds. Fool that thou art, that, wandering in a dark wilderness, dost wilfully put out thy candle, and thinkest cold water can slake thy thirst in the burning fit of an ague; when it only breeds in thee a desire to pour in more. He that never tasted the pleasures of sin longs less after those baneful discontenting contents. What sweets of sin I know not, I desire still to be inexperienced in. I had rather not know, than by knowledge be miserable. This ignorance will teach me knowledge of an unknown peace. Let me rather be outwardly maimed, and want discourse, than be furnished of that, and possess a wound that bleeds within.

—*Fellthan*, 1668.

(3254.) Hundreds of men are ruined by city exploration. They go to see for themselves. A man hears that lions are very dangerous. He says, "Is that so?" He opens the cage; and the monster with one stroke fells him, and with one craunch grinds up his skull. The lion never imagined that the man had come in to study natural history. Oh! the devil is mean. He says, "Come in and see." The man goes in to look for himself; the roaring lion grabs him, and he is gone. He learns *human* nature dearly who learns it at the risk of his *immortal* nature. —*Talmage.*

(3255.) If there are any that have made up their mind to know life, I say to them, Stop! You may pay too dear for your knowledge. Men have looked into the crater of a volcano to see what is there, and gone down to explore, without coming back to report progress. Many and many a man has gone to see what was in hell, that did see it. Many and many a man has looked to see what was in the cup, and found a viper coiled up therein. Many and many a man has gone into the house of lust, and found that the ends thereof were death—bitter, rotten death. Many and many a man has sought to learn something of the evils of gambling, and learned it to his own ruin. And I say to every man, the more you know about these things, the more you ought to be ashamed of knowing; a knowledge of them is not necessary to education or manhood, and they ought to be avoided, because when a man has once fallen into them, the way out is so steep and hard. Many and many a man has begun to climb the giddy cliff of reformation; but, oh! how few have succeeded in getting over its brow! Methinks I see men sweltering in passions, and swimming out to the base of the cliff, and attempting to climb up. Some are higher than others. One after another falls back, or is plucked down by some fiendish hand. Some are half way up the cliff, and struggling hard to reach the top. Some turn ghastly pale when they look down at the abyss below; and they are filled with despair when they look up at the height above them. And where one goes over and is saved, ninety-nine fall back and are lost. —*Beecher.*

10. The love of life.

(3256.) The love of life is a powerful instinct. God has implanted it in the bosom wisely. And, during the natural years of life, this instinct holds us to it, as the stem holds an apple to the bough.

—*Beecher.*

11. Long life.

(1.) *The blessing of the godly.*

(3257.) Long life and length of days is the blessing and gift of God, that which He promises and performs to all those who fear Him and walk in His ways.

Objection.—But many of the children of God die untimely, and live not long; how, then, is this true?

Answer.—This is not simply a blessing, as if he were happy that lives long, but as a symbol or sign of God's good favour and love. If, then, He shows His love to some rather by taking them out of this life, than by prolonging their days, He doth the rather perform His promise than break it. A man promises ten acres of ground in one field, and gives him a hundred in another, he has not broken his promise. So if God have promised long life, that is, a hundred years here, and after not give it him, but gives him eternity in the heavens, He has not broken His promise; for it not being promised as a blessing and happy thing in itself, but as a sign of His goodwill, which is greater sometimes to be taken out of this life; as Jeroboam's good son was, that he might not be infected with the sins of his father's house, and not afflicted with the sight of those horrible judgments that were to fall upon that graceless family; which was no ill bargain, to be taken from earth to heaven, from the conflict to the triumph, from the battle to the victory, from men to God, and to the company of His angels and saints. —*Stock*, 1568–1626.

(2.) *Is to the ungodly merely a reprieve.*

(3258.) All mankind being condemned as soon as born, life is but a reprieve, a suspension of citation, a breathing time of mercy, a suspending of wrath—the sleeping of a storm, which is about to

burst forth in floods of destruction on all who are not sheltered in Christ—it is the staying the almighty arm of Him who saith, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." This is just what life is—a calm to usher in a mighty tempest.

12. How its length is to be estimated.

(3259.) Life is not to be numbered by its hours, but measured by cheerfulness, as moneys not by tale but value. A little piece of gold contains a great many pieces of silver. Manhood consists not in the bulk of bones, but in the mettle and spirits. Is not one week of a healthy man better than a year of a crazy; one sunshine hour, than a gloomy day? I have often mused how a man might come nearest to that life which Adam lost, and recompense in this latter age of the world (wherein the lives of men are so contracted) the longevity of those that lived before the flood. And this is the best help I find: to live well is to live twice. A good man doubles and amplifies his days; one may speak as much in a few words as another in many. Persius wrote more in a few leaves than Marsius in large volumes. One day led by the rules of faith is better than an immortality of vanity.

—*Ward*, 1577–1639.

(3260.) Life is to be measured by action, not by time; a man may die old at thirty, and young at eighty; nay, the one lives after death, and the other perished before he died.

—*T. Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3261.) Seventy years of life may be much more important, and may, for all the purposes of living, be much longer at one period of the world than another. It is much more so now than it ever was or could be among savage tribes; than it was in ancient Egypt or Assyria; than it was or is in India or in China; than it was in Scotland, in England, in France, or in Germany previous to the Reformation; than it was in our own country during the last century. The discoveries which have been made in our own times—the inventions and improvements in the arts of living—have been equivalent to making life twice or thrice or four times as long as it once was. A man whose business it is to travel, who can pass over as much in his journey now in one hour as would on a camel, or on a horse, or on foot have occupied twelve hours, has in this respect added eleven hours in such a journey to his life. The unconscious powers of nature now accomplish a large part of what was done by human muscles, and do it better than it could have been done by the unaided hand of man. The mere lengthening of life to the period of Methuselah would not in itself be equivalent to what has been gained in this manner; and, for all the purposes of living, human life is now incomparably longer than it was in the time of the antediluvian patriarchs.

—*Albert Barnes*, 1790–1870.

(3262.) An eminent divine was suffering under chronic disease, and consulted three physicians. They declared, on being consulted by the sick man, that his disease would be followed by death in a shorter or longer time, according to the manner in which he lived; but they unanimously advised him to give up his office because, in his situation, mental agitation would be fatal to him.

"If," inquired the divine, "I gave myself up to repose, how long, gentlemen, would you guarantee my life?"

"Probably six years," answered the doctors.

"And if I continue in office?"

"Three years, at most."

"Your servant, gentlemen," he replied; "I should prefer living two or three years in doing some good to living six years in idleness."

13. Its brevity.

(3263.) My life is like the autumn leaf
That trembles in the moon's pale ray,
Its hold is frail—its date is brief,
Restless—and soon to pass away!
—*R. H. Wilde.*

(3264.) If a company that are bound out for some long voyage should strive who should be master and who master's mate, and who should have this or that office, they were not too much to be blamed; but when they are almost at home, within sight of land, when they shall begin to strike sail, to tack in all and go ashore, then, if they shall fall a-quarrelling for places, and use all the means they could make, it were a ridiculous thing. So it is with us; time was when a man came into the world by the course of nature, he might well say, "I have a matter of six, or seven, or eight hundred years to go on in my pilgrimage before I shall end my journey," and then if a man should greet the world, he might be excused. But now, since God hath contracted the time of our age, so that as soon as we begin our voyage we are ready to strike sail presently, that we have but a little time to continue here and a great deal of work to do for hereafter, to stand striving who shall be greatest, who shall rule all, to cry out of afflictions just when we are going ashore, is extreme folly and madness.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(3265.) Though we seem grieved at the shortness of life in general, we are wishing every period of it at an end: the minor longs to be at age; then to be a man of business; then to make up an estate; then to arrive at honours; then to retire.

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(3266.) With a telescope directed towards one end of things created, and a microscope towards the other, we sigh to think how short is life, and how long is the list of acquirable knowledge. Alas! what is man in the nineteenth century! It is provoking that, now we have the means of learning most, we have the least time to learn it in. If we had but the longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs, we might have some hope, not of completing our education, but of passing a respectable previous examination prior to our admittance into a higher school. —*Household Words.*

(3267.) How brief it is! Who stood sentinel by the gate of Shushan when the royal couriers, bearing hope to the Jews, dashed through, burying their spurs in their horses' flanks—who lately stood on the platform by the iron rails that stretch from Holyhead to London, when, signals flashed on along the line to stop the traffic and keep all clear, an engine and carriage dashed by with tidings of peace or war from America—saw an image of our life. The eagle poising herself a moment on the wing, and then rushing at her prey; the ship that, throwing the spray from her bows, scuds before the

gale; the shuttle flashing through the loom; the shadow of a cloud sweeping the hill-side, and then gone for ever, nor leaving a trace behind; the summer flowers that vanishing, have left our gardens bare, and where were spread out the colours of the rainbow, only dull, black earth, or the rotting wrecks of beauty—these, with many other fleeting things, are emblems by which God through nature teaches us how frail we are; at the longest, how short our days. What need, therefore, there is to seize the passing moments—seeking the Lord while He is to be found. —*Guthrie.*

(3568.) Life, like a little lamp whose oil quickly consumes, is rapidly wasting away. Ever and anon we are deeply conscious of this. Not seldom time seems too fast for us. As a traveller journeying by express train is aroused from his sleep by arriving at his destination and exclaims, "I have got here sooner than I expected;" so are we tempted to exclaim as we reached various resting-places during life's pilgrimage. Certain stations come sooner than we thought they would. On birthdays, new years' days, and other anniversaries, we feel that we have "got there sooner than we expected."
—*T. R. Stevenson.*

14. Its vanity.

(3269.) Life consists not of a series of illustrious actions or elegant enjoyments: the greater part of our time passes in compliance with necessities, in the performance of daily duties, in the removal of small inconveniences, in the procurement of petty pleasures; and we are well or ill at ease as the main stream of life glides on smoothly, or is ruffled by small obstacles and frequent observation.
—*Dr. S. Johnson*, 1709–1784.

(3270.) My life is like the summer rose
That opens to the morning sky,
But ere the shades of evening close,
Is scatter'd on the ground—to die:

My life is like the prints which feet
Have left on Tampa's desert strand;
Soon as the rising tide shall beat,
All trace will vanish from the sand.
—*R. H. Wilde.*

15. Its uncertainty and transitoriness.

(3271.) Life is a dream, and a scene; and as on the stage when the scene is shifted the various pageants disappear, and as dreams flit away when the sunbeams rise, so here when the end comes, whether the universal or that of each one, all is dissolved and vanishes away. The tree that you have planted remains, and the house that you have built, it too stands on. But the planter and the builder go away, and perish.
Chrysostom, 347–407.

(3272.) Like as one in a ship, whether he sit, stand, awake or asleep, is ever still carried forward, although he mark it not greatly, neither feel it; so our life is a continual motion, doth every twinkling of an eye steal forth, and privily creep to the end, though we mark not how the time passeth. David saith, "Our time goeth forth swiftly, as though we did fly." As if he would say, There can nothing run or fly away more swiftly. And Sirac saith, "Remember that death tarrieth not." Paul saith, "I die daily." For even "in the midst of life we are in death," yea, death daily, as soon as we are born, taketh away somewhat of our life. After this meaning writeth Augustine, "The time of this life is nothing else but a rounding unto death."
—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(3273.) As it is with a man, being come to some great fair or market, with a considerable sum of money about him, who whilst he is walking in the throng, considering with himself how he should lay out his money to the best advantage, some sly fellow either cuts his purse or at unawares dives into his pocket, and there is an end of all his marketing; so it is with most men, that whilst they are in the midst of all their secular employments, and, as it were, crowded in the throng of worldly contrivances, how to secure such a ship, advantage, trade, compass such and such a bargain, purchase such and such lands, &c. (things in themselves with necessary cautions not unlawful), in steps death, cuts the thread of their life, spoils all their trade, and lays their glory in the dust.
—*Marshall*, 1655.

(3274.) Though in the course of undisturbed nature, young men may live longer than the old, yet nature hath so many disturbances and crosses, that our lives are still like a candle in a broken lanthorn, which a blast of wind may soon blow out.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

16. Its close.

(3275.) Life's evening, we may rest assured, will take its character from the day which has preceded it; and if we would close our career in the comfort of religious hope, we must prepare for it by early and continuous religious habit.
—*Shuttleworth.*

(3276.) You gladly now see life before you, but there is a moment which you are destined to meet when you will have passed across it and will find yourself at the farther edge. Are you perfectly certain that at that moment you will be in possession of something that will enable you not to care that life is gone? If you should *not*, what then?
—*John Foster*, 1770–1843.

(3277.) William the Conqueror established the ringing of *curfew* bells. The meaning of that curfew bell, sounded at eventime, was, that all the fires should be put out or covered with ashes, all the lights should be extinguished, and the people should go to bed. Soon for us the curfew will sound. The fires of our life will be banked up in ashes, and we shall go into the sleep, the long sleep, the cool sleep, I hope the blessed sleep. But there is no gloom in that if we are ready. —*Talmage.*

17. Its relation to eternity.

(3278.) This life was not intended to be the place of our perfection, but the preparation for it. As the fruit is far from ripeness in the first appearance, or the flower while it is but in the husk or bud; or the oak when it is but an acorn, or any plant when it is but in the seed; no more is the very nature of man upon earth. As the infant is not perfect in the womb, nor the chicken in the shell, no more are our natures perfect in this world.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3279.) Natural life is like the river Jordan, empties itself into the Dead Sea; but spiritual life is like the waters of the sanctuary, which, being shallow at the first, grow deeper and deeper into a

river, which cannot be passed through: water continually springing, and running forward into eternal life; so that the life which we leave is mortal and perishing, and that which we go into is durable and abounding. —*Salter.*

(3280.) Considered as a state of probation, our present condition loses all its inherent meanness; it derives a moral grandeur even from the shortness of its duration, when viewed as a contest for an immortal crown, in which the candidates are exhibited on a theatre, a spectacle to beings of the highest order, who, conscious of the tremendous importance of the issue, of the magnitude of the interest at stake, survey the combatants from on high with benevolent and trembling solicitude.
—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

(3281.) There are some who say, "What use is there in doing anything in this world? It scarcely seems worth while, in this brief span of life, to try to do anything." A man is placed in a high situation, receives an expensive education at school and college, and a still more expensive one of time and experience. And then, just when we think all this ripe wisdom, garnered up from so many fields, shall find its fullest use, we hear that all is over, he has passed from among us, and then the question, hideous in its suggestiveness, arises, "Why was he then more wise?"

Asked from this world's stand-point—if there is no life beyond the grave, if there is no immortality, if all spiritual calculation is to end here, why then, the mighty work of God is all to end in nothingness: but if this is only a state of infancy, only the education for eternity, in which the soul is to gain its wisdom and experience for higher work, then to ask why such a mind is taken from us, is just as absurd as to question why the tree of the forest has its first training in the nursery garden. This is but the nursery ground, from whence we are to be transplanted into the great forest of God's eternal universe. —*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(3282.) The one thing which saves this life from being contemptible is the thought of another. The more profoundly we feel the reality of the great eternity whither we are being drawn, the greater do all things here become. They are made less in their power to absorb or trouble, but they are made infinitely greater in importance as preparations for what is beyond. When they are first they are small, when they are second they are great. When the mist lifts and shows the summits of the "mountains of God," the nearer lower ranges, which we thought the highest, dwindle indeed, but gain in sublimity and meaning by the loftier peaks to which they lead up. Unless men and women live for eternity they *are* "merely players," and all their busy days "like a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, *signifying nothing.*" How absurd, how monotonous, how trivial it all is, all this fret and fume, all these dying joys and only less fleeting pains, all this mill-horse round of work which we pace, unless we are, mill-horse like, driving a shaft that goes *through the wall*, and grinds something that falls into "bags that wax not old" on the other side. The true Christian faith teaches us that this is the workshop where God makes men, and the next the palace where He shows them. All here is apprenticeship and training. It is of no more value than the attitudes into which gymnasts throw themselves, but as a discipline most precious. The end makes the means important; and if we believe that God is preparing us for immortal life with Him by all our work, then we shall do it with a will; otherwise we may well be languid as we go on for thirty or forty years, some of us doing the same trivial things, and getting nothing out of them but food, occupation of time, and a mechanical aptitude for what is not worth doing.

It is the horizon that gives dignity to the foreground; a picture without sky has no glory. This present, unless we see gleaming beyond it the eternal calm of the heavens above the tossing tree-tops with withering leaves, and the smoky chimneys, is a poor thing for our eyes to gaze at, or our hearts to love, or our hands to toil on. But when we see that all paths lead to heaven, and that our eternity is affected by our acts in time, then it is blessed to gaze, it is possible to love the earthly shadows of the uncreated beauty, it is worth while to work.
—*Maclaren.*

(3283.) This eternal life hangs on the small thread of the present. As we are now, so shall we be for ever. Eternal life is a synonym for character. "The child," it is said, "is the father of the man." This has a more solemn and awful—a more significant and truthful meaning with regard to a world to come. The childhood of time will determine the manhood of eternity. The passing moments of the present will colour the infinite future. Life in this world is the cartoon—the dim shadowy outline—which will be filled up and embodied in the life hereafter. —*Macduff.*

(3284.) Men are seeking for only this life. A short life it is, and exceedingly imperfect and rudimentary, at best. It is like a road, which is good for travelling, but poor for sleeping. This world is magnificent for strangers and pilgrims, but miserable for residents. The very moment a man carries himself as though this were his home, and begins to build as though he would live here, that moment the world is not a fit place for a temporary residence for him. It is only when a man considers this world as a school-house, and not a dwelling, that it will serve the purpose it was intended to serve. The academy is not a place to live in. We go into it that in due time we may come out prepared for a higher sphere. What the anvil and the blacksmith's shop are to the sword of the warrior, that this world and its instrumentalities are to us. We are forged here to be used hereafter. We are to receive our perfect selves, and to come to the fruition of ourselves, only when God shall open the door of this world, and let us out. We are like a ship that, being built, lies high and dry, and whose sea-going qualities cannot be known till she is launched upon the ocean. We do not know our own powers. When at death we are launched upon the sea of eternal life, then we shall know what we are.
—*Beecher.*

(3285.) A man who makes calculation and provision for this life only, is like the sea captain who, starting on a voyage to Europe, lays in provisions sufficient to last him only until he gets safe past the lighthouse, and out into the open sea.
—*Beecher*

(3286.) Man is a creature of two worlds. In this world he is at his least estate. There be plants that require two summers to grow in. They make their root in the first one. They make their blossom in the second. And no man can wisely treat such a plant as that, who treats it only for one summer. The hollyhock is a familiar instance. If you plant the seed now, no amount of nourishment shall drive it forward to blossom before the frost overtakes it. You have leaves the first season, and that is all. But if you carry it through the winter, knowing its double nature, nourishing it and strengthening it, and planting it again in the coming spring, you shall see it lift up its gorgeous spire, stately and glowing, among the noblest objects of beauty in the garden.

Man is a creature that grows by leaf and root in this life only; and he that has an ideal of life that encompasses only this life, lives only for leaves. No man lives for blossoms that does not take in two lives, and that has not in his ideal, therefore, not only the elements that give respectability and standing here, but the elements that give dignity, and power, and spiritual purity in the life that is to come. —*Beecher.*

(3287.) You have seen the tiny blossom of the fruit-tree opening in early spring. After basking a few days in the sun, it fades and falls. A germ is left behind on the branch, but it is scarcely discernible among the leaves. It is a green microscopic speck that can scarcely be felt between your fingers. If a hungry man should pluck and eat it, the morsel would not satisfy. Although he dreams of eating, when he awakes his soul is empty. The germ, as to present use, is a sapless, tasteless nothing. Grasped now as an object and end, it is the most worthless of all things; but left and cherished as the germ of fruit, it is most precious. According as it fades or thrives will the husbandman have joy or sorrow in the harvest.

This life is the bud of eternity; if it is plucked and used as the portion of a soul, that soul will be empty now, and empty for ever. If the husbandman should gather all the germs green, while they are tiny, tasteless atoms hidden among the leaves, he would be disappointed at the time, and destitute at last. He would gather worthless things in spring, and have nothing to gather in harvest. This life, taken and used as the portion of an immortal being, is green and sour and hurtful. If you pluck it at this stage, you will taste no real sweetness at the time, and possess no ripened store at last. But while the present world thus abused is worthless, rightly used it is beyond all price. Here is generated, cherished, ripened, the life that will never die.
—*Arnot.*

18. Reviewed.

(3288.) In the years that are past, what have we done for God? We have had many, daily, innumerable, opportunities of serving Him, speaking for Him, working for Him, not sparing ourselves for Him who spared not His own Son for us. Yet, how little have we attempted; and how much less have we done in the spirit of our Saviour's words, Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? In the golden sheaves of harvests the soil, grateful for favours, returns to the husbandman all that it gets; and by the mouths of its ten thousand rivers the earth gives back her treasures to the sea—and hence the sea is always full. But how poor the return we have made to God! There is no moor in our country so barren as our hearts. They drink up God's blessings as the sands of the Sahara heaven's rain. Nor is it but here and there that our life shows any green spots with verdure to refresh the eye, and call for the grateful acknowledgment of the apostle, "By grace I am what I am,"—by the grace of God I have done what I have done! Alas, how few are the days, how few the deeds of the past, that will be remembered with any comfort on a death-bed! It is impossible even now to review our lives without feeling that there is no hope for us out of Christ; and that the best and the busiest have been unprofitable servants.
—*Guthrie.*

(3289.) Our Saviour's whole life, which, if written fully out, John says, would fill so many volumes that the world would not be able to contain them, is told in this one, brief sentence, "He went about doing good." In this work He lived; for this end He died. This drew Him down from the skies; "doing good" was "the joy set before Him," for which He wore the thorny crown, and bore His heavy cross. And mark this, that none are His but those that are baptized with this baptism;—not you, "unless the same mind is in you that was in Jesus Christ."

Suppose, then, that our blessed Lord, sitting down on Olivet to review the years of His busy life, had looked on all the works which His hands had wrought,—what a crowd, a long procession of miracles and mercies had passed before Him! How many sinners warned! how many mourners comforted! how many friends and neighbours counselled! how many griefs healed! how many sufferers relieved! what busy days, what blessed hours! His presence carrying sunbeams into darkened homes! mercies springing up like flowers all along His path from the cradle to the grave! With what truth and beauty might He have applied to Himself the words of the patriarch: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness of me; because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." True of Job, how much more true are these words of the life of Jesus! He came in the form of a servant; and living, not to Himself, it was His meat and drink to do His Father's will. In that, He hath set us an example that we should follow His steps. And such an example! I believe there were more good works crowded into one single day of Christ's life, than you will find spread over the life-long history of any Christian.

Trying our piety by this test, what testimony does our past life bear to its character? Ages ago, two strangers belonging to other spheres alighted on our world; and both have left their footprints behind them. The poles are not so wide asunder as were their purposes. Rising on the smoke of the pit, Satan came from hell to ruin it: descending with a train of angels from the skies, Jesus came from heaven to save it. Each had his mission; and each performed it. We also have ours; and looking to the manner in which we have passed our lives, to which of the two do we bear the greatest resemblance? What have we been doing, what have we done in years gone by! Creeping like a

serpent into some happy Eden, have we tempted others to their fall? or, Christ-like, have we sought to raise the fallen? The tree is known by its fruits. Judge ye. The Lord have mercy on you if, tempting others to sin, you have played the devil's part! Happy those who, at however great a distance, and in however imperfect a manner, have attempted to follow Christ! "Well done, good and faithful servant," shall reward the pains, and crown the prayers, that sought to raise the fallen and save the lost. —*Guthrie.*

(3290.) "What a mercy for me that I have lasted so long," said the Old Quill Pen on the shelf, to itself. "I have lasted as long as any working Quill might reasonably expect with daily writing, and all the cutting, paring, and nibbing to which Pens are commonly subjected. Those attacks of the Knife, of course, served to shorten my existence, but no doubt improved me when I needed mending. So, it seems that those who used me, also took an interest in my well-being and work. I am only a poor Old Stump now! but though laid aside, let me humbly hope that my writings have done some good; which, of course, was the object intended when I was first made into a Pen, and is a comfort to my thoughts now that I can write no longer." —*Bowden.*

19. The after revelation of its results.

(3291.) All development of the soul toward character takes place little by little. To-day in one direction, to-morrow in another; to-day by one instrumentality, to-morrow by another; and what the whole of these accumulating parts and results is to be doth not yet appear. It is an invisible process. It is a growth by parts toward a whole; but a growth which to the end of this life will still remain fragmentary.

Look upon some building in process of construction. All round about it are stones disconnected. The architect knows for what they were cut, but you do not. Whether it is cornice or window-cap, whether it is top of this column or of that, you do not know. Vast timbers, in the framer's mind fitted for their places, and brought together here, give to your eye no indication of their function or their position. They lie around in their several heaps. As the workmen hoist them to their places, some order seems to begin. Yet it doth not appear what the whole is to be; nor will the beauty and fairness of the whole appear until it is completed. And what a building is whose materials are gathered and gathering ready for construction, that is man in this world—a creature whose parts are yet under the hammer. This virtue, that grace; this self-denial, that restriction; this courage, that patience; this faith, that love; this sentiment, that affection —all these varied elements, touched now by one instrument, and now by another, form, little by little, but never shaped into a whole in this world, that structure which is to rise into perfectness in the other life. —*Beecher.*

(3292.) If you go into the great manufactories at Lowell and Lawrence, that which you see is that which you never see elsewhere; and that which you see elsewhere is what you almost never see there. You see there, not colours, but dirty dye-vats; wool rather than thread, or thread rather than fabrics. Instead of seeing rolls of finished carpeting or cloth, you hear the rattling of looms, spinning-jennies, and other machinery. These things, which absorb your attention, you leave behind you, when you go out; whereas it is in New York, in London, in the great commercial mart, that you see the fabric which is produced by them.

Now, this world is a great rattling manufactory, and all these physical things are but the stationary engines and looms. These are the things that men never carry with them from this world. And yet, how important they are! Our life, as it were, is placed in a loom, and woven by these things. It rolls up, and is hidden as fast as it is woven; and it is to be taken out of the loom only when we leave this world. We shall see the pattern of it only when we abandon the things which act upon us here. —*Beecher.*

(3293.) Every thought and feeling is a painting stroke, in the darkness, of our likeness that is to be; and our whole life is but a chamber, which we are frescoing with colours that do not appear while being laid on wet, but which will shine forth afterwards, when finished and dry.

Like those airy sprites in fairy tales who rear the building through the night, unseen in the process, but clear and distinct in the morning's completion, so years, and hours, and moments are silently rearing, in this world's darkness, a soul-structure whose proportions the sunlight of eternity shall reveal. —*Beecher.*

LORD'S SUPPER. THE

1. Variously estimated by Christian men.

(3294.) All men speak honourable things of the sacrament, except wicked persons and the scorners of religion; and though of several persons, like the beholders of a dove walking in the sun, as they stand in several aspects and distances, some see red and others purple, and yet some perceive nothing but green, but all allow and love the beauties; so do the several forms of Christians, according as they are instructed by their first teachers, or their own experience, conducted by their fancy, and proper principle, look upon these glorious mysteries, some as virtually containing the reward of obedience; some as solemnities of thanksgiving, and records of blessings; some as the objective increase of faith; others as the sacramental participations of Christ; others as the acts and instruments of natural union; yet all affirm some great things or other of it, and by their differences confess the immensity and the glory. For thus manna represented to every man the taste that himself did like; but it had in its own potentiality all those tastes and dispositions eminently and altogether; it could speak of great and many excellences, and all confessed it to be enough, and to be the food of angels; so it is here, it is that to every man's faith, which his faith wisely apprehends; and though there are some of little faith, and such receive but a less proportion of nourishment, yet by the very use of this sacrament, the appetite will increase, and the apprehensions grow greater, and the faith will be more confident and instructed; and then we shall see more and feel more. —*Salter.*

2. Its design.

(3295.) Christ has not instituted this sacrament for a fashion in His Church, to touch, and feel, and see, as we gaze upon pictures in the windows. But as the woman who had the bloody issue, touching the hem of Christ's garment, drew virtue from Christ Himself, because she believed; so Christ would that we, touching these signs, should draw virtue from Himself, that is, all the graces which these signs represent.

—*Henry Smith*, 1560–1591.

(3296.) **The Lord's** Supper is memorative, and so it has the nature and use of a pledge or token of love, left by a dying to a dear surviving friend. It is like a ring plucked off from Christ's finger, or a bracelet from His arm, or rather His picture from His breast, delivered to us with such words as these: "As oft as you look on this, remember Me; let this help to keep Me alive in your remembrance when I am gone, and out of sight.

—*Flavel*, 1627–1691.

(3297.) The Lord's Supper is not designed or adapted to be a converting ordinance. A man sits down at the table of communion. What is the design of it? Is it that he may be converted? Was Judas converted at that table? This is not its design. It is solely to commemorate what Christ has done, and to bring impressively before the mind the great events of His death. "Do this in remembrance of Me," is the command, and this implies that there is already such an attachment to Him as to make such a commemoration proper. Do we institute memorials for the purpose of creating an attachment to those whom we despise, or hate? Is not the very object of a memento to recall the image of one whom we love; to deepen attachment, to bind us more strongly to him or to his memory? The ring which we wear on the finger, or the hair of a friend that we preserve in a locket, is not to create love for that friend, but it is to bring it to remembrance and to perpetuate it.

—*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

3. Its symbolism.

(3298.) Now, if you ask me why Christ called the sign by the name of the thing itself? I ask thee again, Mayest thou say, when thou seest the picture of the Queen, "This is the Queen?" or when thou seest the picture of a lion, "This is a lion?" And may not Christ say when He sees a thing like His body, "This is my body?" . . . The reason why the signs have the names of the things is to strike a deep reverence in us to receive this sacrament of Christ reverently and holily, as if that Christ were there present in body and blood Himself. —*Henry Smith*, 1560–1591.

(3299.) What, then, is there nothing in the sacrament but bread and wine, like a hungry nunchion? Nay, we say not that the sacrament is nothing but a base sign, or that you receive nothing no more than you see. For Christ saith that it is His body. And Paul says that it is the communion of Christ's body and blood. Therefore there is more in sacramental bread than in common bread. Though the nature is not changed, the use is changed. It does not only nourish the body as it did before, but also it brings a bread with which it nourishes the soul. For as sure as we receive bread, so sure we receive Christ; not only the benefits of Christ, but Christ, although not in a Popish manner. Yet we are so formed and united unto Him, even as though we were but one body with Him.

As the spouse does not marry with the lands and goods, but with the man himself, and being partaken of him, is made partaken of them; so the faithful do not only marry with Christ's benefits, but with Christ Himself; and being made partakers of Him, they are made partakers of His benefits. For Christ may not in any wise be divided from His benefits, no more than the sun from its light.

It is said, the Father gave us His Son (Rom. viii. 32), and so the Son gives us Himself. For as the bread is a sign of His body, so the giving of the bread is a sign of the giving of His body. Thus He lies before us like a pelican, which letteth her young ones suck her blood, so that we may say, the Lord invited us to supper, and He Himself was our meat.

But if you ask, "How is this?" I must answer, "It is a mystery." But if I could tell it, it would be no mystery. Yet, as it is said, when three men walked in the midst of the furnace, "One like unto the Son of God walked amongst them" (Dan. iii. 25), so, when the faithful receive the bread and wine, One like unto the Son of God seems to come unto them, which fills them with peace, and joy, and grace, that they marvel what it was that they received besides bread and wine.

For example, thou makest a bargain with thy neighbour for house or land, and receivest in earnest a piece of gold. That which thou receivest is but a piece of gold; but now it is a sign of thy bargain, and if thou keep not touch with him, haply it will clasp thee for all that thou art worth. So, that which thou receivest is bread, but this bread is a sign of another matter, which passeth bread.

Henry Smith, 1560–1591.

(3300.) For the signs to be turned into the thing signified, is utterly against the nature of a sacrament, and makes it no sacrament, for there is no sign. For every sacrament doth consist of a sign, and a thing signified. The sign is ever an earthly thing, and that which is signified is a heavenly thing. This shall appear in all examples: as, in Paradise there was a very tree for the sign, and Christ the thing signified by it. In Circumcision there was a cutting off of the skin, and the cutting off of sin. In the Passover there was a lamb, and Christ. In the Sabbath there was a day of rest, and eternal rest. In the Sacrifices there was an offering of some beasts, and the offering of Christ. In the Sanctuary there was the holy place, and heaven. In the Propitiatory there was the golden covering, and Christ our cover. In the Wilderness there was a rock yielding water, and Christ yielding His blood. In the Apparition there was a dove, and the Holy Ghost. In the Manna there was bread, and Christ. In Baptism there is very water which washes us, and Christ's blood washing us. So in the Supper of Christ there is very bread and wine for the sign, and the body and blood of Christ for the thing signified, or else this sacrament is against the nature of all other sacraments.

—*Henry Smith*, 1560–1591.

(3301.) Like as, when a nobleman delivereth a letter of annuity to any one of his servants he saith he giveth him an annuity of ten pounds, no man is so simple to think that the letter is the money itself,

but an assurance, sign, or gage, of such a sum of money, in such sort that, having such a letter, he is fully assured of the money. Every man doth well know that the signs have the names of the things which they signify; after this manner of speech, also, an ambassador of a prince, being demanded of the authority he hath received of his lord to deal in such or such a matter, is wont to show forth his letters of commission, and to say, "Here is my authority," albeit that the letters are not the power itself, but only the testimony of the same: even so the bread and the wine are the remission of sins, or the body and blood of Christ—to wit, they are as seals and letters, whereby we are assured that the body of Jesus Christ crucified, and His blood shed, have purchased unto us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(3302.) Nothing is more common in all languages than to give the name of the thing signified to the sign: as the delivery of a deed or writing under hand and seal is called a conveyance, or making over such an estate, and it is really so; not the delivery of mere wax and parchment, but the conveyance of a real estate, as truly and really, to all effects and purposes of law, as if the very material houses and lands themselves could be and were actually delivered into my hands: in like manner the names of things themselves made over to us in the new covenant of the gospel between God and man, are given to be signs or seals of that covenant. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(3303.) In the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ we are called to a familiar converse with God: He there appeareth to us by a wonderful condescension in the representing communicating signs of the flesh and blood of His Son, in which He hath most conspicuously revealed His love and goodness to believers: there Christ Himself with His covenant-gifts are all delivered to us by these investing signs of His own institution; even as knighthood is given by a sword, and as a house is delivered by a key, or land by a twig and turf. Nowhere is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ: and nowhere is Christ so familiarly represented to us as in this holy sacrament. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. In what sense the elements are sacred.

(3304.) An instrument or conveyance of lands from one party to another, being fairly engrossed on parchment, with wax fastened unto it, is no more than ordinary parchment and wax: but when it comes once to be sealed and delivered to the use of the party concerned, then it is changed into another quality, and made a matter of high concernment. Thus, the elements of bread and wine are the same in substance with the other bread and wine, before and after the administration is past: the same in quality—the bread dry, the wine moist: the same in nature—the bread to support, the wine to comfort the heart of man; but being once separated (not by any spells or signing with the sign of the cross, not by any Popish, carnal, sensual transubstantiation, nor any Lutheran consubstantiation) from a common to a holy use, when Christ's name is set on them in regard of institution, consecration, operation, and blessing attending on them, then they become Christ's bread and God's wine, and the tables God's tables too—not the bread of the buttery, but of the Sanctuary; not the wine of the grape, but of the Vine Christ Jesus, sealing unto us the pardon and remission of our sins: so that in the right receiving thereof we must make it a work, not *dentis*, but *mentis*—not so much to look on the elements what they are, but what they signify; look through the bush and see God, through the Sacrament and see Christ Jesus, to our comfort. —*Edlin*, 1652.

5. The benefits of a believing reception of it.

(3305.) As a sick man feels no comfort or nourishment when he eateth meat, and yet it preserveth his life: so the weak Christian, though he feel himself not nourished at the Sacrament by Christ's body and blood, yet he shall see in time that his soul shall be preserved thereby unto everlasting life.

As a man, looking steadfastly on a dial, cannot perceive the shadow move at all, yet, viewing it after a while, he shall perceive that it hath moved: so, in hearing of the Word, but especially in the receiving of the Lord's Supper, a man may judge even his own faith, and other graces of God, to be little or nothing increased, neither can he perceive the motion of God's Spirit in him at that present, yet by the fruits and effects thereof, he shall afterward perceive that God's Spirit hath by little and little wrought greater faith and other graces in him. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(3306.) The covenant of grace, founded upon this covenant of redemption, is sealed in the sacrament; God owns His standing to the terms of it; as the right of a house is made over by the delivery of the key, and the right of land translated by the delivery of a turf; whereby He gives us assurance of His reality, and a strong support to our confidence in Him. Not that there is any virtue and power of sealing in the elements themselves, no more than there is in a turf to give an infeoffment in a parcel of land; but as the power of the one is derived from the order of the law, so the confirming power of the sacrament is derived from the institution of God; as the oil wherewith kings were anointed did not of itself confer upon them that royal dignity, but it was a sign of the investure into office, ordered by divine institution. We can with no reason imagine that God intended them as naked signs or pictures, to please our eyes with the image of them, to represent their own figure to our eyes, but to confirm something to our understanding by the efficacy of the Spirit accompanying them. They convey to the believing receiver what they represent, as the great seal of a prince, fixed to the parchment, does the pardon of the rebel, as well as its own figure. Christ's death, and the grace of the covenant, is not only signified, but the fruits and merit of that death communicated also. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3307.) Two friends, intimately united, lose sight, in some sense, of the difference which there may be between their respective conditions. This, too, is what the believer experiences at the Lord's table. On the one part, though there must ever be an immeasurable abyss between God and us, we go to Him as to our brother, as to our friend. . . . And on the other part, God is pleased to lay aside, in condescension to our weakness, if the expression be lawful, the rays of His divine majesty, with which the eyes of mortals would be dazzled into blindness. —*Saurin*.

(3308.) It was very tenderly considerate in the Lord to leave something visible and tangible whereby to lift us up to the Invisible. Just as in prayer, while the shut door, the bowed knees, the articulate words as towards God, have no efficacy, but nevertheless are a help to us; so the Lord's supper is a help at once to our faith and brotherhood. It draws us nearer to one another—it aids us to think what heaven is, where we shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." —*Grosart.*

6. Not to be neglected.

(3309.) If it be a token of divine goodness to appoint it, it is no sign of our estimation of divine goodness to neglect it. He that values the kindness of his friend will accept of his invitation, if there be not some strong impediments in the way, or so much familiarity with him, that his refusal upon a light occasion would not be unkindly taken. But though God put on the disposition of a friend to us, yet He loses not the authority of a sovereign; and the humble familiarity He invites us to, does not diminish the condition and duty of a subject. A sovereign prince would not take it well, if a favourite should refuse the offered honour of his table. The viands of God are not to be slighted.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3310.) He has left us this dark glass, wherein we may see His face till He return with a full glory; and is it an affection to Him never to look upon His picture, the medal of Himself, wherein He has engraven the tracks of His dying love; all that He did, all that He purchased, all His fulness, all His treasures, wherein we may behold Him as a Redeemer pouring out His blood for us, as a Sanctifier pouring His blood into us, as a Benefactor opening His enriching treasures to us, as a Supplier providing for all our wants? How can we say we love Him if we do not mind Him? What value have we for Him, if He be not in our thoughts?

Well, but we may remember Christ other ways without this ceremony? We may, but do we? Do you frequently ponder upon Him? are your thoughts of Him edged with choice and ravishing affections to Him? does not the body of death hinder you from thinking of the Lord of Life? But suppose you are not one minute forgetful of His love, does it consist with your professed affection to Him to choose your own ways of remembering Him, and neglect His? Suppose we had a friend who had redeemed us from the galleys, restored us from servitude, redeemed our lives, installed us in a large inheritance, and was to take a long journey, promising to return again, leaving with us his picture, which he would have us look upon at some special seasons, and express in that method a particular mindfulness of him. Though we could not without an excusable ingratitude forget him had we not that picture, yet it were but an unworthy return to deny the observance of so small an order to a friend to whom we owe ourselves. This is all the picture Christ has left of Himself; He never appointed any images or crucifixes, never imprinted the features of His face upon Veronica's napkin. Is it not ingratitude to neglect the remembrance of Him in His own method, when He might have put hard conditions upon us; and when it is not a mere sight of Him, but a spiritual feast with Him, wherein we may suck of His very blood into the veins of our souls, as well as the wine into those of our bodies? —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3311.) It is undeniable that as sacraments are "generally necessary to salvation," whoever continues to live in the wilful neglect of the Lord's supper is under condemnation. He cannot be Christ's disciple, for he denies Him in the world. He presumptuously breaks one of God's commandments, and is therefore guilty as a transgressor of the whole law. But it is not merely the bare refusal of this sacrament, but the secret disposition and state of heart which such a neglect discovers—and of which it is the infallible mark, which proves his pretension to religion to be vain. Take the case of a man in whom the process of inward mortification is going on. This is not visible, and is altogether hid from general observation. But the black and livid spots on the limb distinctly mark the fatal disorder within. The patient's attention is confined to the part which is affected, and he little dreams of its connection with the work of death which is going forwards. But to the experienced eye the fatal process is fully disclosed by that little spot of livid flesh. It would not be there if mortification was not present. To the continued and resolute refusal to sup with Christ, though to the party himself, and to others, it may appear a venial matter, and to be accounted only as the neglect of *one* of the ordinances of the Church, yet, in the judgment of all who are taught of God, it is indicative of a fatally disordered state of the heart—it marks the universal indisposition to assume that sacred badge of discipleship and separation from the world. It proves the disaffection and disloyalty to Christ's government and institutions which reigns within, and that something is loved and cherished as better than obedience and love to the Saviour. For in the case under consideration, it is no other than an indisposition to commit ourselves by giving a pledge that we design that high and holy walk in life which belongs to Christ's disciples. We would not come under such a yoke. And just as there would be no living marks in the case supposed, where there was no mortification—so there would be no wilful refusal of the holy supper, were the disposition of our heart in a sound and healthy state. In both of these cases the process of death is going forwards. —*Salter.*

7. Who are to partake of it.

(3312.) This sacrament is a sacrament of nourishment, unrenewed men therefore are not fit for it. They are dead (Eph. ii. 1); and what has a dead man to do with a feast? Men must be alive before they be nourished. It is eat, drink. The principal intent is not to eat corporeally, but spiritually; words not to be spoken to a dead man. Meat and drink may be put into a dead man's mouth, but he can swallow down neither one nor other in a vital way, nor concoct either of them. He that wants the life of grace can make no use of the nourishment of grace; so that the sacrament is at best but a vain thing to such. But besides, the very end of the sacrament is perverted, when the richest viands are taken by a man spiritually dead; as the end of bread, which is to nourish the body, is perverted, and the creature abused by being used contrary to the end of it, when it is put into the mouth of a dead man to whom it can be no advantage. The body of Christ conveys strength and growth to His own

members only; to living members, not to dead. Dead branches receive no sap from the vine.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3313.) The sacrament is appointed for nourishment, and that supposes life. A sacrament does not suppose the effect which it was instituted to produce, but this sacrament supposes grace in a participant. And indeed, bread and wine are not ordered to enliven a dead man, but to nourish and maintain life in a living man. The bellows kindle not the wood, but suppose the fire kindled before. This sacrament is instituted as a part of refreshment, with meat and drink; and though Christ, who is exhibited in this sacrament, can raise a dead man, yet He is offered in this ordinance for producing such effects which are agreeable to the nature of it. He is offered as spiritual food, and spiritual food supposes a new birth.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3314.) I see plainly by unquestionable experience, that either we must have churches without the discipline of Christ, and be rulers without ruling it; or else we must utterly undo our people, body and soul for ever, and plunge them into a desperate state, and make all our following labours in vain to multitudes of them: or else we must take another course, than to admit our parishes to adult church-membership, as was formerly done, without preparation and fitness for such a state.

And yet in their blindness, gentlemen, ministers, and all that plead for common church-membership, pretend to be charitable to the people's souls, when they are exercising this grievous cruelty. It is just as if in mercy to the schoolboys, you should set them that cannot read English in the highest form, where they must make orations in Latin and Greek, or else be whipped: would they thank you for such advancement? It is as if you should put an ignorant, unexercised, cowardly soldier, or one that is but learning to use his arms, into the front of the battle, for his honour: or as if you should prefer a pupil to be a tutor, or put a freshman in the doctor's chair, or admit a newly-baptized novice to be a pastor of the Church, where the blood of the people shall be required at his hands; or as if to honour him, you should admit any common mariner to the pilot's place, or any apothecary to play the physician to other men's ruin, and his own shame. If you set such children on horseback, while you pretend their good, you will break their necks. No man is safe out of his own rank and place. If the husbandman know that every sort of plants and grain, must have their proper soil and season, and the gardener knoweth that several herbs and flowers must be variously manured, or else they will not prosper; why should we be less wise in the work of God? As country schools are seminaries to the academies, so the catechumens or expectants is the seminary to the Church; and the state of infant church-membership the seminary to the state of the adult, into which they must be seasonably and solemnly transplanted when they are ripe and ready, and not before. Truly our merciful hastlings do but yoke untamed bullocks, that are fitter to strive and tire themselves than to plough; and do but saddle such wild, unbroken colts as are more likely to break their own and their rider's necks, than to go the journey which they are designed for. In the state of expectants, these men may profit by preparing ordinances, and the season may come when they may fitly be transplanted: but if we put them *inter fideles*, that are not prepared for the station, we bring them under a discipline which will exasperate them, and turn them to be malignant enemies, and undo them for ever. The disposition of the matter must go before the reception of the form; for indisposed matter will not receive it. As the operation followeth the being and the disposition, so we must employ every person and thing in such operations only as their being and qualification is capable of and suited to. A due placing of all according to their qualifications is the chief part of our government. Misplace but one wheel in your watch, and try how it will go. If any person or thing be not good in his own place, he will be much worse out of it, in the place of his superior. Fire is better in the chimney than in your bed, or upon your table; a good clerk may make but a sorry counsellor; and a good subject may make but an ill magistrate: and many a man becomes the seat of a justice, that would not become the prince's throne. If you would not undo men's souls by a discipline which they cannot bear, let them stay in the seminary of expectants till they are ripe for it.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3315.) The profiting of our people will be much greater in their own place, when those that are not yet fit for adult-membership and privileges are kept in the place of catechumens or expectants. Everything doth thrive and prosper best in its own place: if you tear them not out of the Church's womb, till they are ready for the birth, they will prosper there, that else may perish. Your corn will best prosper in the cold earth, where it seems to be dead and buried, till the springing-time shall come. And you should not violently unhose the ears, till nature put them forth. The first digestion must be wrought before the second, and nature must have time allowed it, and the stomach must not too hastily let go the food, if you would have good sanguification and nutrition follow. Men think they do a great kindness to grossly ignorant or impious men to take them into the Church, before they are capable of such a station and the work or privileges thereto belonging; but, alas! they do but hurry them to perdition, by thrusting them out of the state where they might have thriven in preparation to a church-state, into a state which will set them abundance of work which they are utterly unfit for, and under the pretence of benefits and privileges will occasion abundance of aggravations of their sins. A boy in his A, B, C, will learn better in his own place among his fellows, than in a higher form, where he hath work set him which he is incapable of doing. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

8. We should prepare ourselves to receive it.

(3316.) Abraham, when he went to sacrifice his son on Mount Moriah, seeing the place afar off, said unto the young men that were with him, "Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship." He knew well enough, that if they had gone along with him, they would have distracted and hindered him in the sacrifice; and therefore, when he saw the place afar off, he prepared himself, and bade them stay behind. The like should our care be, when we should receive the sacrament; when we see the time

draw near, we should set aside all worldly cares and employments, and bid them wholly stand aside, and suffer them not only not to go to the Mount with us, but not to go into our secret chambers with us, but shut them out of doors, make them dance attendance there, that we may perform the duty with more comfort and freedom.

—*Dyke*, 1644.

(3317.) We must not only examine whether we have a wedding-garment, but also whether it be well kept and brushed; whether no moths be got into it, no new spots dashed upon it. A rich robe may be sometimes so besmeared and daubed with mire, that none of the gold lace upon it may be visible, till cleansed. Graces are to be purified, as well as sins purged out; grace, as well as metal, for want of rubbing and exercise, will gather dust.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

9. The sin of not discerning the Lord's body.

(3318.) Like as, if a rebellious subject should no more regard his prince's seal than other common wax, or have it in no greater reverence than the seal of some private man, it might rightly be said that he maketh no difference of his prince's person —that is to say, that he doth no more esteem him than he doth other men, yet it needeth not that the king's person be there really present: so, when we come to the Lord's table, if we take irreverently the mystical bread and wine as other common meats appointed for the belly, then make we no difference of the Lord's body; we do not esteem the worthiness, price, and virtue of it, which in the holy mysteries is so freely and so liberally offered unto us; and therefore, if we receive this sacrament irreverently, not considering who is the Author of it, nor who it is that offereth Himself so mercifully and lovingly unto us, it is no marvel that the holy apostle saith that we are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord—that is to say, that we are before the seat of the Almighty God, because of our unthankfulness and irreverent handling of the holy mysteries, counted as guilty as if we had slain the body of the only-begotten Son of God, and shed His most precious blood upon the cross; or it is no marvel that, instead of grace, instead of forgiveness of our sins, and of life everlasting, we do eat and drink our own damnation; and yet it followeth not that the body and blood of Christ be really present there in the sacrament. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

10. Why so many derive so little profit from its observance.

(3319.) Abraham, when he went with his servants to sacrifice Isaac, said unto them, "Abide you here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Thus too many do with their sins when they come to the sacrament; they do, in effect, say to their sins and lusts, "Stand you awhile aside; I must go to the sacrament and receive the communion. Do but stand by awhile, and when the sacrament is over, or, at farthest, as soon as the sacrament day is over, I will come again to you." Thus, the duty once over, and the sacrament a little forgotten, they and their sins are hail-fellow-well-met upon all occasions. —*Dyke*, 1644.

(3320.) Let us see that we so come to Him, that we do not put Him to receive sins as well as sinners. For though Christ is willing to make us part of His body, yet He is not willing to unite Himself to ulcers and putrefaction. And therefore He that comes hither with a Judas's heart and hypocrisy, will find a Judas's entertainment; and though he may receive the morsel from Christ's hand, yet he will find that the devil will enter and go along with it. It will be only the nutriment of his sin, and the repast of his corruption. He that comes to this dreadful duty profane, unclean, or intemperate, will go away with quicker dispositions and livelier appetites to those sins. Every corruption shall rise and recover itself, like a giant refreshed with wine. For Christ has given the devil full commission to enter into such swine, and to drive them headlong to their own destruction.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(3321.) "They that wait on the Lord shall receive strength." Thus God shall make good His promise, "As thy days are, so shall thy strength be." Why then, it may be asked, do men go from the house of God and from a communion table to be worsted, "as at other times before," by the devil, the world, and the flesh? Baptize a withering plant with water, and it lifts up its head, casts off the old leaves, and puts out a fresh crop of buds and blossoms; or carry a cup of water, or of wine, to the lips of a fainting man, and his pulse beats again; the blood returns to his cheek; he opens his eyes; he rises to his feet, if a racer, to resume the course; if a soldier, to renew the combat. And if it be true, that like water to a languishing flower, or wine to a fainting man, so are the ordinances of religion to the soul, why are men often no better of them? why are they like "clouds without rain" that give their shadows, but no showers, to brown, barren fields? This admits of an easy explanation.

The ordinances of religion are compared to wells of water; but then they are like Jacob's well. The water lies far below the surface; and to the man of the world, the mere professor of religion who has the name but not the faith of a Christian, we may say, as the woman said to our Lord, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." Faith is, as it were, the rope, and our souls the vessel, which we let down into this well to fill them with living water. But that they do no good to some, forms no reason why we should despise or neglect ordinances. It is no fault in the bread, that, thrust between a dead man's teeth, it does not nourish him. The truth is, that we must have spiritual life to get the benefit of religious ordinances. Water will revive a withering, but not a withered plant; wine will revive a dying, but not a dead man; the breath of your mouth, or the breeze of heaven, will rekindle the smouldering coal, but not the cold, grey ashes of the hearth. And it is only spiritual life that can derive benefit from such ordinances as are intended to revive the faint and give strength to the weary. —*Guthrie.*

(3322.) Were they to speak their own experience, many who come to the church and go to the sacrament would say, What is the Lord that we should serve Him? what profit shall we have if we pray to Him? Still there is no genuine Christian but will set to his seal that God's promises are true; but has often found himself in times of trouble, in seasons of trial and temptation, greatly refreshed and strengthened by waiting on the Lord. What though the

disciples, within a few hours of leaving the communion table, gave its vows to the winds; bent like reeds before the blast; and, instead of rallying round their Master as they had promised, played the part of cowards—flung away their weapons and fled the field? They had been waiting on the Lord; and was this all they got, or is it all we shall get by doing so? These questions may be asked; but they prove nothing against the truth of God's Word. It is not the fact that they went from the communion table to flee. That is not a correct statement of the case. They did not go from making vows, from professing that they would die with the Lord—one to deny, and all to desert Him. After supper they went to sleep; and from that, not from their knees, they rose to flee. The husbandman covers the seed when he has sown it; the workman rivets the nail when he has driven it; and had the disciples followed up the work of communion with the work of prayer, they would have risen from their knees, if need be, to die, but in no case to deny their Master. —*Guthrie.*

LOVE.

I. *ITS SOURCE.*

(3323.) As one familiar with the sonatas and the symphonies of Beethoven, while passing along the street in summer, gets from out of the open window a snatch of a song, or of a piece that is being played, catching a strain here and another there, and says to himself, "Ah, that is Beethoven! I recognise that; it is from such and such a movement of the Pastoral," or whatever it may be; so men in life catch strains of God in the mother's disinterested and self-denying love; in the lover's glow; in the little child's innocent affections. Where did this thing come from? No plant ever brought out such fruit as this. Nature, dumb and blind, with her lizards, and stones, and thousand accumulations of matter, never thought anything like that. This and that harmony of light, the few hints which we see here and there—these have been sprinkled into life, dropping from above. And there is a fountain where exist elements and attributes of which these are but the souvenirs. And to me they all point back to something which we have not seen. As birds, when after moulting they begin to sing, break down in mid-song, and give only a snatch here and a snatch there of the full volume of their summer strains; so these hints, these little tinkling notes of love on earth, beautiful as they are in themselves, are not perfect, and are not understood until we trace them back, and feel that there is above somewhere One whose nature epitomises all these things.

Go and look on the south side of the Highlands. You shall see that, detached from the rocks there, and lying in a long trail, for miles and miles, are blocks of syenite, or of trap, or of granite, as the case may be. And there is many a block which, if you choose, you can trace back to the very spot where the ice pried it out, or from which the flood or the iceberg drifted it along the mountain side. Now, as it is with those blocks of stone, so it is with these scattered elements and traits that have drifted out, as it were, from the mountain of God, and sweetened the household, and refined civilised life. They are, after all, but the outflowing, the drift, as it were, of the great Divine Soul in this world. —*Beecher.*

II. *ITS EXCELLENCE.*

1. It is the life of the soul and of the moral universe.

(3324.) The soul may sooner leave off to subsist than to love; and, like the vine, it withers and dies if it has nothing to embrace. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(3325.) It is the heat of the universe. Philosophers tell us that without heat the universe would die. And love in the moral universe is what heat is in the natural world. It is the great germinating power. It is the ripening influence. It is the power by which all things are brought steadily up from lower to higher forms. —*Beecher.*

2. It is the bond that unites all holy intelligences.

(3326.) *Crispus.* I have been thinking of love as the band which unites all holy intelligence to God and one another; as that in the moral system which the law of attraction is in the system of nature.

Gaius. Very good; while the planets revolve round the sun as their central point, and are supremely attracted by it, they each have a subordinate influence upon the others: all attract and are attracted by others in their respective orbits; yet no one of these subordinate attractions interferes with the grand attractive influence of the sun, but acts rather in perfect concurrence with it. Under some such idea we may conceive of supreme love to God and subordinate love to creatures.

Crispus. Among the planets, if I mistake not, the attractive power of each body corresponds with the quantity of matter it possesses, and its proximity to the others.

Gaius. True, and though in general we are required to love our neighbour as ourselves, yet there are some persons, on account of their superior value in the scale of being, and others on account of their more immediate connection with us, whom we are allowed and even obliged to love more than the rest. —*A. Fuller*, 1754–1815.

3. It is the supreme grace.

(3327.) Love is the queen of the graces; it outshines all the other, as the sun the lesser planets. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3328.) If charity be greater than faith, then is not man justified by faith only. Inconsequent illation! St. Paul commends not love for the virtue of justification; it may fail in that particular action, yet receive no impeachment to the excellency of it. By demonstration: A prince excels a peasant; shall any man therefore infer that he can plough better, or have more skill in tillage? A philosopher excels a mechanic, though he cannot grind so well as a miller, or limn so cunningly as a painter. A man is better than a beast; who but a madman will therefore conclude that he can run faster than a horse, draw more than an ox, or carry a greater burden than an elephant! Though he fail in these particular acts, yet none will deny but he is better than a beast. *Adams*, 1653.

4. Its production is the end of Christ's mission and of all religious ordinances.

(3329.) Christ came not into the world to fill our heads with mere speculations, to kindle a fire of

wrangling and contentious dispute amongst us, and to warm our spirits against one another with angry and peevish debates, while, in the meantime, our hearts remain all ice within towards God, and have not the least spark of true heavenly love to melt and thaw them. Christ came not to possess our brains with some cold opinions, that send down a freezing and benumbing influence into our hearts. Christ was a master of the life, not of the school; and He is the best Christian whose heart beats with the purest pulse towards heaven, not he whose head spins the finest cobweb.

—*Cudworth*, 1617–1688.

(3330.) It is obvious that in order to solid proficiency in any kind of art, the student must first be furnished with a clear answer to the question, What is the object—the end to be reached? Take the art of oratory, for instance. What (in brief) is the thing to be done by the orator, the end at which he must aim? Let us say that it is to persuade the audience to adopt or refrain from a certain course of action. If he can persuade them to do what he advises, he hits the mark—he reaches the end of the art—he succeeds. But if, after having heard him, they act in a way opposite to that which he recommends, he goes wide of the mark—his speech is a failure. And this is a good subject to draw the instance from, because as a fact both speakers and hearers often do make much the same mistake as to oratory, which is universally made as to religion. Too often, for example, is a fine sermon thought to be, not that which gives a spur to the wills of the hearers, not that which induces them to set about reforming their lives, and becoming good people, but that which merely explains a difficult text of the Bible, or which goes towards settling a controversial question, or which, not even possessing merits as high as these, has merely fine language and flowers of rhetoric to recommend it. Now it is clear that the perception of the true end is the first step towards setting the practice right. I have done something towards rectifying my preaching, if I have settled it in my own mind that, on the one hand, I shall fail utterly, unless I send the audience away with a desire for, and an impulse towards, spiritual improvement, and that, on the other, I shall succeed perfectly, if I do send them away with such a desire and impulse, even if my sermon should settle no controversy, should explain no merely speculative difficulty, and should be absolutely wanting in fine words and in all the graces of style. St. John was a true orator in his old age, when from his infirmities he was unable to say more than this, "Little children, love one another," because the antecedents of that holy and venerable bishop, and the deep and living sympathy with which he uttered the words, really moved the hearers to comply with the precept, and their feuds sank to rest at the sound of his voice.

Let us take an instance from another art, where there may perhaps be some *doubt* as to what should be the artist's object. What is the end of painting, the aim which the painter must set before him? Is it to deceive the spectator, to give him a false impression, to make him imagine that the painted object is a real one? It would seem that the ancients thought so from the story current among them of the trial of skill between Zeuxis and Parrhasius, in which one of them painted a bunch of grapes so like nature, that the birds came and pecked at them, and the other a curtain so like real drapery, that his brother artist called on him to draw the curtain and exhibit his picture. Or is the end of painting not to deceive, but to please the spectator by a faithful imitation of nature,—an end which is incompatible with deception; for if the spectator is to be affected with pleasure by the fidelity of an imitation, he must of course be aware that it *is* an imitation, and not the reality? And, again, *how* is nature to be imitated by the painter? Servilely, and in a matter-of-fact way, line upon line, feature by feature? Or shall we say rather that there is a soul in nature, a soul in every countenance, ay, and a soul in every landscape, which struggles for a fuller development, and to which it is the painter's business to give expression? In other words, is a photograph the very highest style of imitative art, because it is true in the letter? or is a portrait of Raffaelle's or Murillo's infinitely higher than any photograph can be, because it is true not so much in the letter as in the spirit?

It is not to my point to answer these questions, but only to call attention to the fact that they may be asked, and answered differently. And an artist who intends to paint successfully must have a clear answer to them in his mind before he begins. He must resolve himself on the question, "What is the true object of my art? Is it to produce deception? Is it to please persons by a faithful imitation of nature? And if so, what *is* a faithful imitation? Is it a servile copy, like the Chinese imitation of pottery, which reproduces the flaws and the cracks; or is it the development of a feature which in the original seems to yearn for expression?" If this point be not settled at the beginning, he is certain to go astray in the execution.

The above illustrations will not be thrown away, if they tend in any mind to clear up the position which we are endeavouring to establish. As in the arts, so also in the pursuit of holiness, or, in other words, in the spiritual life, *there is an end;* and it is all-important that they who would be proficients in the spiritual life should discern clearly what this end is, and hold it steadily before them in their every endeavour. The end is love—supreme love, with all the powers of the soul to God,—and such love to our brethren as we bear to ourselves,—this love to be engendered by a living faith in what God has done for us, a faith which sets free the heart both from a sense of guilt and from a love of sin, and which thus sets the conscience at ease. If this love is *not* produced and maintained in the soul, we fail altogether in true religion, and that, though we may have been very busy *about* religion, may have put up many prayers, heard many sermons, attended many sacraments, assisted in many philanthropic enterprises.

—*Goulburn.*

5. It renders all our services acceptable.

(3331.) Love is the heart of religion, the fat of the offering: it is the grace which Christ inquires most after, "Peter, lovest thou Me?" Love makes all our services acceptable, it is the musk that perfumes them. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3332.) It is not so much the thing done, as the spirit in which it is done, which is of such great moment. For love is an affection of the heart and will, and we know that very small tokens, the

merest trifles, will evince it; and that, when it is evinced, it has a peculiar power of winning its way both with God and man. Suppose a great fortune laid out in building churches, or relieving the poor, under the pressure of servile fear, and with the design of expiating sin, or a great philanthropic enterprise inaugurated and maintained from ambitious motives; can it be supposed that such acts, however it may please Him to bless the effects of them, go for anything with God as regards the doer of them. And, on the other hand, suppose some very simple, commonplace action, something not going at all beyond the circle of routine and daily duty, done with a grateful, affectionate feeling towards God, and from a simple desire to please Him, and to win His approval,—can it be supposed that such an action, however trifling in itself, does not go for something, nay, for much, with God? The love of Him with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, is "the first and great commandment." One movement of that love gives to the commonest action the fragrance of a sacrifice; while, without one movement of it, the costliest offering must of necessity be rejected. "If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." —*Goulburn.*

6. Its excellence is manifest in its influence on the heart and life.

(1.) *It casts out fear.*

(3333.) Love and fear are like the sun and moon, seldom seen together. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(2.) *It expels whatever is inconsistent with itself.*

(3334.) Love is compared to fire, the nature of which is, to assimilate to itself all that comes near it, or to consume them; it turns all into fire or ashes; nothing that is heterogeneous can long dwell with its own simple, pure nature. Thus love to Christ will not suffer the near neighbourhood of anything in its bosom that is derogatory to Christ; either it will reduce, or abandon it, be it pleasure, profit, or whatever else. Abraham, who loved Hagar and Ishmael in their due place, when the one began to jostle with her mistress, and the other to jeer and mock at Isaac, he puts them both out of doors: love to Christ will not suffer thee to side with anything against Christ, but take His part with Him against any that oppose Him.

—*Salter.*

(3.) *It kindles aspirations after holiness.*

(3335.) Look that there be such a change in thy judgment, and heart, as makes thee take an inward complacency and delight in Christ, and His holy commands. Then there is little fear of thy degenerating, when thou art tied to Him and His service, by the heart-strings of love and complacency. The devil finds it no hard work to part him and his duty that never joyed nor took true content in doing of it. He whose calling doth not like him, nor fit his *genius* (as we say), will never excel in it. A scholar learns more in a week, when he comes to relish learning, and is pleased with its sweet taste, than he did in a month, when he went to school to please his master (whom he feared) not himself. Observe any person in the thing wherein he takes high content, and he is more careful and curious about that than any other. If his heart be on his garden, oh, how neatly it is kept! it shall lie as we say, in print; all the rare roots and slips that can be got for love or money shall be sought for. Is it beauty that one delights in; how curious and nice is such a one in dressing herself? she hardly knows when she is fine enough. Truly thus it is here; a soul that truly loves Christ, delights in holiness; all his strength is laid out upon them; may he but excel in this one thing, be more holy, more heavenly, he will give others leave to run before him in anything else. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4.) *It makes obedience easy.*

(3336.) Nothing is difficult to love: it will make a man cross his own inclinations to pleasure them whom he loves. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(3337.) Love is like wings to the bird, like sails to the ship, it carries a Christian full-sail to heaven. When love cools, obedience slacks, and drives heavily, because it wants the oil on its wheel that love used to drop. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3338.) Love to God would make duties of religion facile and pleasant. I confess to him that hath no love to God, religion must needs be a burden: and I wonder not to hear him say, "What a weariness is it to serve the Lord." It is like rowing against the tide. But love oils the wheels, it makes duty a pleasure. Why are the angels so swift and winged in God's service, but because they love Him? Jacob thought seven years but little for the love he did bear to Rachel. Love is never weary; he who loves money is not weary of toiling for it; and he who loves God is not weary of serving Him. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3339.) It is of the utmost importance to keep up our interest in the holy work in which we are engaged, for the moment our interest flags the work will become wearisome. Humboldt says that the copper-coloured native of Central America, far more accustomed than the European traveller to the burning heat of the climate, yet complains more when upon a journey, because he is stimulated by no interest. The same Indian who would complain, when in botanising he was loaded with a box full of plants, would row his canoe fourteen or fifteen hours together against the current without a murmur, because he wished to return to his family. Labours of love are light. Routine is a hard master. Love much, and you can do much. Impossibilities disappear when zeal is fervent.

—*Spurgeon.*

(3340.) Two boys, the sons of poor parents, went one day in autumn to the forest to collect dry sticks. One of them, the son of a kind widow, was called Erhard; the other, named Matthew, had a hard stepmother, who often lived in discord with his father.

When the boys reached the forest, they resolved to return home together, and then parted to look for dry sticks. Erhard collected busily, and where he saw a dry branch on a tree he climbed up and broke it off. In a short time he had prepared a heavy bundle and tied it up tightly.

Then he ran to the other side, calling his companion, who answered him from the depth of the forest; and when Erhard joined him he found him among the hazel bushes. When Erhard saw him he said, "Let us go home now. Where is your

faggot?" But Matthew answered: "Have you finished so quickly? I have not yet found anything."

Then Matthew took out a knife, and looked about to see if any one was near. Erhard asked him: "What are you about?"

The other answered: "Pick up some dry sticks to put outside the faggot, I will provide for the rest." Then he prepared to cut down a young oak with his knife. Erhard was terrified, and cried: "God forbid that you should hurt the young tree. It would be a shame and a sin. If the forest keeper were to hear of it, he would forbid every one to pick up wood, and you would be the cause if all the poor people were to go without wood during the severe winter. God forbid that we should do such evil. Wait a little, I will find a way."

Erhard looked round, and discovered an old oak with many dead branches; he climbed up the tree like a squirrel, and threw down the dry wood. Matthew was surprised.

In less than half an hour they had wood enough, and Erhard made a bundle and carried it to the place where he had left his own; then he put it down, and said to Matthew: "Now, take it on your shoulder."

But Matthew said: "Let me rather have the other, it is smaller and lighter!"

Erhard laughed, and said: "You are stronger and taller than I am; but let it be as you will."

They took their bundles and went. Matthew panted and complained; and before they were out of the forest, he asked Erhard to stop, that they might rest, as he was tired, and wherever he found a nut bush, he wanted to stop to look for nuts. But Erhard prevented him and said: "I must go to my mother."

When they had walked a little while on the road, Matthew threw his bundle angrily to the ground, and said: "You have made it too heavy." He pulled out some thick pieces, saying: "Let him take these who pleases!"

But Erhard picked them up and put them with his own. "I will carry them for you," said he, "till we reach the town."

Then Matthew was astonished at the kindness and strength of his companion; and he looked at him, and said: "Who teaches you to do this, and what gives you so much strength?"

Erhard answered: "My mother's love." But Matthew sighed and groaned.

—*F. A. Krummacher.*

(3341.) If you wish to go from one side to the other of a steep, high hill, and there is a road through it, how much better it is to take the road than to climb over the top of the hill. Now there is such a road as this to the performance of duties, and that is the road of love. If a man does the things that he has to do in any other spirit than that of love, they are irksome tasks; but if he does them in a spirit of love, how his face laughs! how his hands tingle! how radiant is every part of his life!

If one were sent to take care of the poor, miserable, wounded soldiers lying in the plague-stricken hospitals on the plain of Solferino, he would say to himself, "Money would not hire me to do it, but I must do it because it is my duty. Here are men who are suffering and need attention, and I am bound to look after their wants." But let me find my own son among those unfortunate creatures, and, no matter how loathesome might be the offices to be performed toward him, could money buy from me the privilege of ministering to his necessities? Could any motive induce me to leave his side day or night? That which I should do in the one case through conscientiousness, or from a sense of duty, and which would be a disagreeable task, I should do in the other case through love, and it would then be a pleasure to me. I should do it with delight. There would not be hours enough in which I might serve in love my wounded son.

Think of the things a mother does for her child. She gives it her life. She cannot serve it enough. To her there is nothing but, "My babe." It is her joy, her pleasure, night and day. There are offices that she has to perform toward it that are disagreeable for the moment, but her love for it enables her to perform them with willingness, and to forget all connected with them which is unpleasant. And thus are fulfilled the words of Christ when He says, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Not that the things which you do from love are not sometimes hard, but there is a way in which you can engineer hard things and make them seem easy. Love, and love enough, and your burdens will not seem heavy. Love is able to steer you over all difficulty. Employ it, and it will carry you through life with power adequate to your exigencies. *Beecher.*

(5.) *It inspires self-sacrifice.*

(3342.) In the time of Cromwell a young soldier, for some offence, was condemned to die, and the time of his death was fixed "at the ringing of the curfew." Naturally such a doom would be fearful and bitter to one in the years of his hope and prime, but to this unhappy youth death was doubly terrible, since he was soon to have been married to a beautiful young lady whom he had long loved. The lady, who loved him ardently, in return, had used her utmost efforts to avert his fate, pleading with the judges, and even Cromwell himself, but all in vain. In her despair, she tried to bribe the old sexton not to ring the bell, but she found that impossible. The hour drew near for the execution. The preparations were completed. The officers of the law brought forth the prisoner, and waited, while the sun was setting, for the signal from the distant bell-tower. To the wonder of everybody it did not ring! Only one human being at that moment knew the reason. The poor girl, half wild with the thought of her lover's peril, had rushed unseen up the winding stairs, and climbed the ladders into the belfry-loft, and seized the tongue of the bell. The old sexton was in his place, prompt to the fatal moment. He threw his weight upon the rope, and the bell, obedient to his practised hand, reeled and swung to and fro in the tower. But the brave girl kept her hold, and no sound issued from its metallic lips. Again and again the sexton drew the rope, but with desperate strength the young heroine held on. Every moment made her position more fearful; every sway of the bell's huge weight threatened to fling her through the high tower window; but she would not let go. At last the sexton went away. Old and deaf, he had not noticed that the curfew gave no peal; the brave girl descended from the belfry, wounded and trembling. She hurried from the church to the place of execution. Cromwell himself was there, and just as he was sending to demand why the bell was silent, she saw him—

"And her brow,
Lately white with sickening horror, glows with hope and courage now;
At his feet she told her story, showed her hands all bruised and torn,
And her sweet young face, still haggard with the anguish it had worn,
Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes with misty light—
'Go; your lover lives,' cried Cromwell: 'curfew shall not ring to-night.'"

(6.) *It makes the soul beautiful.*

(3343.) The love of Jesus Christ in the heart of man is like a ray of sun shining through the painted windows of a cathedral, colouring and embellishing it, but destroying and displacing nothing.
—*Vianney.*

(3344.) Love, that geyser of the soul, can melt the ice and snow of the most frozen regions; wherever its warm springs well up, there glows a southern climate.

(3345.) With love, the heart becomes a fair and fertile garden, with sunshine and warm hues, and exhaling sweet odours; but without it, it is a bleak desert covered with ashes.

(3346.) True love alone can awaken and evoke all the nobility and grandeur of human nature. Then we are like musical instruments touched by a master's hand. That organ yonder, many fingers have moved over its keys and drawn out its stops; but the harmonies have not surprised us, our listening has not even deepened into interest. But one day a stranger came and sat before it, and presently rich, exquisite melodies began to pour forth, new and wondrous depths and changes of tone trembled in the air and thrilled our souls. It seemed like a living thing interpreting the secrets of our hearts, so that we hardly dared to breathe lest we should destroy the charm. What a revelation that was! We never dreamed that the old instrument could "discourse" such marvellous strains. But the capacity was there, only the soul of the musician was needed to inspire it. Thus, too, can love elicit in answer to its skilful touch the grandest responsive harmonies from the lowliest human heart. And it is by love—God's love—that our great nature shall reveal all its greatness. —*Braden.*

III. *CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE LOVE.*

1. It is practical.

(3347.) To love as Christ loves, is to let our love be a practical, and not a merely sentimental thing. Some are in danger of becoming mere religious sentimentalists. They revel in the poetry of feeling; they are easily wrought into an effervescence of tenderness; they delight in a storm of emotional vehemency. All this they suppose to be Christian love. Yet it is a love that costs them nothing. They feel much, but do little. They are ready for sympathy, but not for sacrifice. They try, in effect, to divorce benevolence from beneficence. They are the sensitive plants of the Church, and not fruit-bearing trees of righteousness. —*Stanford.*

2. It embraces God and man.

(3348.) All true love is one. The first commandment is very great, but the second is not little. They are upper and nether pools, and the same fountain fills them. He who is richest in the love of God has the greatest advantage for loving his neighbour—for loving his family, his household, his country, and the world. And that is the best and happiest state of things, the primal and truly natural, where, springing from under the throne of God with a bright and heaven-reflecting piety, love fills the upper pool, then, through the open flower-fringed channel of filial affection and the domestic charities, flows softly till it again expands in neighbourly kindness and unreserved philanthropy. The channel may be choked. The devotee may close it up in the hope of raising the level in the first and great reservoir, and by arresting the current he causes an overflow and converts into swamp the surrounding garden. In the same way the materialist or worldling, content with the lower pool, may fill up the conduit, and declare that he is no longer dependent on the upper magazine; but from the isolated cistern quickly evaporates the scanty supply, and thick with slime, weltering with worms, the stagnant residue mocks the thirsty owner, or as over the bubbling malaria he persists to linger, it fills his frame with the mortal poison. Cut off from living water, receiving from on high no consecrating element, human affection is too sure to end in the disgust of a disappointed idolatry or the mad despair of a total bereavement; whilst the mystic theopathy, which in order to give the whole heart to God gives none to its fellows, will soon have no heart at all.

Love is of God, and all true love is one. The piety which is not humane will soon grow superstitious and gloomy; in cases like Dominic and Philip II. we see that it may soon grow bloodthirsty and cruel; nor, on the other hand, will brotherly love long continue if the love of God is not shed abroad abundantly.
—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(3349.) Love of man necessarily arises out of the love of God. The love of the creature is but the corollary to the love of the Creator. This is what the Christian finds, as a matter of fact. His heart is overcharged with love to God. It finds its way out in love to man. His direct service of God cannot, in the nature of things, go very far. He worships God publicly in His house. He glorifies Him secretly in the constant outpourings of his heart. He gives of his substance to the maintenance of every cause which is God's cause. But here it ends. God is so mighty, so self-contained, that with all our puny efforts, much cannot be done to serve Him. So the Christian looks about to see how he is to show his love for God. He soon finds the way. Clearly, it must be by love for his fellow-men. Here is a vast field for practical service. It begins with his own household; it ends with the most distant idolater on the opposite side of the globe. And now the Christian finds what a right royal law this is of the Saviour's,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,"—for he sees that it includes and covers every possible form of duty; that if this command be fulfilled, it necessitates the fulfilling of every other command. He who is content with visiting the lower eminences which surround Mont Blanc may wander about from one to another, and get picturesque views in detail; but, at the best, they are only partial and imperfect glimpses. He alone who reaches the topmost sum-

mit can command at one glance all the glorious view. In like manner must it be with him who wishes to serve God. He may try in detail to keep this and that commandment, and he will be the better and happier for his efforts. But in order to observe them all truly and in their spirit, he must stand on the moral eminence of love towards God. Then he will be able to perform his duty, not bit by bit, but as a whole, complete and perfect, doing everything for God, and yet not neglecting man.

—*Hooper.*

IV. *THE LOVE OF GOD.* [*See also* 2318-2327.]

(3350) A sailor who had been piously trained in early life, but had lived for many years in all manner of profligacy, was thoroughly awakened to a sense of his guilt and sinfulness while voyaging in the Pacific Ocean. One night his terror rose to such a pitch, that he dared not shut his eyes lest he should awake in hell; but at length, overcome with fatigue and weariness, he fell asleep. In this condition he dreamed that he was in India (where he had been formerly), and heard a missionary preach on the solemn words, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" He was so moved by the words, that he tried to run away, and in the effort he awoke. His own words shall tell what followed:—"The perspiration was pouring from my forehead; and as I was in the greatest agitation, I opened God's Word, for I had no other comforter. I read the third chapter of John, and there I saw what I needed—I must be born again. I read on, and came to the sixteenth verse: 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' I was struck by these beautiful words. 'Does that include me? Yes,' I said, '*Whosoever* includes me; I will venture on this love.' I tried to give God my heart; and there, in that midnight hour, far away on the billows, I cast my poor guilty soul on His mercy; and, while pleading this precious word, I felt peace and comfort within me."

V. *THE LOVE OF CHRIST.* [*See also* 946-950.]

1. Transcends ours.

(3351.) Love is its own perennial fount of strength. The strength of affection is a proof not of the worthiness of the object, but of the largeness of the soul which loves. Love descends, not ascends. The might of a river depends not on the quality of the soil through which it passes, but on the inexhaustibleness and depth of the spring from which it proceeds. The greater mind cleaves to the smaller with more force than the other to it. A parent loves the child more than the child the parent; and partly because the parent's heart is larger, not because the child is worthier. The Saviour loved His disciples infinitely more than His disciples loved Him, because His heart was infinitely larger. Love trusts on, ever hopes and expects better things; and is a trust springing from itself, and out of its own deeps alone. —*Rowland Hill*, 1744-1833.

2. The most powerful of motives.

(3352.) Our common motives are no stronger than a handful of water caught in a child's hand, slipping away through his fingers as he tries to clutch and keep it. But Christ's love is like the great river itself, rushing onward evenly, unwearying and unwaiting; strong enough to bear the fleets of all the nations on its waters, fertilising every soil it passes through, offering its strength, and wealth, and fulness to every one alike, irrespective of lineage or of station, of endowment or of purpose, of past doings or of present hopes; saying plainly, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

3. Its conquering power.

(3353.) Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I myself, have founded great empires: but upon what do these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus, alone, founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him. . . . I think I understand something of human nature; and I tell you, all these were men; and I am a man: none else is like Him! Jesus Christ was more than man.

—*Napoleon I.*, 1769-1821.

(3354.) A friend of mine was desired to visit a woman in prison; he was informed of her evil habits of life, and therefore spoke strongly of the terrors of the Lord, and the curses of the law: she heard him a while, and then laughed in his face. Upon this he changed his note, and spoke of the Saviour, and what He had done and suffered for sinners. He had not talked long in this strain before he saw a tear or two in her eyes. At length she interrupted him by saying: "Why, sir, do you think there can be any hope of mercy for me?" He answered, "Yes, if you feel your need of it, and are willing to seek it in God's appointed way. I am sure it is as free for you as for myself." She replied, "Ah, if I had thought so, I should not have been in this prison. I long since settled it in my mind that I was utterly lost; that I had sinned beyond all possibility of forgiveness, and that made me desperate." *Newton*, 1606-1663.

(3355.) Two of my brethren, John Waterhouse and David Cargill, landed upon an island in Fejee. They knew well the character of the people there, and the people did not know their character; but they met them naked, and clubbed, and scowling, ready to destroy to all appearance. The two white men walked straight up to them, and the first, who evidently was a chief, and ready to take part in the proceedings whatever they might be, was suddenly arrested in his intentions towards the white men by Mr. Cargill walking up to him and bowing, and saying, "My love to you;" and he turned round to the next, and said, "My love to you;" and then to the rest, "My love to you;" and in a very little time all the clubs were down, and they began to talk, and then there was an opportunity for them to stay and then to preach. In a few years Mr. Cargill was leaving that island, and one of these great savages followed the boat, holding out a pretty little thing he had made, and said "Wait, wait; I want you to take this home to your mother. Great is my love to your mother. This is not much, but I made it with my own hand; carry it home to your mother. Tell her before you came I was a cannibal, and killed men and ate them, but now the love of God is burning in my heart; and if your mother had not loved me and let you

come to tell me that Christ had died, I should have been a cannibal to this day. Great is my love to your mother. Take this home to your mother for me." —*Arthur.*

(3356.) A minister in one of our large cities had prepared and preached, as he supposed, a most convincing sermon for the special benefit of an influential member of his congregation, who was well known to be of an infidel turn of mind. The sinner listened unmoved to the well-turned sentences and the earnest appeals; his heart was unaffected. On his return from church he saw a tear trembling in the eye of his little daughter, whom he tenderly loved, and he inquired the cause. The child informed him that she was thinking of what her Sabbath-school teacher had told her of Jesus Christ. "And what did she tell you of Jesus Christ, my child?" "Why, she said He came down from heaven and died for poor me!" and in a moment the tears gushed from eyes which had looked upon the beauties of only seven summers, as in the simplicity of childhood she added: "Father, should I not love One who has so loved me?" The proud heart of the infidel was touched. What the eloquent plea of his minister could not accomplish, the tender sentence of his child had done, and he retired to give vent to his own feelings in a silent but penitent prayer. That evening found him at the praying circle, where, with brokenness of spirit, he asked the prayers of God's people. When he came to relate his Christian experience, he gave this incident, and closed his narration by saying: "Under God, I owe my conversion to a little child, who first convinced me by her artless simplicity that I ought to love One who had so loved me." The minister on returning from this meeting, took his sermon and read it over carefully, and said to his family and to himself: "There is not enough of Jesus Christ in this discourse."

VI. *LOVE TO GOD.*

1. God must be loved for His own sake.

(3357.) All our love is moved from some good, which we apprehend in the party loved: carnal love, from beauty; worldly, from gain; spiritual, from grace; divine, from infinite goodness. It must needs be, therefore, that when the ground and motive of our love faileth, the affection itself must cease. Those that are enamoured of a beautiful face find their passion cooled with a loathsome deformity: those that are led by the hopes of profit, like wasps, leave buzzing about the gally-pot, when all the honey is gone; those that could carry the rod familiarly in their hand, run from it when they see it turned to a serpent. Contrarily, when that which attracts our love is constant to itself and everlasting, the affection set upon it is permanent and eternal: if then I love God for riches, for preferment, for my own indemnity, when intervening crosses strip me of the hopes of all these, I shall be ready to say, with that distempered king of Israel, "Behold, this evil is of the Lord: what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" (2 Kings vi. 33). If my respects to my Saviour be for the loaves and fishes, my heart is carried away with those baskets of fragments; but, if I can love God for His goodness' sake, this love shall out-last time, and overmatch death (Cant. iii. 6.) *Hall*, 1574–1656.

2. How it is to be kindled in the soul.

(3358.) The love of God is not to be summoned into being or activity at a call. It is not by any simple or direct effort that you can bid it into any operation. You can say to the hand, Do this, and it doeth it, but we have no such mastery over the untractable heart. The true way of bidding an emotion into the heart, is to bid into the mind its appropriate and counterpart object. If I want to light up resentment in my heart, let me think of the injury which provoked it; or if I want to be moved with compassion, let me dwell on some picture of wretchedness; or to be regaled with a sense of beauty, let me look out of myself on the glories of a summer landscape; or, to stir up within me a grateful affection, let me call to remembrance some friendly demonstration of a kind and trusty benefactor; or, finally, to rekindle in my cold and deserted bosom the love of God, let the love of God to me be the theme of my believing contemplation. —*Chalmers*, 1780–1847.

(3359.) The power to evolve in one's self the element of filial love is not given to us. It is not needful that it should be. Why should the anemone covet the power that it has not? It sleeps to-day on the hill-side. There, underneath the sod, a thousand spring beauties are hidden. Around the trunks of living trees, around deserted stumps, and around uncongenial stones are troops of wild-flowers. And not one of these can lift itself up, and open its petals, or paint them with beautiful colours. The sun has the power to do this; and why should the flowers covet this power? For that sweet orb will not forget them. It is coming already from the south. The lengthening days mark its approaching footsteps. And by and by it will reach out its sceptre of light and warmth, and say to them, "Come forth!" and every one that lies dormant within the ground shall rejoice, and begin to come forth. God has garnered up the power of the resurrection of the flowers in the sun, and there is no need that they should covet that power. And why should we covet the power to lift up our souls, and cause them to blossom into higher affections? If God has not lent it to us we need not covet it, and we do not need to add it to our prerogatives. God never forgets to touch the heart with the sceptre of Divine love, and if we heeded it, and were half as obedient to it as the flower is to the life-giving influence of the sun in spring, we should be like the garden of the Lord. —*Beecher.*

(3360.) We have brought near to us in Jesus Christ a God whose nature it is to be bountiful, tender, sweet, beautiful, so that when we begin to see the traits that are in Him, they draw out the same traits in us. We love because He has loved us.

If you go into Steinway's manufactory or ware-room, and strike certain chords of one of the powerful instruments, the chords of all the other instruments, though they are covered up, and apparently mute, will sound. Such are the correspondences which exist between them, such is the sympathy which is communicated from one to another by the air, that when one vibrates they all vibrate. Though the sound be low and almost inaudible, it is there. When the grandeur, the beauty, and the love of the divine natue are presented to a man, they draw some response from

every part of his nature which corresponds to that which is presented. So it is that there begins to be, through this conception of God in Christ Jesus, a piety which is in the nature of a personal communion or affiliation. The hearts of men are thus drawn toward the heart of God, and there begins to be an interplay between them. —*Beecher.*

(3361.) This highest of all possible love can only be produced by the quickening action of the Holy Spirit. It is out of the groundwork of the natural affections that the Christian love is produced, but it cannot exist without the direct action of God upon the heart. In the cold northern climes enough food is produced for the subsistence of man. The common fruits of the field grow in sufficient abundance to support life. But the productions of hotter countries—the grape, the olive, the fig—will not thrive there. The soil is the same in both. But in the cold countries the life-giving rays of the sun are wanting. It is also thus with man. The heart and its affections are the same in all of us. Amongst the whole human race, love and its kindred virtues flourish sufficiently to enable people to live with comfort in each other's society. But the highest love—the love of God—can only flourish in the sunshine of His grace. —*Hooper.*

(3362.) Frequently at the great Roman games, the emperors, in order to gratify the citizens of Rome, would cause sweet perfumes to be rained down upon them through the awning which covered the amphitheatre. Behold the vases, the huge vessels of perfume! Yes, but there is nought here to delight you so long as the jars are sealed; but let the vases be opened, and the vessels be poured out, and let the drops of perfumed rain begin to descend, and every one is refreshed and gratified thereby. Such is the love of God. There is a richness and a fulness in it, but it is not perceived till the Spirit of God pours it out like the rain of fragrance over the heads and hearts of all the living children of God. See, then, the need of having the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost!

—*Spurgeon.*

3. It is capable of being cultivated.

(3363.) We assume that, simply because it is enjoined. When an apostle says, "Have fervent charity among yourselves," it is plain that it would be a cruel mockery to command men to attain it if they could do nothing towards the attainment. It would be the same insult as saying to the deformed, "Be beautiful." For it is wanton cruelty to command where obedience is impossible.

How shall we cultivate this charity?

Now I observe, first, love cannot be produced by a direct action of the soul upon itself. You cannot love by a resolve to love. That is as impossible as it is to move a boat by pressing it from within. The force with which you press on is exactly equal to that with which you press back. The reaction is exactly equal to the action. You force backwards exactly as much as you force on. There are religious persons who, when they feel their affections cooled, strive to warm them by self-reproach, or by unnatural efforts, or by the excitement of what they call revivals—trying to work themselves into a state of warm affection. There are others who hope to make feeble love strong by using strong words. Now, for all this they pay a price. Effort of heart is followed by collapse. Excitement is followed by exhaustion. They will find that they have cooled exactly in that proportion in which they warmed, and at least as fast.

It is as impossible for a man to work himself into a state of genuine fervent love as it is for a man to inspire himself. Inspiration is a breath and a life coming from without. Love is a feeling roused not from ourselves, but from something outside ourselves. There are, however, two methods by which we may cultivate this charity.

1. By doing acts which love demands. It is God's merciful law that feelings are increased by acts done on principle. If a man has not the feeling in its warmth, let him not wait till the feeling comes. Let him act with such feelings as he has; with a cold heart if he has not got a warm one; it will grow warmer while he acts. You may love a man merely because you have done him benefits, and so become interested in him, till interest passes into anxiety, and anxiety into affection. You may acquire courtesy of feeling at last, by cultivating courteous manner. The dignified politeness of the last century forced man into a kind of unselfishness in small things, which the abrupter manners of to-day will never teach. And say what men will of rude sincerity, these old men of urbane manners were kinder at heart with real good-will, than we are with that rude bluffness which counts it a loss of independence to be courteous to any one. Gentleness of manner had some influence on gentleness of heart.

So in the same way, it is in things spiritual. If our hearts are cold, and we find it hard to love God and be affectionate to man, we must begin with duty. Duty is not Christian liberty, but it is the first step towards liberty. We are free only when we love what we are to do, and those to whom we do it. Let a man begin in earnest with—I ought, he will end, by God's grace, if he persevere, with the free blessedness of—I will. Let him force himself to abound in small offices of kindliness, attention, affectionateness, and all those for God's sake. By and by he will feel them become the habit of his soul. By and by, walking in the conscientiousness of refusing to retaliate when he feels tempted, he will cease to wish it; doing good and heaping kindness on those who injure him, he will learn to love them. For he has spent a treasure there, "And where the treasure is, there will be the heart also."

2. The second way of cultivating Christian love is by contemplating the love of God. You cannot move the boat from within; but you may obtain a purchase from without. You cannot create love in the soul by force from within itself; but you may move it from a point outside itself. God's love is the point from which to move the soul. Love begets love. Love believed in, produces a return of love; we cannot love because we must. "Must" kills love; but the law of our nature is that we love in reply to love. No one ever yet hated one whom he believed to love him truly. We may be provoked by the pertinacity of an affection which asks what we cannot give; but we cannot hate the true love which does not ask but gives. Now, this is the eternal truth of Christ's Gospel, "We love Him because He first loved us." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "God is love." —*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

4. Leads to trust in God.

(3364.) Let a man try to learn God's ways only

by his intellect, and he will find many things to perplex and embarrass. There is much in God's government of this world that is quite unfathomable to human reason. In a world like this scepticism is easier than faith. If any man wish to stumble at God's ways, he may easily find stumbling stones. He may point to many of God's dealings which bear the *appearance* of unkindness and injustice; he may point to much that the most godly man must confess is *seemingly* inconsistent with infinite justice and love. The godly man sees difficulties in the Divine government as well as the infidel; but he is not distressed by them, permanently at least, for "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him;" he has such a deep and abiding conviction of God's infinite love, that he cannot believe Him guilty of unkindness, much less of injustice; he knows that there must be, and *is*, a satisfactory explanation of these difficulties, and he is content to wait until God chooses to give him the explanation. Take an illustration. Here is a little child, whose father is suddenly accused of some terrible crime. Though the accused has hitherto borne a good name, the proofs of his guilt seem so numerous and conclusive that even his dearest friends abandon and shun him. But the little child does not believe his father guilty. "No," says he, "I know my father's heart, and I am quite sure that he never did *that*." In like manner, by *the intuition of love*, the Christian has a settled and immovable conviction that ultimately nothing can ever throw the shadow of a shade over God's infinite goodness. —*Davis.*

5. A test of its reality.

(3365.) A loving wife, when her husband returns home from a far country, as soon as she is sensible of his approach or hears his voice, although she be ever so much engaged in business, or forcibly detained from him in the midst of a crowd, yet her heart is not withheld from him, but leaps over all other thoughts to think on her husband who is returned. It is the same with souls that love God; well, let them be ever so busy, when the remembrance of God comes near them, they lose almost the thought of all things else, for joy to see that this dear remembrance is returned; and this is an extreme good sign. —*Francis de Sales.*

6. Comfort for those who lament that it is feeble in them.

(3366.) Let not a humble Christian be overanxious, if his spiritual affections are not as keen as he would wish. The love of God is the full-blown flower of which the love of man is the bud. To love man is to love God. To do good to man will be recognised hereafter as doing good to Christ. These are the Judge's words: "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did unto Me."

—*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

VII. *LOVE TO CHRIST.* [See also 1003, 1004.]

(3367.) We would please those whom we greatly love. No praises are as sweet as theirs. We can bear the frown of others if they only smile. We often care for no other compensation for toil, and pain, and suffering than their approval. The affectionate child who contends at school or college for some prize of youthful ambition, knows of no stimulant to his industry and exertion like that which he feels when he thinks what may be the joy one day of father and mother, brother and sister, on his account. When he has succeeded in the strife he is not moved by the commendation of his teachers, or the plaudits of his companions, as he is by what he knows will be thought, and felt, and said at home. The man who has won renown by his service to his country and to mankind, has often confessed that no honours he has received have so recompensed his heart for what he had achieved, as the greetings which welcomed him in the little town or village where he was born and reared. He has felt that the delight in his triumph of those who were dear to him through old memories and associations, or even that the joy he has given to one heart, the exulting smile on one face, the approving glad words that fell from one tongue, were worth more to him than all acclamations and gifts besides. It is of the nature of true love thus to prize the joy and approval of its object. But there is no true love, or so great, as that which Christ can inspire.

—*David Thomas, B.A.*, 1811–1875.

(3368.) Is there no sin in not doing what you ought to do? If your neighbour's house were in flames to-night, and you saw them belching out of the windows, would it be no sin for you to sit calmly in your own dwelling, and not go at midnight to raise the family from their fatal sleep? Would you think so if to-morrow morning you looked at their skeletons amid the charred and blackened ruins? Suppose there is some man in this chapel to-night, who lives in a comfortable and luxurious mansion, but his own mother is in an almshouse, I say to him, "Where is your old mother?" He says, "In the poorhouse." "Do you know, sir, that you are practising a diabolical cruelty?" "Oh! but I am doing nothing to my mother." "It is your not doing; it is your living in luxury, and she lying there on that hard bed of poverty and neglect, that stamps you, sir, with that most damnable sin of breaking God's fifth commandment. It is what you do not do that stamps you as an ingrate to her that bore you." Oh! my friends, yet out of Christ it is the sin of not loving Christ that makes you guilty before God. Not loving Him is pronounced in all cases a positive and fatal sin. —*Cuyler.*

(3369.) Where Christ is loved and desired, the veriest trifles of common life may be the means of His discovery. "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.

We know not what was the special point which brought their dormant remembrance to life again, and quickened their associations, so that they knew Him; even as we do not know what was the hindrance, whether supernatural or whether by reason of their own fault, which prevented the earlier recognition; but this at least we see, that in all probability something in the manner of taking the bread and breaking it, the well-remembered action of the Master, brought back to mind the whole of the former relation, and a rush of associations and memories pulled away the veil and scaled off the mists from their eyes. And so, dear brethren, if we have loving and waiting and Christ-desiring spirits, everything in this world—the common meal,

the events of every day, the most veritable trifles of our earthly relationships—they will all have hooks and barbs, as it were, which will draw after them thoughts of Him. There is nothing so small but that to it there may be attached some filament which will bring after it the whole majesty and grace of Christ and His love. Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in remembrance of Him, and do all to His glory. Oh, if we had in our inmost spirits a closer fellowship with Him, and a truer relation to Him, we should be more quick of apprehension. And, as in regard to those that we love, when they are away from us, the fold of a garment, some bit of cloth lying about the room, something upon the table, some common incident of the day that used to be done in company with them, may bring a flood of memories that sometimes is too strong for a weak heart, so with the Lord, if we loved Him—everything would be (as it is to those whose ears are purged) vocal with His name, and everything would be flushed with the light that falls from His face, and everything would suffice to remind us of our love, our hope, our joy. —*Maclaren.*

VIII. *LOVE TO THE BRETHREN.*

1. Is the badge of Christ's disciples.

(3370.) So peculiar is this blessing to the gospel, that Christ appoints it for the badge and cognizance by which they should not only know one another, but even strangers should be able to know them from any other sect and sort of men in the world: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another." A nobleman's servant is known as far as he can well be seen, by the coat on his back, whose man he is; so, saith Christ, shall all men know you, by your mutual love, that you retain to Me and My gospel.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

2. Our love must be like Christ's.

(3371.) We are to have love *like* that of Christ. In one sense this is impossible. "Measure the waters in the hollow of Thine hand; mete out heaven with a span; comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure; weigh the mountains in scales; and the hills in a balance;"—these *are* measurable things, but the love of Christ is measureless. There is nothing in His nature which is not infinite. The depths of *God* are depths of love, for God is love, and Christ is God. His perfections are His glory, but His love is the glory of His glory; the boundless glory of the boundless Essence. Till the less can include the greater, and the human the Divine, we may not fathom the depths, or grasp the dimensions of Christ's love. Then, how can we keep this law? To love like Paul—to love like John—would be a lofty aim, but who can love like Christ?

Let us not mistake His meaning. He asks not that our love should equal His, but *resemble* His; not that it should be of the same strength, but of the *same kind*. A pearl of dew will not hold the sun, but it may hold a spark of its light. A child, by the sea, trying to catch the waves as they dash in clouds of crystal spray upon the sand, cannot hold the ocean in a tiny shell, but he may hold a drop of the ocean water. "There is an ocean of love in my heart," says Christ, "let a drop of that ocean be received into yours. Your love one to another must not be a mere earthly element. It must have a different nature from the love you were born with. It must be something higher than love of kindred—or love of home—or love of country; it must be of the same kind as that which I have for you. It must be Divine. Let me pour it into you, that you may pour it out on the objects of your sanctified affections." —*Stanford.*

3. We must love what is Christ-like in them.

(3372.) But doth not the Scripture say, "that we know we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren"?

Answer—Yes; but when you may easily know it speaks of sincere love. So it saith, "Whoever believeth shall be saved;" and yet (Matt. xiii.) Christ showeth that many believe who yet fall away and perish, for want of deep rooting: so that the sincerity of this love also lieth in the degree; and, therefore, when the promise is made to it, or it made a mark of true Christians, you must still understand it of that degree which may be called sincere and saving. The difference lieth plainly here. An unsound Christian, as he hath some love to Christ, and grace, and godliness, but more to his profits, or pleasures, or credit in the world, so he hath some love to the godly, as such, being convinced that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour; but not so much as he hath to these carnal things. Whereas the sound Christian, as he loves Christ and grace above all worldly things, so it is Christ in a Christian that he so loves, and the Christian for Christ's sake above all such things: so that when a carnal professor will think it enough to wish them well, but will not hazard his worldly happiness for them, if he were called to it; the sincere believer will not only love them, but relieve them, and value them so highly, that, if he were called to it, he would part with his profits or pleasures, for their sakes. For example, in Queen Mary's days, when the martyrs were condemned to the fire, there were many great men that really loved them, and wished them well, and their heart grieved in pity for them, as knowing them to be in the right; but yet they loved their honour, and wealth, and safety, so much better, that they would sit on the bench, yea, and give sentence for their burning, for fear of hazarding their worldly happiness. Was this sincere, saving love to the brethren? —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. We are to love them on account of what they are to be.

(3373.) Foresee the perfections of their graces in their beginnings. No man will love a seed or stock of those plants or trees which bear the most beautiful flowers and fruits, unless, in the seed, he foresee the fruit or flower which it tendeth to. No man loveth the egg aright, who doth not foreknow what a bird it will bring forth. Aristotle or Cicero were no more amiable in their infancy than others, except to him that could foretell what men they were like to prove. Think oft of heaven, and what a thing a saint will be in glory, when he shall shine as the stars, and be equal to the angels, and then you will quickly see cause to love them.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

MAN.

1. The Darwinian hypothesis as to his origin.

(3374.) Many able scientists are investigating the road through which men came up to their present state; but it is of little consequence to me where I came from. It is of a great deal of consequence, though, where I am going to. I confess to some curiosity as to my origin; and I am far from saying that it will not do any good to trace the history of the origin of the human race, and of everything else in this world. I regard the labours of Mr. Darwin with profound interest; and I believe the world owes him a great debt of gratitude. Although I may not accept all his speculations, I thank him for any facts, or any deductions from facts, which have the appearance of nearly definite truth. I do not participate a particle in the revulsion and horror which some feel at the idea that men sprang from some lower form of existence. Only show me that *I* am clear of the monkeys, and I am perfectly willing that it should be true that, millions of years ago, my ancestors sprang from them. Let there be difference enough, and distance enough, between these animals and me, and I do not care how nearly my progenitors may have been related to them. I would as lief have sprung from a monkey as from some men that I know of. If I look at the Patagonians, or the Nootka Sound Indians, or the Esquimaux of the extreme North, it does not seem to me that there is much to choose, as to parentage, between them and our lower animals. I do not care so much about the past, as I do about the future. It is not of the slightest importance that I should trace my early associations back to a million years ago. All my life is looking forward. I do not care where I came from: I want to know where I am going. If I am going with the animal, earth to earth, that is sad enough; but if I am under that attraction, that mighty power, which calls the sun to make summer in the bosom of winter, which all the winds and ice cannot resist, which generates heat, and which out of heat brings life-universal, infinite, multitudinous, innumerable—if I am under that power, and it is still drawing you and me and all along in these paths, and it is vouchsafed that we may be partakers of the Divine nature, then that is something that I want to know, and something that I want to feel.

Now, let men bore in the rear if they will: it is for me to look up and see where I am going. For, if it is life and immortality, and joy ineffable and full of glory there, I care not for the nest. I care not for the skin that I sloughed off ages ago. It is the future that I care for. The Christian has little to fear, I think, if it will only lead on to this. Not to deny the past, nor to be indifferent to the things of the past, it is not probable that we shall, in your day or mine, find out everything that God ever thought of or did. It is far more important that we should have faith in the future, and know which way to fly when we have the inspiration of emigration, than that we should know what took place myriads of ages ago, or what was the condition of the race then. —*Beecher.*

(3375.) In so far as our duties are concerned, we are far more interested in knowing *what* man is, than in knowing how he came to be what he is. It is not uninteresting to me to know how my son reached home for the festivities of thanksgiving, or of the holidays: but it is far more interesting to me to know that he is there, than to know by what road he came. It may be of a good deal of interest to know how some unknown benefactor has liquidated the debt that seemed likely to sweep away your prosperity; but it is a great deal more to the point to know that the mortgage is paid or lifted, if you never in the world know how it came to be done. It is for us to know what man is; of what he is susceptible. He is here. He exists. He may be studied in his present condition. He may be studied in all his possibilities. These are questions of more importance than to know the road which he took to get here, or the influences which operated to bring him here. —*Beecher.*

2. Is more than an animal.

(3376.) Man is not an organism; he is an intelligence served by organs.

—*Sir W. Hamilton*, 1788–1856.

(3377.) There are striking analogies, nay, even resemblances, between the higher order of quadrupeds and the lower members of the human family. Yet from these most brutelike among men may be drawn the most cogent argument for the existence and indestructibleness of the spiritual element in man. Sixty years ago the half-reasoning elephant or the tractable and troth-keeping dog might have seemed the peer, or more, of the unreasoning and conscienceless Hawaiian. From that very race, from that very generation, with which the nobler brutes might have scorned to claim kindred, have been developed the peers of saints and angels. Does not the susceptibility of a regeneration so radical, the capacity for all that is tender, beautiful, and glorious in the humanity of Him whom we Christians revere as the Lord from heaven, inherent in even the lowest types of our race, of itself claim for man a nature which the brutes around him share as little in kind as in degree? Has physical science a right to leave "the new man in Christ Jesus," which the most squalid savage may become, entirely unaccounted for in its theory of spontaneous development? —*Peabody.*

3. The grandeur and complexity of his nature.

(3378.) The grandeur of man's nature turns to insignificance all outward distinctions. His powers of intellect, of conscience, of love, of knowing God, of perceiving the beautiful, of acting on his own mind, on outward nature, and on his fellow-creatures,—these are glorious prerogatives. Through the vulgar error of undervaluing what is common, we are apt, indeed, to pass them by as of but little worth. But as in the outward creation, so in the soul, the common is the most precious. Science and art may invent splendid modes of illuminating the apartments of the opulent; but these are all poor and worthless compared with the light which the sun sends into our windows, which he pours freely, impartially, over hill and valley, which kindles daily the eastern and western sky; and so the common lights of reason, and conscience, and love, are of more worth and dignity than the rare endowments which give celebrity to a few.

—*Channing*, 1780–1842.

(3379.) Man is the highest product of his own history. The discoverer finds nothing so grand or

so tall as himself, nothing so valuable to him. The greatest star is that at the little end of the telescope, —the star that is looking, not looked after, nor looked at. —*Theodore Parker.*

(3380.) The essence of our being, the mystery in us that calls itself "I,"—ah, what words have we for such things?—is a breath of Heaven; the Highest Being reveals himself in man. This body, these faculties, this life of ours, is it not all as a vesture for that Unnamed? "There is but one temple in the universe," says the devout Novalis, "and that is the body of man. Nothing is holier than that high form. Bending before men is a reverence done to this revelation in the flesh. We touch heaven when we lay our hand on a human body!" This sounds much like a mere flourish of rhetoric; but it is not so. If well meditated, it will turn out to be a scientific fact; the expression, in such words as can be had, of the actual truth of the thing. *We* are the miracle of miracles,—the great inscrutable mystery of God. We cannot understand it, we know not how to speak of it; but we feel and know, if we like, that it is verily so.
—*Carlyle.*

(3381.) Hath not God given us a soul to inform us; senses to inform our soul; faculties to furnish that soul; understanding, the great surveyor of the secrets of nature and grace; fantasy and invention, the master of the works; memory, the great keeper or master of the rolls of the soul, a power that can make amends for the speed of time, in causing him to leave behind him those things, which else he would so carry away, as if they had not been; will, which is the lord paramount in the state of the soul, the commander of our actions, the elector of our resolutions; judgment, which is the great counsellor of the will; affections, which are the servants of them both; a body, fit to execute the charge of the soul—so wondrously disposed, as that every part hath best opportunity in his own functions—so qualified with health arising from proportion of humours, that, like a watch kept in good time, it goes right, and is fit to serve the soul and maintain itself. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3382.) As there is much beast and some devil in man, so is there some angel and some God in man. The beast and the devil may be conquered, but in this life never destroyed.
—*Coleridge*, 1772–1834.

(3383.) "In man there will be a layer of fierce hyena, or of timid deer, running through the nature in the most uncertain and tortuous manner. Nero is sensitive to poetry and music, but not to human suffering: Marcus Aurelius is tolerant and good to all men but Christians." The Tlascalans of Mexico loved, and even worshipped, flowers; but they were cruel to excess, and sacrificed human victims with savage delight. The good and the evil lie close together; the virtues and the vices alternate; so is human power accumulated; alternately the metals and the rags; a terrible Voltaic pile. In the well-bred animal the claw is nicely cushioned; the old Adam is presentable.
—*A. F. Russell.*

4. Was made in the image of God.

(3384.) There is one correspondency between man and nature so pre-eminently striking, that it is marvellous it has not found more frequent mention in natural theology.

The Bible tells us that God made man in His own image; science gives us a proof of it, showing that in very truth the ideas of man's mind are akin to the ideas of the Divine mind.

The proof is capable of very simple statement.

We all know that the science of geometry was worked out in ancient times from a few very simple principles which man found in his own mind. It was worked out by Euclid and Archimedes by pure reasoning, out of their own minds. Ages afterwards the telescope was discovered, and the courses of the planets and comets were ascertained; and the Galileos and Newtons beheld with reverent wonder that these heavenly bodies, in all their mazy revolutions, do obey those very laws of geometry which the mathematician, hundreds of years before, had evolved out of the necessary conditions of thought involved in the constitution of his own mind.

How was this correspondency to be accounted for? those curves traced on the sand of his study floor, by an Archimedes found to be the very curves swept out in the heavenly spaces by the mighty comets? I say how and why was this? How was it that man found his thoughts thus verified in God's universe?

One only explanation is there, that God had the same thoughts, and chose to exemplify them in that universe; the ideas of the Divine mind and the ideas of the human mind thus wonderfully corresponding! Man made in the image of God. There is no other explanation.

5. His original perfection.

(3385.) All those arts, rarities, and inventions, which vulgar minds gaze at, the ingenious pursue, and all admire, are but the relics of an intellect defaced with sin and time. We admire it now, only as antiquaries do a piece of old coin, for the stamp it once bore, and not for those vanishing lineaments and disappearing draughts that remain upon it at present. And certainly that must needs have been very glorious, the decays of which are so admirable. He that is comely when old and decrepit, surely was very beautiful when he was young. An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of Paradise.
—*South*, 1633–1716.

6. His fall.

(1.) *Its evidences.*

(3386.) If you should see a house with its gable ends in ruins, with its broken pillars lying in heaped-up confusion on the ground, half covered up with trailing weeds and moss, you would not hesitate to say, "This building has suffered damage at some time; it was not like this when it came from the hand of the builder." I say this of man. He is not in a normal condition. —*Hepworth.*

(3387.) Bartholomew Fair is one of the most perfect exhibitions of unrestrained human nature in the whole world. The monkey, the tiger, the wolf, the hog, and the goat, are not only to be found in their own, but in human form, with all their savageness, brutality, filthiness. It displays human nature in its most degraded, ridiculous, and absurd conditions. The tiger may be seen in a quiescent state, if we pass through Dyot Street:

he couches there; he blinks; but at Bartholomew Fair he is rampant, vigorous, fierce. Passing through a fair in a country town, I witnessed a most instructive scene:—Two withered, weather-beaten wretches were standing at the door of a show-cart, and receiving two-pences from sweet, innocent, ruddy country girls, who paid their money, and dropped their curtsies; while these wretches smiled at their simplicity, and clapped them on the back as they entered the door. What a picture this of Satan! He sets off his shows, and draws in heedless creatures, and takes from them everything they have good about them! There was a fellow dressed out as a zany, with a humpback and a humpbelly, a lengthened nose and a lengthened chin. To what a depth of degradation must human nature be sunk to seek such resources! I derived more instruction from this scene than I could have done from many elaborate theological treatises.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(2.) *Its effects.*

(3388.) The sin of man, being the lord of all creatures, must needs redound to the misery and mortality of all his retinue. For it was in the greater world, as in the administration of a private family; the poverty of the master is felt in the bowels of the rest; his stain and dishonour runs into all the members of that society. As it is in the natural body, some parts may be distempered and ill-affected alone; others, not without contagion on the rest; so likewise is it in the great body of the creation. However other creatures might have kept their evil, if any had been in them, within their own bounds, yet that evil which man, the lord and heart of the whole, brought into the world, was a spreading and infectious evil, which conveyed poison into the whole frame of nature, and planted the seed of universal dissolution, which shall one day deface with darkness and horror the beauty of that glorious frame which we now admire. —*Salter.*

(3.) *The Scripture account of it vindicated.*

(3389.) It has been sneeringly and tauntingly demanded, "What great evil could there be in plucking an apple from a certain tree? Would it," it is asked, "be becoming the majesty of Almighty God to condemn His creatures for so small an offence?" . . . The ground of the objection is utterly fallacious. The objector seems to insinuate that the value or amount of the fruit abstracted constituted "the front and head of man's offending," and that Deity was actuated by passion and revenge in the punishment which He inflicted. Now, no charge can be more absurd and utterly unfounded than this. To suppose that the sovereign Lord and proprietor of all worlds, and whose is this earth and the fulness thereof, should have grudged to His creatures the fruit of a single tree in Paradise, notwithstanding all the munificence with which He had furnished and stored it as their abode, is too preposterous an idea to be entertained for a moment.

The ground of their condemnation, then, was plainly, that the act of eating the forbidden fruit involved in it disobedience, revolt, and rebellion. The prohibition was designed simply as a test of continued allegiance. In every point of view it was peculiarly suitable to their circumstances and condition. As the happy tenants of this earthly abode of bliss, it was the acknowledgment that they held all they possessed by the mere goodness of their indulgent and bountiful Creator. If an earthly prince were to bestow on one of his subjects a valuable estate on condition of some act of homage, trivial in itself, but still a recognition of the sovereignty of the giver, and the allegiance due to him, would he be considered as fairly chargeable with injustice, or would it be held as any reflection on his goodness, in the original deed of gift, if he should prescribe such a condition on pain of forfeiture, not only of the estate, but of the favour of the donor? If the acknowledgment required was a mere pepper-corn, would its smallness and trifling value be considered as a proper subject for ridicule and scorn? Would it not be universally admitted, that the smaller the temptation to incur the forfeiture, the greater the guilt, the ingratitude, and the folly of transgression? But the test prescribed to man, as a test of allegiance to his Creator in the garden of Eden, was not the payment of any tribute, but the mere abstinence from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. —*Ewing.*

7. His nature depraved.

(3390.) A common and steady effect shows, that there is somewhere a prevailing liableness in the state of things to what comes so steadily to pass. A steady effect argues a steady cause. If a die be once thrown, and it falls on a particular side, we do not argue from hence, that *that* side is the heaviest; but if it be thrown without skill or care many thousands or millions of times, and it constantly falls on the same side, we have not the least doubt in our minds, but that there is something of propensity in the case, by superior weight of that side, or in some other respect. How ridiculous would he make himself, who should earnestly dispute against any tendency in the state of things to cold in the winter, or heat in the summer; or should stand to it, that although it often happened that water quenched fire, yet there was no tendency in it to such an effect.

In the case we are upon, human nature, as existing in such an immense diversity of persons and circumstances, and never failing in any one instance of coming to that issue—that sinfulness, which implies extreme misery and eternal ruin—is as the die often cast. For it alters not the case in the least, as to the evidence of tendency, whether the subject of the constant event be an individual, or a nature and kind. Thus, if there be a succession of trees of the same sort, proceeding one from another, from the beginning of the world, growing in all countries, soils, and climates, all bearing ill-fruit; it as much proves the nature and tendency of the *kind*, as if it were only one individual tree, that had remained from the beginning of the world, often transplanted into different soils, and had continued to bear only bad fruit. So if there were a particular family, which, from generation to generation, and through every remove to innumerable different countries, and places of abode, all died of consumption, or all run distracted, or all murdered themselves, it would be as much evidence of the *tendency* of something in the nature or constitution of that *race*, as it would be of the tendency of something in the nature or state of an individual, if some one person had lived all that time, and some remarkable event had often appeared in him, which he had been the agent or subject of from year to year, and from age to age, continually and without fail.

Thus a propensity, attending the present nature

or natural state of mankind, eternally to ruin themselves by sin, may certainly be inferred from apparent and acknowledged fact.

—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1703–1758.

(3391.) It is of dangerous consequence to represent to man how near he is to the level of beasts, without showing him at the same time his greatness. It is likewise dangerous to let him see his greatness without his meanness. It is more dangerous yet to leave him ignorant of either; but very beneficial that he should be made sensible of both.

—*Pascal*, 1622–1662.

(3392.) "That fox." Many wild beasts lie lurking under the skin of man.

—*Cardinal Bovillus.*

(3393.) We have such an habitual persuasion of the general depravity of human nature, that in falling among strangers we always *reckon on* their being irreligious, till we discover some specific indication of the contrary.

—*John Foster*, 1710–1843.

(3394.) The most convincing evidence is presented to us every day, that the nature of man necessarily and essentially tends to sin. Did you ever know an infant grow through childhood, I will not say to adult age, but to youth, without sinning often and seriously? Every one who is familiar with young children must be aware that they sin by instinct, and of their own nature, quite irrespective of any bad habits which they acquire from those around them. The sin comes spontaneously, just as the evil growth amongst the wheat. No farmer can grow his corn without weeds; and no father can educate his child so as to be free from sin. The child is passionate, and exhibits its passion in a miniature tempest of wrath. The child is selfish, and steals its brother's toys, and follows the wrong doing with all its little resentful power when restitution is made. The child is disobedient, and transgresses its parent's commands, and lies to hide the fault when detection is imminent. In a word, no sooner does the child become a moral agent, than it also becomes essentially sinful, just to the extent to which its nature is developed. Education may do much to eradicate the evil; but the fact remains that education is necessary. The plant does not grow straight but crooked, and must be trained to symmetry. The human heart is essentially depraved.

—*Hooper.*

(3395.) The assumption of the New Testament is that men by nature are animals. The scriptural use of the word flesh in the New Testament writings indicates that men by nature are living in the animal condition; and it is taught that in that condition it is not possible for them to understand higher truths, nor to feel higher influences, nor to enter into the experience of those regal joys which belong to a man when he is developed in his higher faculties. It is declared everywhere in the New Testament—not so much declared as assumed—that the heart is sinful. The apparent fact that the whole creation groans and travails in pain is argument enough on that subject. The tears, the sorrows, the sufferings of men, which we behold on every hand; the conflicts of the whole world, of which we are cognisant, these things make it evident enough that men are sinful. When a machine is out of order, and the various parts grate and grind against each other, it is not necessary to say to one who hears the grinding, "It is out of order." Therefore no time is spent in the New Testament to prove that men are depraved. It is assumed to be a thing of universal consciousness—as it is.

—*Beecher.*

(3396.) The doctrine of man's sinfulness may be so preached that men revolt from it. It is a profoundly sorrowful truth that men are sinful, and that they need the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit—the new birth; and it may be so preached that all the feelings of men revolt from the representation of it. A great many think they cannot preach the doctrine of sinfulness effectually until they have made men mad. When, by rude and unskilful handling, they have awakened the passions of men, and called forth all their resistance, they say, "Now, this is thorough work. It is subsoiling human nature. If they are converted from this state, they will be better Christians than they would otherwise be."

If you wanted to take a garrison, would you not think it the better way to quietly steal round to a neglected door in the rear before any alarm was given, and seize them, and take their arms from them? Would not that be the wiser plan in war? Would you cry out to them, "Shut your back door: we are after you"? Would you by cannonading arouse them, and make them as hostile as possible, and then run in and crush them? Would the victory be any better for that?

If a man keeps a bull-dog in his house, and you want to go there without being disturbed by the animal, the best way is to go to the front door quietly, and not wake him up; but many men think, "No, you must stand and throw stones for a while, and then, when the dog's mouth is wide open, go at him."

Now, human nature is very weak: it is full of faults; and I think it needs to be dealt with carefully and cautiously, in order, as far as possible, to prevent the resistance of these unspiritual tendencies: and whoever so preaches the doctrine of the sinfulness of man as to make men angry is unskilful in the handling of the Word.

—*Beecher.*

(3397.) Total depravity—what is it? That clock yonder is made on a plan. So is my soul. The clock may be out of order. So may my soul. When that clock is in order it keeps time. When my soul is in order it obeys conscience. If the clock is so out of order as not to keep time, it is good for nothing as a clock. If my soul is so out of order as not to obey conscience; if I answer, "I will not," when the Divine voice says "I ought," I am not keeping time. Every choice is wrong when I reply by the negative to the infinite affirmative; and as the moral character of all action comes from choice, and as my choice is wrong, I violate the plan of my being; I no longer keep time. I am good for nothing as a clock. But when I say that clock will not keep time, do I mean to say that the wheels in it cannot be put in order? No. Perhaps the wheels are of gold and silver. Disarrangedness in the clock implies its arrangeability. Disarrangedness in the soul implies its arrangeability. That

clock will not keep time, however, and so I say it is totally depraved as a clock. Does that mean that the wheels are all slime and the face of it a concrete mass of leprosy, or that there is nothing useful in it? Let us be clear on this topic once for all, for Boston loves clear thought, and supposes that there can be none on this subject. *Make a distinction between total depravity and total corruption.* That is a distinction as old as St. Augustine, and ought to be tolerably well understood here, where the doctrine of total depravity has so long been attacked mercilessly. If that clock were a concrete mass of unspeakable slime, I should say it was totally corrupt. When it is so out of order that it will not keep time, I say it is totally depraved. If there were nothing in a man capable of arrangement; if, when the soul is out of order it could not by following conscience and by God's good grace be put again into order, I should say it is totally corrupt. But the wheels yonder may be of pearl, the pivots may be of diamonds, and yet the clock not keep time at all. It is not totally corrupt, it is totally depraved. So the human faculties may be wheels of far-flashing silver and gold and pearl; the pivots may roll on diamonds, and yet the man not keep time. He says "I will not," when the still small voice says "I ought;" and you know it is a deliverance of self-evident truth that when a man says that he has a sense of ill desert, he feels that the nature of things is against him. You cannot convince him that he is right with the universe. He is out of order with the universe whenever he does not keep time to the divine "I ought." But is the man incapable of being arranged? Not at all. Total depravity means the moral disarrangedness of man and the evil character of his choices. It implies man's arrangeability. It does not mean total corruption. That has no arrangeability. —*Joseph Cook.*

8. The conflicts of his nature.

(3398.) The *flesh* represents, in St. Paul's terminology, the whole brood of lower faculties, or that part of our nature which constitutes us animals; and the *spirit* represents manhood, or that whole class of faculties by which we are exalted into the higher sphere—by which we become sons of God. In a figurative way, he represents these two as in conflict.

It is as if there were two bands of soldiers quartered in one tenement, having an upper and a lower storey. On the ground floor is a company of brawling, drunken, unruly, brutal, violent, cruel men; and in the second storey above them, is a company of soldiers that are gentlemanly, and courteous, and humane, and well-disciplined. And there are three states of affairs which may exist. The brawling soldiers below may govern the house; and then they will have hard times upstairs; for their supplies will be cut off, and they will starve. Or, a part of the time the gentlemen upstairs may govern the house, and part of the time the coarse, brutal fellows downstairs may govern it; and then there will be a terrible conflict. And between the attempts of those upstairs to maintain discipline, and the attempts of those below stairs to break down discipline, the place will be a perfect pandemonium. There will be no peace there. They will be quarrelling perpetually.

And so the animal nature and the manhood, in man, quarrel. Sometimes it is the lower nature that is in the ascendancy; and then wnatever things are above it—conscience, faith, hope, all spiritual tendencies, and all supernal tendencies—are at a discount. The upper part of the mind is starved out because of the absolute ascendancy of the appetites and passions—of pride and selfishness, and envy and lusts, and all manner of evil feelings.

Then, by and by, there is the second state. The state of resistance and conflict. The spirit wars against the flesh, and refuses to be in subjection to it. And while this war continues, sometimes one predominates and sometimes the other. The men upstairs to-day have the best of it, and the men downstairs to-morrow have the best of it. Nothing is settled; nothing is continuous; all is subject to chance.

There is many a half-formed man who has no fixed habits of life, and in whom sometimes one part of his nature gets momentum and comes into the ascendancy, and sometimes the other part. Sometimes those faculties which are seeking to do good govern, and sometimes those that are seeking to do evil govern. And to a greater or less extent there is a state of conflict between the upper and the lower nature, between the manhood and the animal, in every one of us.

Then comes that state in which, by the power of God's Spirit, and by the discipline of life, complete ascendancy is gained by our supersensuous nature. And all the other parts of our being *are brought into obedience*, as it is said, *to the Lord Jesus Christ.* Or, if you choose to follow out the psychological figure, the superior faculties in our souls assume control. And then there is peace. Then there is rest.

—*Beecher.*

9. His moral blindness.

(3399.) It is true that in our state of natural corruption, like the inhabitants of Sodom, who blindly groped to find the door of Lot's house without being able to do so, we in the same manner seek the way of life and immortality, but, struck with a fatal bewilderment, we grow weary of seeking without being able to find it, or rather we find the road of death, in which we walk with the same security as if it was in truth the road of life. —*Latreille.*

10. His need of a divine redemption.

(3400.) Man's deviation from his duty was, it seems, a disorder in the moral system of the universe, for which nothing less than Divine wisdom could conceive a remedy; the remedy devised nothing less than Divine wisdom and power could apply. Man's disobedience was in the moral world, what it would be in the natural, if a planet were to wander from its orbit, or the constellations to start from their appointed places. It was an evil for which the regular constitution of the world had no cure, which nothing but the immediate interposition of Providence could repair. —*Sailer.*

11. His vanity.

(3401.) I often think that we are like those little heaps of sand that the wind raises on the road, which whirl round for a moment and are scattered directly. —*Vianney.*

12. His dependence on God.

(3402.) God has but to withdraw His hand which bears us to plunge us back into the abyss of our

nothingness, as a stone suspended in the air falls by its own weight the moment it ceases to be held.
—*Fenelon.*

13. An object of Divine care.

(3403.) The distance between the meanest insect and the mightiest monarch, who treads and crushes reptiles to death without the least regard to them, is a very imperfect image of the distance between God and man. That which proves that it would be beneath the dignity of a monarch to observe the motions of ants or worms, to interest himself in their actions, to punish or to reward them, seems to demonstrate that God would degrade Himself were He to observe, to direct, to punish, or to reward mankind, who are infinitely inferior to Him. But one fact is sufficient to answer this specious objection, that is, that God had created mankind.
—*Saurin.*

14. His liberty is restricted.

(3404.) We are free only like a bird held by a string, which may think itself free while it does not attempt to fly, but the moment that it tries to get away perceives that it is a prisoner.
—*Vianney.*

15. His greatness: in what it consists.

(3405.) In our moral sense we bear, though partially obscured and broken, like the shadow in the rippled water, the image of God. Even his immortality does not invest man with such dignity as his conscience. Mere duration, indeed, does not render anything great. You may regard it with feelings of interest when you think how it existed during ages so long gone by: but if it has no intelligence and no conscience—if it has no other quality than its antiquity, you cannot pronounce it great. A clod does not cease to be a clod because it has existed so long. A moral being, though it were only to exist for an hour—the most short-lived insect, if possessed of a moral sense, would be a greater thing than the first and most glorious sun which God sent rolling on its path through space. —*Landels.*

(3406.) It is in our higher nature only that we are men; and it is there only that we measure ourselves as men. Everything in us that is below our moral nature, we have in common with the animal creation around us. Grass is good for mere leaves; and if it produces enough of them it is good grass. A shrub may produce leaves; but if it is a shrub that you plant for obtaining blossoms it is not a good shrub unless it has blossoms above the leaves. But the orchard may have leaves, and blossoms above the leaves; and yet, though grass is good for leaves, and the shrub is good for blossoms, an apple-tree is not good unless it has fruit as well as blossoms and leaves. And vines in vineyards are good, not for leaves alone, nor blossoms, nor clusters of fruit, but for the wine which is produced from the fruit. And men judge accordingly; measuring the value of a vine, not by the cluster, but by the wine; measuring an orchard, a little lower, not by the blossom, but by the fruit following the blossom; measuring an ornamental shrub, not by the leaves, but by the blossoms; measuring shade-trees, not by the blossoms, but by the leaves; and measuring grass by a standard yet lower. In other words, they find where the characteristic element of a thing is, and there they measure it. We measure things by the point wherein their superiority lies. The swine we estimate for fatness; oxen for strength and flesh; dogs for scent and sagacity; horses for speed and endurance.

Now man is to be measured by that which makes him MAN, in distinction from everything else; and that is not foot, nor hand, nor body, nor appetites, nor passions, nor economic or commercial power. These are not the things that make him man. It is that which has been stamped on him—God's image—that makes him man. That part of his nature which introduces the moral element, right and wrong; the spiritual element, invisible realities; and the benevolent element, the very divinity of love. Here man must be measured; for here, and only here, he becomes man, among the creatures of the world. And our substantial judgment of what we are, what our character is, and what we are worth as men, is to be formed upon this high moral development:—You are worth *just how good you are!* —*Beecher.*

16. Is immortal [*See also* **The Soul: immortal.**]

(3407.) Can we think that the most natural and most necessary desire of all has nothing to answer it? that nature should teach us above all things to desire immortality, which is not to be had? especially when it is the most noble and generous desire of human nature, that which most of all becomes a reasonable creature to desire, nay, that which is the governing principle of all our actions, and must give laws to all our other passions, desires, and appetites. What a strange creature has God made man, if He deceive him in the most fundamental and most universal principle of action; which makes his whole life nothing else but one continued cheat and imposture!
—*Sherlock,* 1641–1707.

(3408.) When I reflect that God has given to inferior animals no instincts nor faculties that are not immediately subservient to the ends and purposes of their beings, I cannot but conclude that the reason and faculties of man were bestowed upon the same principle, and are connected with his superior nature. When I find him, therefore, endowed with powers to carry as it were the line and rule to the most distant worlds, I consider it as conclusive evidence of a future and more exalted destination, because I cannot believe that the Creator of the universe would depart from all the analogies of the lower creation in the formation of His highest creature, by gifting him with a capacity not only utterly useless, but destructive of his contentment and happiness, if his existence were to terminate in the grave.
—*Lord-Chancellor Erskine,* 1750–1823.

(3409.) Upon this short question, "*Is man immortal, or is he not?*" depends all that is valuable in science, in morals, and in theology,—and all that is most interesting to man as a social being and as a rational and accountable intelligence. If he is destined to an eternal existence, an immense importance must attach to all his present affections, actions, and pursuits; and it must be a matter of infinite moment that they be directed in such a channel as will tend to carry him forward in safety to the felicities of a future world. But if his whole existence be circumscribed within the circle of a few fleeting years, man appears an enigma, an inexplicable

phenomenon in the universe, human life a mystery, the world a scene of confusion, virtue a mere phantom, the Creator a capricious being, and His plans and arrangements an inextricable maze.
—*Dr. T. Dick.*

(3410.) Can it be possible that man, a human form, to whom homage is paid both by animal and vegetable; the focus of ingenuity; the wonderful exposition of cause and effect; the living poem of perfect measure; the mechanical wonder of the world; was born and created to grow; and, having done his best to injure or benefit mankind, he, a perfect score in the plan of creation, shall cease to exist when the body sinks; and the soul stained with sin shall meet with no just punishment, when laws against sin govern this world? Or, if he has raised the lowly, forgiven the erring, and relieved the suffering and needy relative, is he to be blotted out, even as a worm is trodden down, and reap the benefit of no approving conscience?
—*S. W. Francis, M.D.*, 1875.

(3411.) The bird within the shell could not comprehend why wings were given for that cramped existence, but the almost unconscious flutter of the prisoned pinions was God's promise of another and a better life. —*Duff Porter.*

(3412.) Death cannot kill us. Having once launched this ship, it sails on for ever. Other craft may be sucked into a whirlpool, or shivered on the rocks; but this life within us shall weather the storms, and drop no anchor, and ten million years from now shall shake out signals passing others on the high seas of eternity. —*Talmage.*

(3413.) It may be taken as a great and distinctly marked principle in the arrangement of nature, that there is nothing wasteful, and nothing unmeaning; and yet, unless man be appointed to a higher and nobler existence, it is undeniable that there has been bestowed on him a vast deal which is truly superfluous, and that no proportion whatever is maintained between the powers wherewith he is endowed, and the achievements which are placed within his reach. Who can contemplate man, and not perceive him to be possessed of energies and capacities which are thrown away, or lost, if a few years spent within the trammels of a circumscribed scene made up the sum-total of his being? If you extended man's life to thousands of years, and allowed not during this long period old age to enervate his powers, he might continue gathering in accessions of knowledge, in the varied scenes which now invite his research; but any one of which, far too ample to be traversed in the present span of existence, would remain unexhausted where centuries on centuries had been given to their investigation. And what is this but saying, that man is blessed with immeasurably larger capacities than it is possible to fill during the scant moments of his lifetime; so that if at death he be altogether withdrawn from the theatre of being, he carries down with him into nothingness a rich freight of unemployed and undeveloped energies; and thus leaves behind him a record of the wastefulness of the Creator, and furnishes a proof that God bestows what is not wanted, and gives means without an end. We will just suppose, that what is matter of fact in man's intellectual constitution were also matter of fact in his physical. If there were limbs, or nerves, or organs in man's body, which answered no present use, or whose office were inconsiderable when compared with their evident power, the anatomist who has rigidly learned that nature does nothing without an end, would be inclined to the persuasion that the body has yet to pass into some other condition, and that then the useless and half-employed powers would find full room for exercise. It is certain that there is much in the anatomy of the infant which is only to be accounted for on the supposition that the infant is to grow into the man; and if we could find the same traces of a prospective arrangement in the full-grown man, the inference would seem unavoidable, that manhood is not the last stage of the body's existence, but that it is designed to be ushered into some broader arena, where the yet unused organs shall be all brought into play. But what we thus suppose in man's physical anatomy, is really found in his intellectual and moral. There are embryo powers which are either not at all, or only partially called forth on earth; there are capacities which will hold immeasurably more than they are here required to contain; there is a grasp and tenacity of intellect which are as much out of place, if there be no futurity, as would be the sinew and grapple of a giant, when only a feather is to be raised, or a straw to be wielded; there are unutterable longings which find nothing in the present scene at all corresponding; in short, the soul of man cannot be "filled," it is too big for time, and craves eternity. And what do we infer from this ascertained disproportion between the powers and circumstances of man? Shall not the intellectual anatomist proceed, as in the like case the physical would proceed? Shall we not believe that the excess of energies over present employment witnesses that the soul is appointed to a future and far higher career—that she is destined to expatiate in a sphere, compared to that which now binds her journeyings, which shrinks into a point? And shall we not learn from the known restlessness of man, from the fact (which, be it observed, is the sole exception to the rule, and the single instance of departure from uniform principle), the fact that creation cannot satisfy the creature, but that the world with all it can afford is too little—shall we not learn from this, that the death of the body terminates not the existence of the spirit; but that in some yet untravelled region, into which the soul shall be hereafter translated, there are objects great enough and glorious enough to engage our every power, and crown our every capacity, and satiate our every longing? —*Melvill*, 1798–1851.

(3414.) In this life the soul never appears to reach the limit of its growth. Every victory increases the facility with which subsequent and more important victories are gained. Every cubit added to its stature accelerates the rapidity of its growth. The wonder of yesterday is the commonplace of to-day; and the task of to-day is the child's play of to-morrow. Nor will it be otherwise, we have reason to think, in the future life. Our sense of congruity would be shocked by the termination of its existence. It would be destroyed in what was comparatively the infancy of its being — the season of its promise, while it felt longings which had not been satisfied, possessed capabilities which had not been exercised, gave promises which had

not been fulfilled. It would be as if an artist were to destroy the best of his works while they were yet in course of completion—as if the fairest flowers were to be blighted while yet in the bud—as if the best fruits were to wither before they ripened—as if the sun were to set in the morning, or the winter were immediately to succeed the first buddings of spring. It would be the strangely anomalous procedure of a Being of infinite wisdom and power and goodness ruthlessly destroying, while they were progressing towards a higher perfection, those works which bore, in the most eminent degree, the traces of His power and skill. —*Landels.*

(3415.) The truth of life and immortality, which were brought to light in Christ Jesus, had been before believed in a doubting way. It had been in the world as a suggestion, as a hint, as a rumour, one might say, but never as a power.

You are a poor man and ignorant. There is a written document in a chest in your room. You cannot read writing, and you do not know what the document contains, but you have a suspicion that by it you might become the inheritor of great treasure. You take it out, and look at it, and vainly wish that you could read it; you put it back without gaining any knowledge of its purport. By and by some kind friend comes to your relief. A light is kindled in your dwelling, and that document is taken out; he examines it for you. He reads, and as he reads, grows more and more attentive. He stops to ask you, "Who was your father? who was his father? what was your uncle's name?" "Something concerning my uncle, my father, and my father's father?" you say. You are impatient to know what it is. But instead of telling you, he turns the paper over again, and says, "Well, well!" Unable longer to restrain your eagerness to know what are its contents, you say to him, "Tell me what it is. Do not hold me in suspense. What is the news?" At length he says, "Why, sir, do you know that that whole estate is yours? Here is your title. I have brought it out of its hiding-place. This is well. The evidence is unquestionable. You are a millionaire. Your poverty is gone." "Read the paper again. Is it so—that I own that estate?" The man reads it again; you are assured that you are heir to the property. Your neighbours hear the news, and tell it to others; presently it is known through the whole town; great is the rejoicing that you have come to your rights at last!

The world had heard whispers of immortality. There had been fables and pictures, cloud-pictures, and fables grotesque or fantastic. Christ came, and opened God's will, as it is revealed in the New Testament, and made known the love—the suffering love of God. Men began to listen to His glorious teachings. "All that is God's is yours. By faith you may become His sons. You are heirs of God, and joints-heirs with Jesus Christ. All that God owns you shall inherit, of joy, of power, of nobleness, of dignity, of society, of existence, throughout eternity." Such is the revelation. Sound the musical word! Proclaim to all nations and generations the glad tidings that for ever and for ever man shall live! —*Beecher.*

17. His future.

(3416.) We are quite certain that what we are cannot be the end of God's design. When I see a block of marble half chiselled with just perhaps a hand peeping out from the rock, no man can make me believe that that is what the artist means it should be. And I know I am not what God would have me to be, because I feel yearnings and longings within myself to be infinitely better, infinitely holier and purer, than I am now. And so it is with you; you are not what God means you to be; you have only just begun to be what He wants you to be. He will go on with His chisel of affliction, using wisdom and the graving tool together, till by and by it shall appear what you shall be for; you shall be like Him, and you shall see Him as He is. Oh! what comfort this is for our faith, that from the fact of our vitality and the fact that God is at work with us, it is clear, and true and certain, that our latter end shall be increased. I do not think that any man yet has ever got an idea of what a man is to be. We are only the chalk crayon, rough drawings of men, yet when we come to be filled up in eternity, we shall be marvellous pictures, and our latter end indeed shall be greatly increased.

—*Spurgeon.*

(3417.) "The ages to come" will reveal a personal experience in us of which now we have but the very faintest trace in analogy. We cannot at present form a conception of perfection in the elements which constitute character. You never can tell what the ripe is from looking at the green. If an unknown seed be brought to you, and you plant it in the ground, and it sprout, and grow for five years, only throwing out leaves, and for five years more, still only throwing out leaves, can you tell how its blossoms are going to look? You never saw them. The tree is a new one. You have seen the root, the leaves, and the bark, and you have cut into the wood; you know its habits for the first ten years; you know when its leaves appear in the spring, and when they fall off in the autumn; you know everything about it as far as it has gone during those ten years; but you cannot guess whether its blossoms are white or yellow. You cannot tell whether they will hang in racemes, or rise up in circles. You cannot tell whether they will stand out in spikes, or be pendant. You cannot tell whether they will be early or late. You cannot, if the shrub or tree be unknown, find out the prophecy of the blossoms.

But at last the blossom comes out. Now tell me what that blossom is going to produce. Look at it. Is it going to put forth a pod, or is it going to be a fruit? Is it going to be a seed, or luscious food? You cannot tell from a blossom what the fruit is going to be, except by analogues; and I am now supposing a new plant of which there has been no congener within your knowledge, and that you are attempting, from a lower state, to conceive of the higher.

Now, in regard to human beings, there is nothing in the unripe state of the mind which is a fair interpretation of what ripeness in it is going to be. You could never have told, except by seeing it, what the human reason was competent to do. Consider the force of reason, by which the whole physical universe is being now unbarred: by which the most distant orbs are being searched, weighed, analysed; by which we are unwrapping the sun, and taking off coat after coat; by which we know more about the sun itself than oftentimes men do of the province in which they live on earth. What an education! What an outstretch of thought!

What development of the reasoning, searching power of the mind! Who could have suspected it in the days of barbarism? No man could then have told that. And who now can foretell what new development the human reason is capable of? As from the lower stages you could not suspect the higher, so from the present stages you cannot anticipate those which are yet to come. Now we think; but in the higher forms of thinking there is the intuition, the jump, as it were, the flash of thought, with which our present thinking is not to be compared. We call it *intuition*, we call it *inspiration*, we call it names; but names are not things. There is evidently the hint of a wondrous disclosure of power in the direction of reason "in the ages to come." We do not see it here. We cannot know it. We can only know what is the perpetual suggestion of it. Says the apostle St. John: "We are the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be." —*Beecher.*

18. The unity of the human race.

(3418.) We have certain demonstration from Egyptian mummies, and Roman urns and rings, and measures and edifices, and many other antiquities, that human stature has not diminished for above two thousand years.

—*Bentley*, 1661–1742.

(3419.) There is a vast difference between one part of the human family and another, but I do not know that it is greater than the difference which exists in a single household. In the same family we find one child blazing with the genius of imagination, and foretokens and forelookings of this radiant faculty, and another child squarely practical, without a spark of imagination. In the same family we find one child as full of song as the spring day is with all the birds in the woods, and another as dumb as though only turtles lived. One child shall be clear in practical matters, and stupid in ethical; and another child shall be clear in ethical matters, and stupid in practical. One shall have extraordinary intelligence, and another shall be in the twilight of insanity or idiocy. And does anybody say that the family is not a unit because children of the same parents are different? There are no diversities between the races of the world on the great scale more extreme than those which are often found in the family on the small scale.

—*Beecher.*

(3420.) The physical diversity of the race-stocks on the earth is not such as to impair the argument for substantial unity. There is the same plan existing throughout all nations. We hear a great deal about the ethnoid bones, and the length of the heel, and the curvature of the chin, and the style of the hair, and all these little incidental matters. But what would be thought if we should argue in the same way in respect to military organisations, and should take the jacket of the sailor as over against the coat of the soldier; and the snub-plume of the artillery as over against the feather of the other arm of the service? What would be thought if you should pick out little tit-bit things here and there and urge them against the substantial unity of the army to which all these belong? And, without going into any detail, how absurd it is to speak of the anatomical structure of man to show that the races are substantially different and divisible! There is precisely the same *plan* throughout the earth, of bone, of nerve, of artery, of structure, of generation, of gestation, of nutrition, of increment, and of decrement. These things are substantially the same in one race that they are in the others, whether it be African, or Asiatic, or Anglo-Saxon, or Norman, or Dane. The great functions of the human system are exactly the same, and the brain does its work in the same manner in some men as in others, whether they be on a low or a high plane. The liver, the heart, the stomach, the spleen, and every part of the body are the same in all. The organs of the race are the same. If it were true that the African had his heart in his liver, that would be a pretty tough argument; but does it make any difference to me if the hair is kinked? The African's bone is the same as yours is; and his marrow is the same as yours is. And though there is a slight variation between races, the surgeon, the nurse, the dietician, would treat all nations of the earth as though there were simply minor differences between them. There are no greater differences between nations than between individuals of the same nation; and they must be all treated alike. —*Beecher.*

19. The future of the human race.

(3421.) When we are obliged to say that probably not one man in a million has ever been of any particular moral avail, that of the mass of the inhabitants of the globe—those in the isles of the ocean; those in China; those on the populous plains of Asia; those on the whole continent of Africa; and a large portion of the fairest population of both North and South Americas—a million taken together do not constitute one fair man as respects moral endowments, that it has been the history of the race that they have simply been animals, and that they have been born, and lived, and ripened, and begotten their posterity, and decayed, and died, and gone through the precise circle which leaves go through, that come out in the spring, and ripen, and loosen, and drop off, and turn to soil for their successors to grow upon, developing no conscience, and producing no material impression on the course of the human mind—when we are obliged to see these things, it is difficult to believe in a divine moral government among men. It is said that a million Chinamen might die to-day, and not one idea would be lost. Ten million Asiatics might die, and not an invention nor a moral impulse would be lost. Of the race hitherto, ninety-nine parts in a hundred might have been wiped out without any loss to civilisation or to religion. And men say, with a great show of reason, too, "Is it to be supposed that this is the state of facts in a world where God is universal Father, and is conducting a government, and is the leader of the people, and is carrying on a glorious Church that is to fill the whole earth?" You are to remember that the mode of leadership is important as well as the fact that God leads. He does lead; but He does not lead as you would have led. He leads, not by overt and creative power at every step, but by evolution, by development, by growth; and that which the world is to reach, it is to reach through the process of self-unfolding, little by little. It requires cycles and periods of time that are incomputable. God makes the soil. How does He make the soil? Here is a volcanic island, with an area of a thousand acres, where not long ago there was ocean. It is

all lava; and the rains, and the sun, and the winter begin to mellow the surface, and to disintegrate it. It is a thousand years before it is sufficiently mellowed by climacteric influences to be able to support a seed, yet God cultivates it during that thousand years. There is no waste of time, because where one is infinite there is time enough for the longest operations. By and by some chance seeds find their way to this island, and spring up in the soil, and grow, and then die. And what do they do? They form the first particles of vegetable mould which the soil contains. And before they die they ripen seeds. These seeds become other plants. And what do they do? They ripen, shed their seeds, and add their corpses to those that have gone before them. And so generations of plants live and die. And what do they do? They make soil, until by and by, there come up stately trees out of it. And these decay, and enter into the soil, and a less rank and higher order of vegetation begins to take their place. When men see the last part of the process, they have faith to believe that God is producing this luxuriant and wonder-exciting and gladness-exciting vegetation; but He produces it by that long series of natural evolutions by which a rock is turned to soil, and all things that grow on that soil will serve to prepare it for something better. And the perfect type is the last step, the final step of the process of evolution of ages and ages.

Now, in the human family, it may be true that, as regards the results which they produce, a single generation seems a waste generation; but poor as men are, and little as they do, no generation of the world ever died without leaving some little soil behind in moral and intellectual affairs. And we stand on the aggregations of the moral experience of myriads and myriads of men that we call worthless.

The king builds his palace on a rock in the sea, and it stands, though the waves thunder against it, and the turbulent elements beat down upon it with their whole power. But what built that rock? Little coral plants. And there was not one of them that was not infinitesimally small. And the king says, "What are these little worms to me?" They are so much to you that it was by their working and dying, and working and dying, and working and dying, that the foundation was made on which you built your palace; and that if it had not been for them, you would not have had it. And the stone quarry from which you obtained material with which to lay up the walls was the product of the obscure labour of infinite weakness in ages gone by.

It will never do for us, therefore, so long as we have no larger span of vision than we have now, to undertake to say that men who are apparently useless, that men who do not in their individuality produce results, are of no consequence; for if not in their individuality, yet in their aggregates, they do produce results, on which later civilisation is to be established. And we are to consider the course of the whole race in all its cycles, and not the course of any section of it at any one period of time.
—*Beecher.*

(3422.) In my schoolboy drawing lessons, when I came to the human face, my master gave me first the eyes to practise upon, and then the nose, and then the mouth, and then the ears, and then the brow and hair, and after long weeks the day came when I was to combine them. I knew where to set the eyes, one over against the other, where to draw down the nose, and to open the mouth, and to place the ears, and to shade the hair about the forehead; and so at last, I had a perfect face. Now, God is the great draught-master, and the world is His pupil. Here and there, through laws and institutions, He is developing the single features, and at length the day will come when they shall be combined to form a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus.

At the Military Academy, the soldiers are taken separately to the drill-room, and there the martinet puts them through all the steps, and passes, and gestures, which they are required to learn; and when they have been trained and disciplined, they come to the parade ground; and then, at the word of command, platoons march, and squadrons wheel, and the great army, as one man, moves to the voice of its leader. Now, God's formative influences in this world are His military academies, His drill-rooms, where for centuries, the soldiers of the cross have been trained; but the day is coming when He shall put to His lips the trumpet of announcement, and when, with uplifted standard and triumphal music, He shall lead forth His vast army to go round and round the world with victory!
—*Beecher.*

(3423.) The human family is on its way to a state in which wealth, power, refinement, and universal purity and joy shall be characteristic.

As the husbandman of to-day, reflecting upon the last year, sees the stages of ploughing, and sowing, and hoeing, and growing, and reaping all unitised in the harvest, and thinks of what the year has come to, rather than of the steps by which it came to it; so is it to be in the grand autumnal consummation of the world. There is to be a time when we shall see what the world and the race have come to, and shall almost forget those steps of culture by which they came to it. There is to be a grand harvest-home for man. And God, who from eternal spheres is able to take in that beginning and that ending between which roll as many ages as there are drops between Europe and America, sees the history of man as it is to be consummated in the millennial or final period. —*Beecher.*

MEANS OF GRACE.

1. Their necessity.

(3424.) Grace is like a spark in wet wood, that needs continual blowing. —*Manton*, 1620-1667.

(3425.) Would you have and keep up ardent desires? Do as they that would keep in the fire, cherish the sparks, and blow them up to a flame. There is no man lives under the means of grace, and under the discoveries of God and religion, but has his good moods and very lively motions. The waters are stirred many times, take hold of this advantage. Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die, and blow up these sparks into a flame. God has left us enkindling means,—prayer, meditation, and the Word. Observe where the bellows blow hardest, and ply that course. The more supernatural things are, there needs more diligence to preserve them. A strange plant needs more care than a native of the soil. Worldly desires,

like a nettle, breed of their own accord, but spiritual desires need a great deal of cultivating.
—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

2. Are only means!

(3426.) Prayer and Scripture Reading and Sacraments are means to true religion; and as they are means of Divine appointment, they are sure, if faithfully and devoutly used, to conduce to the end. But for all that, they are *not* the end; and to regard them as such is a mischievous confusion of thought, which may very possibly disturb our spiritual aim, and make us shoot very wide of the mark. It is true, no doubt, that the religious exercises we have specified are absolutely essential (in all cases where they may be had) to the spiritual life. But even this fact does not take them out of the category of means, and make them ends. A scaffolding is the means of building a house; nay, more, it is an essential means; for how could the upper stories ever be raised without a scaffolding? But in material things of this kind, no one ever mistakes the means for the end. No one ever confounds the house with the scaffolding, or imagines that the object of the builder is achieved, if nothing should ever be exhibited to the eye *but* scaffolding, if there be no foundation dug, and no layers of bricks begin to rise above the earth. But in matters spiritual there are hundreds who are satisfied with themselves, if they exhibit day by day nothing but a religious apparatus, if they have literally nothing to show but prayers duly and attentively said, church duly attended, sacraments periodically and solemnly received. —*Goulburn.*

3. For what purpose they are to be used.

(3427.) It is not enough to make use of ordinances, but we must see if we can find God there. There are many that hover about the palace, and yet do not speak with the prince: so possibly we may hover about ordinances, and not meet with God there. To go away with the husk and shell of an ordinance, and neglect the kernel, to please ourselves because we have been in the courts of God, though we have not met with the living God, that is very sad. A traveller and merchant differ thus: a traveller goes from place to place only that he may see; but a merchant goes from port to port, that he may take in his lading, and grow rich by traffic. So a formal person goes from ordinance to ordinance, and is satisfied with the work; a godly man looks to take in his lading, that he may go away from God with God; that he may meet God here, and there, in this duty and in that, and go away from God with God. A man that makes a visit only by constraint, and not by friendship, it is all one to him whether the person be at home or no; but another would be glad to find his friend there: so if we, from a principle of love come to God in the duties, our desire will be to find the living God. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3428.) A scholar, knowing he is sent to the university to get learning, gives up himself to pursue this, and neglects other things; 'tis not riches or pleasures he looks after, but learning. Thus the gracious soul bestirs him, and flies from one duty to another, as the bee from flower to flower, to store itself with more and more grace; 'tis not credit and reputation to be thought a great saint, but to be indeed such, that he takes all this pains for. The Christian is compared to a merchantman, that trades for rich pearls; he is to go to ordinances, as the merchant that sails from port to port, not to see places, but to take in his lading, some here, some there. A Christian should be as much ashamed to return empty from his traffic with ordinances, as the merchant to come home without his lading. But alas! how little is this looked after by many that pass for great professors! who are like some idle persons that come to the market, not to buy provision, and carry home what they want, but to gaze and look upon what is there to be sold, to no purpose; O my brethren, take heed of this. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. In what spirit we are to avail ourselves of them.

(3429.) Never think that God is obliged to give you faith, upon the account of your using the means; but use them, because He enjoins them as means. Put them in their own place, not in Christ's room; and do as the mariner: he cannot command the wind, yet he lies ready at the coast, and waits on the wind; and when the gale comes, he hoists up the sails: so, though you cannot command the wind of the Spirit, which blows where it lists; yet wait humbly upon His blowing, and till He come and move the waters. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(3430.) It is with man and God in the production of spiritual, as with the skies and the soil in the production of material, fruit. Gathering harvests each successive year from fields whose wealth of fruitfulness seems exhaustless, we say, How bountiful is the earth!—the world's, like the widow's, meal-barrel, is never empty. We speak of the fruits of the earth, and the flowers of earth, and the harvest of earth; but these, her offspring, have another parent. Heaven claims their sweet juices, and fragrant odours, and glorious colours, as hers, and most her own. To the treasures of light, heat, rain, and dews, poured from exhaustless skies on the dull cold soil, earth's flowers owe their beauty, her gardens their fruits, her fields their golden harvest. Each, at any rate, has its own part to do; nor would a husbandman labour to less purpose under a sunless sky on fields bound hard with frost and buried in perpetual snow, than preachers without the cheering, warming, enlivening influences of the Sun of Righteousness, the dews of grace, and the blessing of the Spirit. Man's is but a husbandman's office—to plant; to water, nothing more. "Paul," as the apostle himself says, "planteth, Apollos watereth, but God giveth the increase; so, then, neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." And thus, whether we preach, or are preached to, when most diligent in the use of means, let a sense of our inability turn our eyes and all our hopes on God. With Him is the blessing and the residue of the Spirit. —*Guthrie.*

5. The folly of Pharasaism.

(3431.) We are apt to feel as if, by our prayers, we laid God under obligations to serve us; as if our feeble, imperfect service were "profitable to him." Suppose some poor beggar should say of a rich nobleman, "He is under great obligations to me." And when asked why? should answer, "I have been every day for a great many years, and told him a long story of my wants, and asked him to help me." You can see how absurd this appears;

and yet it is precisely similar to our conduct, except indeed, that ours is much more absurd, because the disparity between God and us is infinitely greater than can exist between any two mortals.

6. Are not in themselves saving.

(3432.) Mistake not, I pray you: these duties must be had and used, but still a man must not stay there. Prayer says, "There is no salvation in me;" and the sacraments and fasting say, "There is no salvation in us:" all these are subservient helps, no absolute causes of salvation. A man will use his bucket, but he expects water *from the well.* These means are the buckets, but all our comfort, and all our life and grace, is only in Christ.
—*Ambrose*, 1664.

(3433.) Vows, promises, shunning occasions, removing temptations, strictness and severity in duties, fear of hell and judgments—these in themselves are but empty, weak means of prevailing against sin, like the mighty sails of a ship, without wind and tide. No question but shunning occasions, strictness and severity in duties, watchfulness, &c., do well in their place and order, like oars in a boat, which, though it be carried with the tide, if well managed, yet they may help it to go the faster. Howsoever, it is Christ crucified which is the power of all. It is Christ lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent, which strikes more soundness into the wounded beholder, than any other way; wherein some have toiled all their time for power over corruptions, and, like Peter, have caught little or nothing (Luke v. 5) because Jesus Christ was not in the company. —*Ambrose*, 1664.

(3434.) It is not enough to sit under the means; wotul experience teacheth us there are some no sun will tan; they keep their own complexion under the most shining and burning light of the gospel. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3435.) You know in Noah's flood all that were not in the ark, though they climbed up the tallest trees, and the highest mountains and hills, yet were really drowned; so let men climb up to this duty and that, yet, if they don't get into Christ, they will be really damned. It is not thy closet, but thy Christ, that must save thee. If a man be not interested in Christ, he may perish with "Our Father" in his mouth. —*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(3436.) Take heed of resting upon closet duties, take heed of trusting in closet duties. Noah's dove made use of her wings, but she did not trust in her wings, but in the ark; so you must make use of closet duties, but you must not trust in your closet duties, but in Jesus, of whom the ark was but a type. There are many that go a round of duties, as mill-horses go their round in a mill, and rest upon them when they have done, using the means as mediators, and so fall short of Christ and heaven at once. Closet duties rested in will as eternally undo a man as the greatest and foulest enormities; open wickedness slays her thousands, but a secret resting upon duties slays her ten thousands. Multitudes bleed inwardly of this disease, and die for ever. Open profaneness is the broad dirty way, that leads to hell, but closet duties rested in is a sure way, though cleaner way, to hell. —*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(3437.) The ordinances of religion are compared to wells of water; but then, they are like Jacob's well. The water lies far below the surface; and to the man of world, the mere professor of religion who has the name but not the faith of a Christian, we may say, as the woman said to our Lord, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." Faith is, as it were, the rope, and our souls the vessels which we let down into this well to fill them with living water. —*Guthrie.*

7. Yet they are not to be neglected.

(3438.) Thou canst not neglect man's teaching, but thou resistest the Spirit's also. It was for something that the apostle placed them so near: he bids us "Quench not the Spirit;" and in the next words, "Despise not prophesying," surely he would have us know that the Spirit is dangerously quenched, when prophesying or preaching of the Gospel is despised. Now the most notorious way of despising prophesying or preaching is to turn our back on the ordinance, and not attend on it. When God sets up the ministry of the word in a place, His spirit then opens His school, and expects that all who would be taught for heaven, should come thither. Oh take heed of playing the truant, and absenting thyself from the ordinance, upon any unnecessary occasion, much less of casting off the ordinance! If he tempts God, that would be kept from sin, and yet will not keep out of the circle of the occasion, that leads to the sin; then he tempts God as much that would have faith, and pretends his desire is, that the Spirit should work it; but will not come within the ordinary walk of the Spirit, where He doth the work. Whether is it most fitting, that the scholar should wait on his master at school to be taught, or that the master should run after his truant scholar at play in the field to teach him there, judge you?
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3439.) To live above them, while we use them, is the way of a Christian; but to live above ordinances, as to live without them, is to live without the compass of the gospel lines, and so without the government of Christ. Let such beware, lest while they would be higher than Christians, they prove in the end lower than men. We are not yet come to the time and state where we shall have all from God's immediate hand. As God hath made all creatures, and instituted all ordinances for us, so will He continue our need of all. We must yet be contented with love-tokens from Him, till we come to receive our all in Him. We must be thankful if Joseph sustain our lives, by relieving us in our famine with His provisions, till we come to see His own face. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3440.) The power is all of God; the means are likewise of His appointment; and He always is pleased to work by such means as may show that the power is His. What was Moses's rod in itself or the trumpets that threw down Jericho? What influence could the pool of Siloam have, that the eyes of the blind man, by washing in it, should be opened? or what could Ezekiel's feeble breath contribute to the making dry bones live? all these means were exceedingly disproportioned to the effect; but He who ordered them to be used, accompanied them with His power. Yet, if Moses had gone without his rod, if Joshua had slighted the ram's horns, if the prophet had thought it foolishness to speak to

dry bones, or the blind man refused to wash his eyes, nothing could have been done.
—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(3441.) Means—the table of the Lord, the pulpit, the pages of the Bible, the family altar, the closet oratory, are of no value unless as putting us in communication with the Spirit of God; and used as the kite which the philosopher sends up to draw down the lightnings of the skies; or the bucket which the cottager sends down to draw up water from the well. Then, powerless as they are in themselves, they become the blessed and mighty instrument of spiritual good—the sails that catch the wind and impel the vessel on; the concave mirror that, placed before the Sun of Righteousness, gathers His beams into its burning focus to warm the coldest, and melt the hardest heart; eagle-wings to raise our souls to heaven; conduits, like the pipes that bring water to our city from these Pentland hills, to convey streams of grace, and peace, and purity from their fountain in heaven to our souls on earth. —*Guthrie.*

(3442.) God loves to effect His greatest works by means tending under ordinary circumstances to produce the very opposite of what is to be done. God walls the sea with sand. God clears the air with storms. God warms the earth with snow. So in the world of grace. He brings water in the desert, not from the soft earth, but the flinty rock. He heals the sting of the serpent of fire by the serpent of brass. He overthrows the walls of Jericho by ram's horns. He slays a thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass. He cures salt water with salt. He fells the giant with a sling and a stone. And thus does the Son of God work in the gospel. He cures the blind man by that which seemed likely to increase his blindness,—by anointing his eyes with clay. He exalts us to heaven by the stumbling-block of the cross.
—*Bishop Wordsworth.*

8. On the contrary, they are to be diligently used.

(1.) *That we may thereby show our love to God.*

(3443.) He that truly loveth his friend transporteth himself often to the place where he was wont to see his friend; he delighteth in reading his letters, and in handling the gages and monuments that he hath left behind him. How grateful is the sight of anything that presents unto him the memorial of his absent friend! And thus the child of God, to testify his love to Him, transporteth himself often to the place where he may find God in His sanctuary, amongst His saints. He delights in His letters (the Scriptures), in those holy pledges (the Sacraments), which He hath left behind Him, as tokens of His goodwill, until He come again.
—*Thomas de Trugillo.*

(2.) *Because God has appointed them.*

(3444.) If a king should give unto one of his subjects a princely palace upon condition that he shall go into it in the way which he shall prescribe, he would, no doubt, take what pains he could to know the way, and afterward endeavour to continue in it: so, likewise, the kingdom of heaven is the most glorious and royal palace that ever was, and God hath bestowed the same on His elect, and He requires nothing at their hands but that they would turn their faces from this world and walk unto it in the way which He hath chalked forth unto them in His Word; therefore, if they be desirous to have salvation and life everlasting, they must come forth of the broad way that leads to destruction, and enter into the strait way that leads to eternal life—they must acquaint themselves with the guides, which are the faithful ministers of the Word, who will cry unto them, "Here is the way; walk ye in it!" when they shall go to the right hand or to the left. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(3445.) There are no men more careful of the use of means than those that are surest of a good issue and conclusion, for the one stirs up diligence in the other. Assurance of the end stirs up diligence in the means. For the soul of a believing Christian knows that God has decreed both; both fall under the same decree: when God proposed to do such a thing, He proposed to do it by such and such means. Trust, therefore, is with diligence in the use of all means that God has ordained. He that trusts a physician's skill, will be very careful to observe what was prescribed, and will omit nothing. It is but presumption; it is not trust where there is not a care in the use of means, as we may pretend to trust in God and sever the means from the end; they are regardless of the means of salvation. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(3446.) What is Jordan that I should wash in it? What is the preaching that I should attend on it, where I hear nothing but what I knew before? What are these beggarly elements of water, bread, and wine? Are not these the reasonings of a soul that forgets who appoints the means of grace? What, though it be clay, let Christ use it, and it shall open the eyes, though in itself more likely to put them out. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3447.) Use the means appointed by God. Though we are torches which cannot light ourselves, yet we may bring ourselves to the word, which may both melt and kindle. Though the giving rain and the increasing the fruits of the earth be from God, yet no man ever held ploughing, and sowing, and pruning unnecessary. The work of grace is the work of the Spirit, which is a "wind which bloweth where it listeth." But may we not wait for those gales? May we not spread our sails and watch for the successful breathings? How do you know but whilst you are waiting upon God in an humble posture, God may unlock your hearts, and pour in the treasures of His grace? "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on them all which heard the word." If you will not harden your hearts to-day, God may soften your hearts to-day: "To-day, if you will hear His voice." These are the times wherein God parleys with the soul, and inclines it to the happy surrender. Though the power is God's, as the water is the fountain, yet He has appointed the channels of His ordinances through which to convey it: "Ministers by whom you believed." The gospel begets instrumentally, God principally (1 Cor. iv. 15). God calls by the gospel (2 Thess. ii. 14). As God is the Governor of the world, yet it is by instruments and second causes, which He clasps together to bring about His own designs. He that does not use these means may fear that God will never work

savingly upon him, for it is an utter refusing any acceptance of this grace, or anything tending to it. This is to be peremptory, never to do ourselves any good, or receive any from God. In despising the means, you despise the goodness of God.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3448.) There are some men that will refuse to labour for the elevation of the community—for the awakening and conversion of men—by means which long experience has shown do stand connected with that result, because they fear to take God's work out of His hands. It would be no more presumptuous than it is to work in the field which God has made, and sow seed, and raise crops there. God's sovereignty relates to the natural world as really as to the moral. Ploughing and sowing do not trench on God's prerogatives. Neither does spiritual activity. Cause and effect, means and ends, are connected in religious things just as much as in physical. Waiting when you should work is just as bad as would be audacious interference in things above our reach. Every man must do what he can; and men are much more in danger of doing too little than too much. Indolence is more frequent than irreverence. No ship-master infringes upon God's prerogatives when he takes care of his ship in a storm. No farmer feels that he is encroaching upon God's sovereignty when he cultivates the crops for which he prays. He asks for daily bread, and then earns it. No manufacturer or business man feels that he is trespassing upon God's prerogative when he looks after his own business. They believe, if they are good men, in God's blessing; but they always say, "If a man would receive God's blessings, he must prepare a soil for them to blossom on."

So it is in spiritual things. We are to work in reliance upon means, and then wait for God's blessing. And waiting for God to do for us what we can do for ourselves, although it may bear the name of religion, is really nothing but infidelity.
—*Beecher.*

(3.) *Because it is by them that we have communion with Christ.*

(3449.) Use thy duties, as Noah's dove did her wings, to carry thee to the ark of the Lord Jesus Christ, where only there is rest. If she had never used her wings, she had fallen in the water; and if she had not returned to the ark, she had found no rest; so, if thou shalt use no duties, but cast them off, thou art sure to perish; and if they convey thee not to Christ, thou mayest "lie down in sorrow." Or as it is with a poor man that is to get over a great water for a treasure on the other side, though he cannot fetch the boat, he calls for it, and uses it to carry him over to the treasure. So Christ is in heaven, and thou on earth; He does not come to thee, and thou canst not get to Him; now call for a boat; though there is no grace, no good, no salvation in a pitiless duty, yet use it to carry thee over to the treasure, the Lord Jesus Christ. When thou comest to hear, say, "Have over, Lord, by this sermon." When thou comest to pray, say, "Have over, Lord, by this prayer." —*Ambrose*, 1664.

(3450.) A woman like the Samaritan in the gospel, comes with a pitcher to draw water at a well. Her object is to reach and procure water; and she does this by letting down the pitcher into the well, and drawing it up again. It is at once understood that the pitcher is not the same thing as the muscular action, by which it is let down and drawn up. Both must contribute to the result; for without either pitcher or muscular action no water could be obtained; but the pitcher is external to the person, the muscular action a movement of the person. It is also clearly seen that neither pitcher nor muscular action are water,—that the arm might put itself forth for ever, and the pitcher be let down continually, but if it were a dry pit into which the vessel was lowered, no refreshment could be had thereby.

The figure is of easy application. Christ is the Well of the Water of Life, from whom alone can be drawn those streams of grace, which refresh, and quicken, and fertilise the soul. It is by faith that the soul reaches out after this living water; faith is the soul's muscular action, by which the water is drawn up and brought into use. But faith needs as an implement those means which Christ has appointed, and particularly the mean of means, which He constituted for the conveyance of Himself to faithful souls. These means are the pitcher in which the water is conveyed. Faith is not a Christ; neither are sacraments a Christ; but faith (under all circumstances) and sacraments, where they may be had, are necessary to the appropriation and enjoyment of Christ. —*Goulburn.*

(4.) *Because we need them.*

(3451.) Neglect not private or public ordinances. Your bodies may as probably live without diet, as your souls without duties. This is God's way, by which He infuseth grace where it is wanting, and increaseth grace where it is. As the head by the nerves and sinews, as organs, conveyeth animal spirits to the whole body, so doth the church's head, Christ Jesus, by ordinances convey His spirit and grace to His members. Doth not experience teach you that your hearts are like water; though heated a little while over the fire of the means of grace, yet are no sooner taken off, but they are returning to their former coldness. Mariners that swim against wind and tide, must row hard and continue at it; if they intermit but a little while, how far and how forcibly are they carried backwards! It is not unknown to you, if ye have any knowledge in spiritual affairs, how busily and unwearyedly the devil, world, and flesh are drawing you to hell; it highly concerneth you to be always, by duties, fetching in supplies from above, if ever ye would arrive at heaven. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3452.) The Christian's armour decays two ways: either by violent battery, when the Christian is overcome by temptation to sin; or else by neglecting to furbish and scour it with the use of those means which are as oil to keep it clean and bright.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1671.

(3453.) Be conscientious in the performance of holy duties. A fire which for a while shoots up to heaven will faint both in its heat and brightness, without fresh supplies of nourishing matter. Bring fresh wood to the altar morning and evening, as the priests were bound for the nourishment of the holy fire (Lev. vi. 12). God in all His promises supposes the use of means. When He promised Hezekiah his life for fifteen years, it cannot be supposed that he should live without eating and exercise. It is

both our sin and misery to neglect the means. Therefore let an holy and a humble spirit breathe in all our acts of worship. If we once become listless to duty, we shall quickly become lifeless in it. If we languish in our duties, we shall not long be lively in our graces. The loss of the stomach is a sign of the loss of health. If we would flourish, we must drink of those waters that spring up to everlasting life. If we desire our leaves should prosper, we should often plant ourselves by the rivers of waters; we must be where the sun shines, the dews drop, and the spirit blows.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3454.) Pride makes men think that they are so whole and well, as to have little need of all this preaching, and praying, and reading, and holy conference, and meditation, and heavenly-mindedness. They feel not that need or sweetness which should help them to perceive, that frequency is good or necessary for them. If the physician bid two men "eat often," and one of them hath a strong appetite, and the other hath none; he that is hungry will interpret the word "often," to mean thrice a day, at least, and he that hath no appetite will think that once a day is "often." Healthful men do not use to ask, "How prove you that I am bound to eat twice or thrice a day?" Feeling the need and benefit, they will be satisfied with an allowance without a command. They will rather ask, "How prove you that I may not do it?" for they feel reason in themselves to move them to it, if God restrain them not. So it is with a humble soul about the means of his edification and salvation.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3455.) I have no faith nor trust to put in any road to heaven other than that which our Saviour trod. Our Forerunner, He has left His footprints on the path of ordinances; and holding Him to be our Pattern as well as our Propitiation, I will venture on no path but that He travelled. Can anything be plainer than this, that if our blessed Lord did not neglect the means of grace, much less should we, can we afford to do so? How far wrong, therefore, are those, belonging to the Society of Friends, or to sects which have sprung up in our own day, who, though in many respects exemplary Christians, affect a spirituality to which our Lord lent no sanction! Rashly disparaging, and dispensing with the use of appointed ordinances, they say that a Christian man should be above such beggarly elements and rudimentary things; cultivating nothing but a purely spiritual worship.

These good people seem to forget that we are not yet in heaven; nor are yet fit for it. We need all possible help to get there; and with the tide running strong the other way, require to put every oar in the water, and crowd all sail upon the mast. Dragged downward by the many and powerful attractions of this world, we can no more afford to dispense with means than a bird to dispense with wings. The Christian, spurning the earth, is to rise like a lark, singing and soaring in the skies; but mark how, while that bird sings, she beats the air with rapid pinions, and makes ceaseless efforts to ascend. Instead of treating the means of grace with neglect, had we been more devout and diligent in the use of them; had we risen as early to our prayers as men to their work—the peasant to the plough, the weaver to the loom, the smith to his glowing forge; had we been as prompt to improve Sabbaths, sacraments, prayer meetings, and holy seasons, as the merchant rising markets, to make money; the traveller gleams of fine weather, to push homeward; the seamen times of fair wind to shake out all his canvass—how much more Christ-like had we been; how much better prepared for death; how much nearer heaven; how much more fit, and not only more fit for it, but fonder of it, and ready to say with Christ, I leave the world and go to my Father!

—*Guthrie.*

(5.) *That we may be in the way of blessing.*

(3456.) Christ compares the regenerating power of the Spirit unto the winds (John iii. 8). The mariner cannot sail without wind, nor can he procure a wind at his pleasure, for it blows when and where it lists, but he may thrust his vessel off a shore, and spreads his sails, to take advantage of a gale when it blows. Those that wait upon the Lord in the use of means and ordinances, they hereby spread their sails, are ready for the Spirit's motions, which bloweth where it listeth. There is more hope of these than of such who lie aground, neglecting the means of grace, which are both as sail and tackling. The two blind men of whom we read (Matt. xx. 30), they could not open their own eyes; that was beyond their power, but they could get into the way where Jesus passed, and they could cry to Him for sight, who only could recover it. Those that are diligent in the use of means and ordinances they sit in the way where Jesus passes by, who uses not to reject those that cry unto Him.

—*Clarkson*, 1621–1686.

(3457.) Be still in the king's highway, in the use of means; for, though the natural use of means and God's saving grace have no connection, yet there is far less a connection betwixt that grace, and the neglect of means. The poor beggar, that needs an alms from the king, goes to the king's highway, where he passes; and surely he is nearer his purpose, than if he should go to the top of a mountain, where the king never comes; so, be you still in the use of means, in the Lord's way.

—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(6.) *Notwithstanding that to some they are not a blessing.*

(3458.) That they do no good to some, forms no reason why we should neglect or despise ordinances. It is no fault in the bread, that, thrust between a dead man's teeth, it does not nourish him. The truth is, that we must have spiritual life to get the benefit of religious ordinances. Water will revive a withering, but not a withered plant; wine will revive a dying, but not a dead man; the breath of your mouth, or the breeze of heaven, will rekindle the smouldering coal, but not the cold, grey ashes of the hearth. And it is only spiritual life that can derive benefit from such ordinances as are intended to revive the faint and give strength to the weary.

—*Guthrie.*

(7.) *Notwithstanding that they may not be immediately a blessing to ourselves.*

(3459.) We must follow God from ordinance to ordinance. It argues a great deal of pride in carnal men if God does not meet them presently they throw off all. Now and then they will see what

they shall have for calling upon God, but if God do not answer at the first knock they are gone.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

9. The danger of neglecting them.

(3460.) As presumptuous sins are the thieves that with a high hand rob the Christian of his comfort, so sloth and negligence are the rust that in time will fret into his comfort, and eat out the heart and strength of it. It is impossible that the Christian who is careless and secure in his walking, infrequent or negligent in his communion with God, should long be owner of much peace and comfort. What if thou dost not pour water of presumptuous sins into the lamp of thy joy to quench it, 'tis enough if thou dost not pour oil of duty to feed and maintain it. Thou art a murderer to thy comfort by starving it, as well as by stabbing it.

—*Salter.*

10. The guilt of despising them.

(3461.) Those that turn their backs on God's ordinances, and in rebellion to His commandments, live in sins against conscience—can they wonder that He hides His face from them, when they turn their backs on Him? Rebellious persons, that will not yield meekly to God's ordinances, and submit to His commandments, do they wonder that God takes good things from them? When we sin we turn our backs upon God, and our face to the devil and the world and pleasures. When men turn their faces to sin, to pleasures and vanity, and their backs on God, do they wonder that He suffers them to melt and pine away? Let us do as the flowers do, the marigold, &c. They turn themselves to the sun. Let our souls do so. Let us turn ourselves to God in meditation and prayers, striving and wrestling with Him. Look to Him, eye Him in His ordinances and promises; and have communion with Him all the ways we can. Let our souls open and shut with Him. When He hides His face, let us droop, as the flowers do till the sun come again. When the waters fall, the flowers droop and hold down their heads. When the sun rises the next morning, up they go again as if there had never been a shower. So when we have not daily comfort of Spirit in peace of conscience, let us never rest seeking God's face in His ordinances and by prayer, and that will cheer a drooping soul, as the sunbeams do the flagging flowers.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(3462.) If the wounded Jew in the parable should have cast away the twopence which the Samaritan left to provide for him, it had been an argument that he neither regarded him nor his kindness. And it was a sign that Esau loved not God, because he esteemed not his birthright. Thus the true love of God is far from us if we set not a high esteem upon His ordinances, those pledges of His favour which He hath left with us, to wit, the word and sacraments; the word, wherein we hear Him speak lovingly,—and the sacraments, wherein we see Him speak comfortably to us; the one to heal us of our wounds, the other, an earnest of the blessings which we had forfeited by sin.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

11. Are all to be esteemed and used.

(3463.) When at the taking of New Carthage in Spain, two soldiers contended about the mural crown due to him who first climbed up the wall, so that the whole army was thereupon in danger of division, Scipio, the general, said he knew that they both got up the wall together, and so gave the scaling crown to them both. Thus a good orthodox Christian doth not clash God's ordinances together about precedency; he makes not odious comparisons betwixt prayer, preaching, and catechising, prayer public and private, premeditate and extemporary, but compounds all controversies about God's ordinances by praising them all, practising them all, and thanking God for them all.

—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3464.) The efficacy of co-ordinate means lies in their conjunction. The force of an army consists not in this troop, or that one regiment, but in all the parts in a body. And if any single troop or company shall presume to fight the enemy alone, what can they expect but to be routed by the enemy, and punished by their general also? Let not any say, they use this means and that; if any one be willingly neglected, the golden chain of obedience is broke: and *Bonum non nisi ex integris.*

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

12. Why the power to delight in them is sometimes withheld.

(3465.) When all means are strengthless and dead, and yet the mercy comes, "Oh," says a soul, "now I see that God is God Almighty, God all-sufficient." "She that is a widow and desolate," saith the apostle, "trusteth in God." We seldom trust in God till a desolation comes upon the means, then we learn to trust in God. So long as one who is learning to swim can touch the bottom, can touch the earth with his foot, he does not commit himself to the stream; but when he can feel no bottom, then he commits himself to the mercy of the waves. Now, so long as a man can stand upon the second cause, and can feel the bottom with his feet, he does not commit himself to the stream of mercy; but when once the second cause is gone, and he cannot feel the bottom, then he commits himself to the stream of mercy. —*Salter.*

MEDITATION.

I. *WHAT IT IS.*

(3466.) In order to meditation we must call to remembrance the things we have learned, and we must seek to store our minds with new and fresh truths. But neither of these is meditation itself. To remember a truth or a fact is not to ponder it. In the one case we simply possess the truth, in the other we use it. A passage remembered is so much food laid up in a storehouse; a passage meditated is so much food eaten and digested and incorporated with ourselves. Memory is the casket which holds the jewels; meditation is that which brings them forth, and arranges them upon the person, and sets out both to the best advantage. —*Alexander.*

(3467.) Deliberate meditation is like the cultivation of an estate of which we know the value, and which yields to us a sure and certain profit.

—*Salter.*

II. *IS PRACTISED BY ALL WHO LOVE GOD.*

(3468.) The mariner's needle will always turn to the north star,—though it be closed and shut up in a coffer of wood or gold, yet it loses not its nature; so the true Christian is always looking to the "Star of Jacob,"—whether he be shut up in a prison, or shut himself up in his closet, he is ever longing after Jesus Christ. A true lover delights most to visit his friend alone, when he can enjoy privacy with him.

When a prince passes by in the streets, then all, even strangers, will flock about him and look upon him; but his wife and children think this not enough, but follow him home, and are not satisfied unless they can enjoy him there. A false Christian, and one that is a stranger to God, if he have but a superficial view of Him in His courts, is pleased; but the true believer, and one that is nigh unto Christ, must have retired converse with Him in his closet, or he is not contented.

The pulse of the body beats as well in solitariness, as in company, and so does the pulse of the gracious soul towards his God and Saviour.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3469.) The exercising thyself to godliness in solitude, will be a probable proof of thy uprightness. Men are withheld in company from doing evil by the iron curb of fear or shame, and provoked to do good by the golden spurs of praise or profit; but in solitariness there are no such curbs in the way of lust to hinder our passage, nor such baits in the way of holiness to encourage our progress. The naked lineaments and natural thoughts of the soul are best discerned in secret. The darkest night may afford us light enough to see ourselves by; when outward objects and occasions do not interpose to hinder our light or discompose our souls. No man's temper can be discovered by his carriage in a crowd of affairs, no more than his countenance in a troubled water. When the mind is stated in a due repose, it bewrayeth her truest affections, which in the midst of business she either does not show, or not observe. If many servants and several masters be together, busy and active, we can hardly tell to what masters the particular servants belong; but when the masters be alone and walk singly, their servants attend on them and are known. Our affections are the servants of our souls, both rational and sensual; whilst both these masters are employed, as in company it sometimes falls out, and they wait, it is not easy to judge which they serve; in solitude one takes upon itself the government, and then it is visible what attendants it has.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

III. *ITS USEFULNESS.*

1. It prepares us to receive and retain the word of God.

(3470.) I hear many say, "While we are here, and enjoying the privilege of hearing, we are awed, but when we are gone out, we become altered men again, and the flame of zeal is quenched." What then may be done, that this may not come to pass? Let us observe whence it arises. Whence then does so great a change in us arise? From the unbecoming employment of our time, and from the company of evil men. For we ought not as soon as we retire from the communion, to plunge into business unsuited to the communion, but as soon as ever we get home, to take our Bible into our hands, and call our wife and children to join us in putting together what we have heard, and then, not before, engage in the business of life.

For if after the bath you would not choose to hurry into the market-place, lest by the business in the market you should destroy the refreshment thence derived; much more ought we to act on this principle after the communion. But as it is, we do the contrary, and in this very way throw away all. For while the profitable effect of what has been said to us is not yet well fixed, the great force of the things that press upon us from without, sweeps all entirely away.

That this then may not be the case, when you retire from the communion, you must account nothing more necessary, than that you should put together the things that have been said to you. Yes, for it were the utmost folly for us, while we give up five and even six days to the business of this life, not to bestow on things spiritual so much as one day, or rather not so much as a small part of one day. See ye not our own children, that whatever lessons are given them, those they study throughout the whole day? This then let us do likewise, since otherwise we shall derive no profit from coming here, drawing water daily into a vessel with holes, and not bestowing on the retaining of what we have heard, even so much earnestness, as we plainly show with respect to gold and silver. For any one who has received a few pence, both puts them into a bag, and sets a seal thereon; but we, having given us oracles more precious than either gold or costly stones, and receiving the treasures of the Spirit, do not put them away in the storehouses of our soul, but thoughtlessly and at random suffer them to escape from our minds. Who then will pity us after all this, plotting against our own interests, and casting ourselves into so deep a poverty? Therefore, that this may not be so, let us write it down for unalterable law for ourselves, for our wives, and for our children, to give up this one day of the week entire to hearing, and to the recollection of the things we have heard. For thus with greater aptness for learning shall we approach what is next to be said; and to us the labour will be less, and to you the profit greater, when, bearing in memory what has been lately spoken, ye hearken accordingly to what comes afterwards. For no little does this also contribute towards the understanding of what is said, when ye know accurately the connection of the thoughts, which we are busy in weaving for you. For since it is not possible to set down all in one day, you must by continued remembrance make the things laid before you on many days into a kind of chain, and so wrap it about your soul: that the body of the Scriptures may appear entire. —*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

(3471.) Meditation imprints and fastens a truth upon the mind and memory. Deliberate thoughts stick with us; as a lesson we have conned is not easily forgotten. Civet long kept in a box, the scent remains when the civet is taken out. Sermons meditated on are remembered by us long after they are delivered. —*Manton*, 1620–1647.

(3472.) Thou must be a meditative hearer. Meditation is to the sermon what the harrow is to

the seed; it covers those truths, which else might have been picked away. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3473.) Notwithstanding we may have received important ideas into our minds, yet without subsequent meditation, they will soon be overgrown like flowers and delicate plants in a garden which is neglected. —*Hyatt*, 1811.

2. It makes Divine truth effectual to our salvation.

(3474.) Any benefit to be derived from hearing the word exceedingly depends on meditation. Before we hear the word, meditation is like a plough, which opens the ground to receive the seed, and after we have heard the word, it is like the harrow which covers the new-sown seed in the earth, that the fowls of the air may not pick it up: meditation is that which makes the word full of life and energy to our souls. What is the reason that most men come to hear the word as the beasts did in Noah's ark? They came in unclean, and they went out unclean. The reason is, because they do not meditate on the truths they hear; it is but just like putting money into a bag with holes, presently it falls out. The truths they hear preached are put into shallow neglected memories, and they do not draw them forth by meditation, therefore hearing the word is so little effectual: it is said, "*Mary pondered these things in her heart.*" Hearing the word merely is like indigestion, and when we meditate upon the word, that's digestion; and this digestion of the word by meditation produces warm affections, zealous resolutions, and holy actions; and therefore if you desire to profit by hearing the word, meditate. —*Salter.*

(3475.) Meditation is the life of all the means of grace and that which makes them fruitful to our souls. What is the reason there is so much preaching and so little practice? For want of meditation. Constant thoughts are operative. If a hen straggles out from her nest, she brings forth nothing; her eggs chill. So when we do not set a-brood upon holy thoughts, if we content ourselves with some few transient thoughts and glances about divine things, and do not dwell upon them, the truth is suddenly put off, and does no good.

Constant thoughts are operative, and musing makes the fire burn. Green wood is not kindled by a flash or spark, but by constant blowing.
—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3476.) Consideration opens the ear that was stopped, and the heart that was shut up; it sets the powers of the soul at work, and awakeneth it from the sleep of incogitancy and security. The thoughts are the first actings of the soul, that set at work the rest. Thinking on the matters that must make us wise, and do the work of God on the heart, is that which lieth on us to do in order to our conversion. By consideration a sinner makes use of the truth, which before lay by, and therefore could do nothing. By consideration he taketh in the medicine to his soul, which before stood by, and could not work. By consideration a man makes use of his reason, which before was laid asleep, and therefore could not do its work. When the master is from home, the scholars will be at play. When the coachman is asleep, the horses may miss the way, and possibly break his neck and their own. If the ploughman go his way, the oxen will stand still, or make but bad and out of handsome work. So when reason is laid asleep, and out of the way, what may not appetite do? And what may not the passions do? And what may not temptations do with the soul? A wise man, when he is asleep, hath as little use of his wisdom as a fool. A learned man when he is asleep, can hardly dispute with an unlearned man that is awake. A strong man that is never so skilful at his weapons, is scarce able in his sleep to deal with the weakest child that is awake. Why all the powers of your soul are, as it were asleep, till consideration awake them, and set them on work. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3477.) The keenest sword, the greatest cannon, will do no execution against an enemy while they lie by and are not used. There is a mighty power in the word of God and the example of Christ to pull down strongholds, and conquer the strongest lusts and corruptions. But they will not do this while they are forgotten and neglected. Will heaven entice the man that thinks not of it? Will hell deter the man that thinks not of it? Why is it that all the reasoning in the world will do no more good on a man that is deaf, than if you said nothing? but because the passage to his thoughts and understanding is stopped up. And if you have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not, and wilfully cast it out of your thoughts, what good can anything do to you that is spoken? It is not holding food in your mouth that will nourish you, if you will not let it down; not taking it into your stomach, if you will not keep it, but presently cast it up again; but it must be kept till it be digested and distributed. So it is not the most excellent truths in the world that will change your hearts, if you let them not down to your hearts, and keep them not there by meditation till they are digested and turned into spiritual life. The plaster must be laid upon the sore if you would be cured. The wound and sickness is at your heart, and if you will not take in the word to your heart, where the sickness is, I know not how you should expect a cure. The soul will not be charmed into holiness by the bare hearing or saying over a few good words; as wizards use to cure diseases, or seem to cure them. It must be truth at the heart that must change the heart. And if you will not think on it, and think on it again, how can you expect it should come at your hearts?
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3478.) It is consideration of the saving doctrine of the gospel that openeth the heart, and giveth it entertainment. Set yourselves therefore on purpose to this work, and open the doors of your heart which are now shut, and let the King of Glory come in. Who will believe that you love the light, when you shut the windows and draw the curtains? If you will set yourselves to consider of the truth, the windows of your soul will be set open, and then the light will certainly come in. Now, you read over whole chapters, and hear sermon after sermon, and either they never stir you, or at least it is but a little for a fit, like a man that hath a little warmed him at the fire in the winter, and when he goes from it, is colder than before; but if you would but set yourselves to consider of what you hear and read, one line of a chapter, or one sentence of a sermon would lay you in tears, or make you groan, or at least do more than now is done. Satan hath

garrisoned the heart of every carnal man, and consideration is the principal means to cast him out. If, by considering the terrible threatenings of the Word, you would discharge these cannons of God against them, what a battery would it make in the corruptions of your souls! Our God is a consuming fire, and the fire of hell is threatened in His law as the wages of sin; by serious consideration you may, as it were, fetch fire from God and from His Word, and set fire to the very gates of Satan's garrison, and fire him out of many of his holds.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3479.) Meditation on divine things makes them really profitable to us. In the mere apprehension of truth, whether through reading or hearing, there is little or no profit. The profit begins when that which is apprehended is so pondered as to become part and parcel of the man's inner nature; just as food becomes of advantage to us when it is not only taken into the body but assimilated to it, and mixed with its substance. A man may run through a picture-gallery so as to see every painting it contains, and to derive from the sight a certain amount of pleasure; but he alone *profits* by such an exhibition who pauses and studies each worthy work of art, and gathers ideas from it which enrich his mind, or learns lessons from it which refine his taste, or which may guide his own efforts after excellence in art. "It is the settling of milk," says an old writer, "that makes it turn to cream, and it is the settling of truth in the mind that makes it turn to spiritual nutriment."

—*W. L. Alexander.*

3. It renders good impressions lasting.

(3480.) Gotthold had for some purpose taken from a cupboard a vial of rose-water, and, after using it, inconsiderately left it unstopped. Observing it some time after, he found that all the strength and sweetness of the perfume had evaporated. Here, thought he with himself, is a striking emblem of a heart fond of the world and open to the impression of outward objects. What good does it do to take such a heart to the house of God, and there fill it with the precious essence of the roses of Paradise which are the truths of Scripture? What good to kindle in it a glow of devotion, if we afterwards neglect to close the outlet—by which I mean, *to keep the word in an honest and good heart* (Luke viii. 15). How vain to hear much, but to retain little, and practise less! How vain to experience within us sacred and holy emotions, unless we are afterwards careful to close the heart by diligent reflection and prayer, and so keep it unspotted from the world. Neglect this, and the strength and spirit of devotion evaporates, and leaves only a lifeless froth behind. Lord Jesus, enable me to keep Thy word like a lively cordial in my heart. Quicken it there by Thy Spirit and grace. Seal it up in my soul, that it may retain for ever its freshness and its power!

—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

4. It gives fulness and clearness to our views of truth.

(3481.) Meditation takes the veil off from the face of truth. The glory and beauty of truth doth not consist in an expression, but we ought to penetrate into the nature of it by reflection. We have an expression of Solomon, speaking of knowledge and understanding, he bids us to *search for her as for hidden treasure;* observe the expression,—you know jewels do not lie upon the surface of the ground, but they are hid in the receptacles of the earth, you must dig for them before you can enjoy them. Truth is *in profundo*, and our understandings are dark. Now you must search for the truth of God as for hid treasure. He that rides post through a country is never able to make a full description of it; and he that takes but a transitory view of the truths of the gospel will never come to the full knowledge of them. 'Tis meditation makes them appear to our eye in their beauty and lustre.

(3482.) The man who is a stranger to meditation must of necessity possess very confused notions of truth. Whatever be the number of ideas which he has received, they lie in his mind like lumber in a dark room, without any order or arrangement.

—*Hyatt*, 1811.

5. It makes God's Word delightful to us.

(3483.) Meditation shows the beauty of truths. When we look upon them, we do not see half that is in them; but upon a more deliberate view, it more appears. There is a secret grace in some that is not discerned but by much converse and narrow inspection. —*Manton*, 1620–1669.

(3484.) The Word for sweetness, says David, is "like honey and the honeycomb." It is so full, that at first reading some sweetness will now and then drop from it, but he that doth not *press* it by meditation leaves the most behind.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

6. It delivers us from vain thoughts.

(3485.) Meditation will keep your hearts and souls from sinful thoughts. When the vessel is full you can put in no more. If the vessel be full of puddle water, you cannot put in wine: if the vessel be full of wine, you cannot put in puddle water. If the heart be full of sinful thoughts, there is no room for holy and heavenly thoughts: if the heart be full of holy and heavenly thoughts by meditation, there is no room for evil and sinful thoughts. And what is the reason that men's hearts are so full of sinful and evil thoughts, but because their hearts are no more full of God; they think no more, they meditate no more of God.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(3486.) Meditation will be a means to cure the most vicious part of our lives; for what is the wickedest part of a man's life? it is his vain thoughts. As in nature there is no vacuity or emptiness, but a vessel is either filled with liquor or the air; now the more water you pour in, the more air goes out. So, if you would but store your souls with these occasional meditations, it would thrust out vain and wild thoughts. —*Salter.*

(3487.) Let us beseech you then to make them (religion and eternity) familiar with your minds, and mingle them with the ordinary stream of your thoughts: retiring often from the world and conversing with God and your own souls. In these solemn moments, nature and the shifting scenes of it will retire from your view, and you will feel yourselves left alone with God; you will walk as in His sight; you will stand, as it were, at His tribunal. Illusions will then vanish apace, and everything will appear in its true proportion and

proper colour. You will estimate human life, and the work of it, not by fleeting and momentary sensations, but by the light of reflection and steady faith. You will see little in the past to please, or in the future to flatter: its feverish dreams will subside and its enchantment be dissolved.

—*Robert Hall*, 1764–1831.

7. It quickens the affections.

(3488.) Meditation sets the heart a work. The greatest matters will not work on him that does not think of them. Tell them of sin, and God, and Christ, and heaven, and hell, and they stir them not, because they do not take these truths into their deep thoughts; or if they be stirred a little while, it is but a fit, while the truth is held in view of conscience. We had need inculcate things if we would have them affect us. The steel must beat again and again on the flint if we would have the sparks fly out: so must the understanding bear hard on the will to get out any affection and respect to the way of God.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3489.) As meditation is a great help to memory, so it is a heart-warming work. If a thing be cold, you chafe it; if a man's body be cold, you chafe it and rub it; and by chafing and rubbing of a cold part, you put life and warmth into it; meditation chafes the soul, and rubs the soul with a truth. And what is the reason that our hearts are no warmer by what we read, or hear, or observe, but because we mediate no more on it?

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(3490.) As a hen, by sitting on her eggs some weeks, warms them and hatches young ones; so may I, by applying savoury subjects home to my soul, and brooding some considerable time on them, bring forth new affections and new actions. Though my affections seem as dead as the Shunammite's son, by stretching my thoughts thus on them, I shall warm and enliven them. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3491.) As meditation opens the understanding, and presents truth to the mind, so it raiseth the affections. Knowledge without meditation to warm the affections is like the glancing of a beam upon a wave—it fills it with a little clarity, but it doth not heal it; so, when there are many motions of truth in the brain, if meditation doth not apply them to the heart, and fix them upon the soul, the affections have no warmth by them. Slight visions make shallow impressions. He that with a careless eye looks upon a piece of embroidery, does not see the curiousness of the work, and therefore doth not admire it. So when we with a running eye look upon the truths of the gospel, no wonder our affections are not raised towards them. David, speaking concerning his meditation, says, "While I was musing, the fire burned, my heart was hot within me." 'Tis musing makes this fire to burn.

—*Salter*.

8. Promotes spiritual health.

(3492.) As the body will be more in health, when enjoying the benefits of a pure air, even so will the soul be more endued with practical wisdom, when nourished in such exercises as these.

—*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

9. Strengthens the spiritual vision.

(3493.) Seest thou not even the eyes of the body, that when they abide in smoke, they are always weeping; but when they are in clear air, and in a meadow, and in fountains and gardens, they become more quicksighted and more healthy? Like this is the soul's eye also, for should it feed in the meadow of spiritual oracles, it will be clear and piercing, and quick of sight, but should it depart into the smoke of the things of this life, it will weep without end, and wail both now and hereafter. For indeed the things of this life are like smoke. On this account also one has said, "My days have faded like smoke." He indeed was referring to their shortness of duration, and to their unsubstantial nature, but I would say that we should take what is said, not in this sense alone, but also as to their turbid character. For nothing doth so hurt and dim the eye of the soul as the crowd of worldly anxieties and the swarm of desires. For these are the wood that feed this smoke.

—*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

10. Enriches the understanding.

(3494.) Without meditation we do but talk one after another like parrots, and take up things by mere hearsay, and repeat them by rote, without affection and life, or discerning the worth and excellency of what we speak. It is meditation that makes truths always ready and present with us.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

11. Nourishes the soul.

(3495.) Meditation is the means of digesting the important truths we hear, and by which the soul is nourished and strengthened in the divine life. Bodily health is not preserved by the mere act of eating, but by a proper digestion of food; no more is the spiritual health of the soul maintained by the mere act of hearing, but by a proper digestion of truth, and in order to this, holy contemplation is indispensably necessary. —*Hyatt*, 1811.

(3496.) Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and our best abundance of the heart must be slowly and in quietness prepared. The cattle when they rest, are yet working to prepare from the grass that sweetest and most wholesome of beverages—milk. So must we prepare the abundance of the heart. If the milk of our word is to flow from us nourishingly, we must turn the common things of daily life—the grass—by slow and quiet processes, into sweet wisdom. In retired, meditative hours, the digesting and secreting powers of the spirit act; and thus ourselves are nourished, and we store nourishment for others.

—*Lynch*, 1828–1871.

12. Gives depth to the character.

(3497.) Meditation gives depth, seriousness, and earnestness to our religious profession and character. A profession of Christianity is easily made, and the name of Christian is easily assumed. But religion, whatever else it is, is a mode of thought, and hence it is only as deep and earnest thoughtfulness is bestowed upon it, that it can be developed in its higher and nobler forms. For want of this, Christianity often appears in its professors as it is not desirable that it should appear. Some there are who never go beyond the elements and alphabet of spiritual truth; theirs is a superficial Christianity, a gold-leaf religiousness, genuine so far as it goes, but marvellously attenuated, and not good for much nor able to endure much. —*Alexander*.

13. Promotes spiritual fruitfulness.

(3498.) This duty is very advantageous. You know a garden that is watered by sudden showers is more uncertain in its fruit than when 'tis refreshed by a constant stream; so when our thoughts are sometimes upon good things, and then run off; when they do but take a glance, as it were, upon holy objects, and then run away, there is not such fruit brought into the soul as when our minds by meditation do dwell upon them. The rays of the sun may warm us, but they do not inflame unless they are contracted in a burning-glass; so some slight thoughts of heavenly things may warm us a little, but will never inflame the soul till they be fixed by close meditation. Therefore David (who was an excellent man at this duty) tells us, his "heart was fixed," and saith the same concerning the frame of a good man. —*Salter.*

14. It brings comfort to the soul.

(3499.) God conveys comfort to us in a rational way; and although He is able to rain manna in the wilderness, and to cast in comfort to our souls, without any labour of ours, yet usually He dispenseth comforts according to the standing rule. He that doth not work, shall not eat—he that doth not labour in the duties of religion, shall not taste the sweetness of religion. Now meditation is the serious and active performance of the soul to which God hath promised comfort. The grapes, while they hang upon the vine, do not produce that wine which cheers the heart of man; but when they are squeezed in the wine-press, then they yield forth their liquor, which is of such a cheering nature. So the promises which are in the Word barely, do not send forth that sovereign juice which cheers our hearts; but when we ponder them in our souls, and press them by meditation, then the promises convey the water of life to us. "When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night-watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness:" observe the connection. Meditation turns the promises into marrow, it conveys the strength of them to our souls. One morsel of meat masticated and digested dispenses more nourishment than a greater quantity that is swallowed down whole; so one promise that is ruminated upon, and digested by meditation, conveys more comfort than a bundle of promises in the head that are not meditated upon, which we do not consider. The comfort which meditation brings is the most spiritual refined joy that we are capable of. It is spiritual meditation which rejoices the angelical part of our souls within us. Meditation is that which makes a man to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem: he can take a walk in the paradise of God every day, and pluck fruits off the tree of life, and draw water from the wells of salvation. He that performs conscientiously the duty of meditation doth maintain such a correspondence with God as angels do; such a one doth enter into heaven by degrees and steps. —*Salter.*

(3500.) The end of study is information, and the end of meditation is practice, or a work upon the affections. Study is like a winter sun, that shines, but warms not: but meditation is like a blowing up the fire, where we do not mind the blaze, but the heat. The end of study is to hoard up truth; but of meditation to lay it forth in conference or holy conversation. In study we are like vintners, that take in wine to store it for sale; in meditation like those that buy wine for their own use and comfort. A vintner's cellar may be better stored than a nobleman's; the student may have more of notion and knowledge, but the practical Christian has more of taste and refreshment.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3501.) The promises of God are flowers, growing in the paradise of Scripture; meditation, like the bee, sucks out the sweetness of them. The promises are of no use or comfort to us till they are meditated upon. For as the roses hanging in the garden may give a fragrant perfume, yet their sweet water is distilled only by the fire; so the promises are sweet in reading over, but the water of these roses—the spirit and quintessence of the promises—is distilled into the soul only by meditation. The incense, when it is pounded and beaten, smells sweetest. Meditating on a promise, like the beating of the incense, makes it most odoriferous and pleasant. The promises may be compared to a golden mine, which then only enricheth when the gold is dug out. By holy meditation we dig out that spiritual gold which lies hid in the mine of the promise, and so we come to be enriched.

—*Watson*, 1696.

15. It keeps hope active.

(3502.) The special object of hope is eternal glory. The peculiar use of it is to support, comfort, and refresh the soul, in all trials, under all weariness and despondencies, with a firm expectation of a speedy entrance into that glory, with an earnest desire after it. Wherefore, unless we acquaint ourselves, by continual meditation, with the reality and nature of this glory, it is impossible it should be the object of a vigorous active hope, such as whereby the apostle says, "we are saved." Without this we can neither have that evidence of eternal things, nor that valuation of them, nor that preparedness in our minds for them, as should keep us in the exercise of gracious hope about them.

Suppose sundry persons engaged in a voyage to a most remote country, wherein all of them have an apprehension there is a place of rest and an inheritance provided for them. Under this apprehension they all put themselves upon their voyage, to possess what is so prepared. Howbeit some of them have only a general notion of these things; they know nothing distinctly concerning them, and are so busied about other affairs that they have no leisure to inquire into them, or do suppose that they cannot come unto any satisfactory knowledge of them in particular, and so are content to go on with general hopes and expectations. Others there are who, by all possible means, acquaint themselves particularly with the nature of the climate whither they are going, with the excellency of the inheritance and provision that is made for them. Their voyage proves long and wearisome, their difficulties many and their dangers great, and they having nothing to relieve and encourage themselves with but the hope and expectation of the country whither they are going. Those of the first sort will be very apt to despond and faint, their general hopes will not be able to relieve them; but those who have a distinct notion and apprehension of the state of things whither they are going, and of their incomparable excellency, have always in a readiness wherewith to cheer their minds and support themselves.

In that journey or pilgrimage wherein we are engaged towards a heavenly country, we are sure to meet with all kinds of dangers, difficulties, and perils. It is not a general notion of blessedness that will excite and work in us a spiritual, refreshing hope. But when we think and meditate on future glory as we ought, that grace which is neglected for the most part as to its benefit, and dead as to its exercise, will of all others be most vigorous and active, putting itself forth on all occasions. This, therefore, is an inestimable benefit of the duty exhorted unto, and which they find the advantage of who are really spiritually-minded.

—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

16. It brings God near.

(3503.) Meditation is the soul's perspective glass: whereby, in her long remove, she discerns God as if He were nearer hand. —*Felltham*, 1668.

17. Its advantages must be experienced to be known.

(3504.) The advantage of meditation is rather to be felt than read. He that can paint spikenard, or musk, or roses, in their proper colour, cannot with all his art draw their pleasant savour; that is beyond the skill of his pencil.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

IV. *IS A DUTY FOR EVERY DAY.*

(3505.) As it is every man's work, so it is every day's work. The Sabbath day is our market day; we do not go to the market to buy meat into the house only for the market day, but for all the time until the market day comes about again. Indeed, Solomon saith of the sluggard, that he is so sluggish and slothful that "he doth not roast what he hath taken in hunting." The Sabbath day is the hunting day for souls wherein the venison is taken: on the week day we are to roast it, and to live upon it, by meditation and otherwise. And what is the reason that many do not live upon their venison that they have taken on the Lord's day, but because they do not roast it by meditation on the week day, and so are in the number of Solomon's sluggards. David saith that his meditation was at work all the day long: "It is my meditation all the day;" not a piece of it; it is every day's work, it is all the day's work. Yea, in Psalm i. he takes in the night too: "He delighteth in the law of the Lord, and therein doth he meditate day and night."

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(3506.) Accustom yourself to a serious meditation every morning. Fresh airing our souls in heaven will engender in us a purer spirit and nobler thoughts. A morning seasoning will secure us for all the day. Though other necessary thoughts about our calling will and must come in, yet when we have despatched them, let us attend to our morning theme as our chief companion. As a man that is going with another about some considerable business, suppose to Westminster, though he meets with several friends on the way, and salutes some, and with others with whom he has some affairs he spends some little time, yet he quickly returns to his companion, and both together go to their intended stage. Do thus in the present case. Our minds are active, and will be doing something, though to little purpose; and if they be not fixed upon some noble object, they will like madmen and fools be mightily pleased in playing with straws. The thoughts of God were the first visitors David had in the morning (Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18). God and his heart met together as soon as he was awake, and kept company all the day after.

—*Charnock*, 1620–1680.

V. *HOW IT IS TO BE CONDUCTED.*

1. We must be alone with God.

(3507.) To converse with self we must be alone, our sole companion our own thoughts, our sole witness God and nature. When Isaac would meditate he walked at eventide into the fields where, in the free air and the calm face of nature and the music of creation, he could find what tends to elevate the mind to God. When the Psalmist exhorts men to commune with their own hearts, his counsel to them is to do it by night upon their bed, when all is still around them, and when no flaring lights and no distracting shows will be present to interrupt the current of their thoughts. The din and the daylight of society are hostile to quiet, concentrated, self-searching thought. The man that would truly meditate must bear to be alone. The world will ever be ready to obtrude itself upon us if we do not shut it out, and worldly thoughts are like motes in the eye, which vex the soul and will not let it look calmly upwards. The wing that would soar into the serene air of the upper world must shake from it all clogs and fetters, and break away from whatever would tie it down to earth. —*Alexander.*

2. We must leave behind all vain and worldly thoughts.

(3508.) I wish that whenever I sequester myself from worldly business I might leave all my sinful and worldly thoughts behind me. There can no work of concernment be done in secret unless these disturbers be absent. Should I entertain such guests, I forbid Christ my company.

Vicious thoughts are His sworn enemies, and He will not dwell in the same house, in the same heart with them; if I desire Him to sit upon the throne of my heart, I must give Him leave to cast down every imagination, and to bring every thought to the obedience of Himself. Places that are full of vermin are not fit for a prince's presence.

Vain and unnecessary thoughts about lawful objects are strangers, though not sworn enemies, and will give my best Friend distaste. Though a noble person should come to pay me a visit, if he should hear me debasing myself to converse needlessly with inconsiderable impertinent fellows, I may look that he should pass by without calling in. Christ loves not to be entertained in a room full of dust-heaps and cobwebs. If vain thoughts lodge within, the blessed Jesus will stand without. Gold and clay will not mingle. If these mists arise and these clouds interpose, they will hinder my sight of the true sun. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

3. We must select single truths for special consideration.

(3509.) As sweet spices yield small savour until they are beaten to powder, so the wonderful works of God are either not at all or very slightly smelled in the nostrils of man, who is of a dull sense, unless they be rubbed and chafed in the mind, through a fervent affection, and singled out with a particular view; like them which tell money, who look not confusedly at the whole heap, but at the value

of every parcel. So then a true Christian must endeavour himself to deliver, not in gross, but by retail, the millions of God's mercy to his soul; in secret thought chewing the cud of every circumstance with continual contemplation.
—*E. Culverwell.*

(3510.) There is abundant matter for our meditation; as the nature and attributes of God, the states and offices of Christ, the threefold state of man, the four last things, the vanity of the creature, the sinfulness of sin, the love and fulness of the blessed Saviour, the Divine Word and works; out of these we may choose sometimes one thing, sometimes another, to be the particular object of our thoughts. To undertake more than one at a time will deprive us of the benefit of all. Too much food will rather destroy than increase the natural heat: a little wood may help that fire to burn, which a great quantity would smother. Whilst the dog runs after two hares, now after one, and presently after the other, he loses both. Many subjects, as a press or crowd of people, do but hinder one another. Those streams are strongest which are most united. Greediness of appetite, and receiving too much food, weakens digestion.

When thou hast fixed upon a subject, meditate (if it may be) on its causes, properties, effects, titles, comparisons, testimonies, contraries—all will help to illustrate the subject, and to quicken and advantage thee; they do all as so many several windows let in those beams which enlighten the mind and warm the affections: but they must be considered in their places and methodically. The parts of a watch jumbled together serve for no use, but each in their order make a rare and useful piece. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

4. We must select practical topics for consideration.

(3511.) There are some points in religion which are chiefly speculative; there are others which are more practical. Now as the tops of mountains are barren, but the humble valleys fruitful, so speculative points are barren, and the meditation of them is ineffective. There are some slight dishes which gratify the palate, but have no substance in them to feed and strengthen the body; so there are some truths which though they are delicious, yet they do not produce holiness; and although they may please the taste, yet they yield no solid nourishment to the soul. We lose much of the benefit of meditation, when we pitch our thoughts upon those objects which are not most fruitful. Hence, meaner Christians often thrive more in holiness than those of richer gifts; they meditate upon those objects most fruitfully in reference to their lives, and so they make a sensible progress in the ways of religion, whereas others are barren. —*Salter.*

5. We must not be in too great haste to bring our meditation to a close.

(3512.) In meditation, those who begin heavenly thoughts and prosecute them not are like those who kindle a fire under green wood, and leave it as soon as it begins to flame.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3513.) Let not thy meditations be transient. The milk must be set some time before it will turn into cream. Many blows drive a nail to the head, many thoughts settle a truth on the heart. Oh, that I might not only at some times exchange a few words with the subject of my meditation occasionally, as I do with a friend passing by my door; but also at set times invite it, as Lot did the angels, to stay with me all night, being confident it will pay me bountifully (as they him) for my charges in its entertainment. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3514.) Occasional meditations do some good, but set meditations much more, as making a greater impression upon the soul, and abiding longer with it. They differ as a taste and a full meal, as a sip and a good draught. Occasional meditations are like loving strangers, that afford us a visit, but are quickly gone: deliberate meditations are as inhabitants that dwell with us, and are longer helpful to us. The former, as the morning dew, do somewhat moisten and refresh the earth, but quickly pass away; the latter, as a good shower, soak deep and continue long. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

6. Neither must it be unduly prolonged.

(3515.) Do not overdo in point of violence or length; but carry on the work sincerely according to the abilities of your minds and bodies; lest going beyond your strength, you craze your brains, and discompose your minds, and disable yourselves, to do anything at all. Though we cannot estimatively love God too much, yet it is possible to think of Him with too much passion, or too long at once, because it may be more than the spirits and brain can bear; and if once they be overstrained, if they break not, like a lute-string screwed too high, they will be like a leg out of joint, that can pain you, but not bear you. While the soul rideth on so lame or dull a horse, as the body is, it must not go the pace which it desireth, but which the body can bear; or else it may be quickly dismounted, or like one that rideth on a tired horse. It is not the horse that goeth at first with chafing heat and violence which will travel best; but you must put on in the pace that you are able to hold out. You little know how lamentable and distressed a case you will be in, or how great an advantage the tempter hath, if once he do but tire you by overdoing!
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

VI. *ITS DIFFICULTIES.*

1. Are merely initial.

(3516.) As in the heating of an oven the fuel is set on fire, yet not without some pains to blow it up into a flame, but afterwards, when the oven begins to be somewhat hot, the fuel will catch and kindle of itself, and no sooner is it thrown in but it is all in a blaze on a sudden: such is the difficulty of meditation at the first. When there is but, as it were, a little spark of love in the heart, it will cost a man some pains to blow it up into a flame; but afterwards, when the heart is once heated with those flames of love, then it will inflame all the thoughts and set the affections on fire: insomuch, that the duty of meditation will not be only easy and delightful, but so necessary, that a man cannot tell how to avoid it. —*White*, 1576–1648.

(3517.) There are two things that make meditation hard. The one is, because men are not used thereunto, men are not exercised therein: and another is, because they do not love God enough. Everything is hard at the first: writing is hard at the first, painting hard at the first, and the getting

languages hard at the first. A trade is hard at the first, so certainly the work of meditation will be hard at the first. There is nothing not hard to those that are unwilling. There is nothing hard to those that love, love makes all things easy. Is it a hard thing for a lover to think or meditate on the person loved? Is it a hard thing for a child at a distance from his father to think or meditate on his father, and his father's love and kindness,—is this hard? Indeed to a rebellious child it is hard, but for a loving and an obedient child it is not hard. And what is the reason that the work of meditation is so hard to many of us, but because in truth we are not used thereunto, or because we are rebellious children, and do not love the Lord as we ought to do? —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

2. Yield to persistent effort.

(3518.) Continue to meditate till you find some sensible benefit conveyed to your soul. The nature of man has a great disrelish of this duty, and we are apt to be soon weary of it; our thoughts are like a bird in the cage, which flutters the more because of his confinement; so our thoughts are apt to run strayingly out when we confine them to such a duty as this is; but he that begins and doth not proceed loses the benefit of the duty. As it is in the kindling of fire in wet wood, you know continuance is that which must cause the flame. When you blow at first, there is a little smoke arises; by holding on, you raise sparks; but he that goes forward at last brings it to a flame. So 'tis in the duty of meditation; when you begin to meditate upon spiritual things, at first you raise a smoke, a few sighs towards God; by continuance you raise some sparks of heavenly desires; but at last there's a flame of holy affections that goes up towards God. Now you should not ordinarily leave the work till the flame doth so ascend. When a man goes forth in a calm and serene evening, and views the face of the heavens, he shall see a star or two twinkle and peep forth; but if he continues, both their number and lustre is increased, and at last he sees the whole heaven is bespangled with stars in every part; so when thou dost meditate upon the promises of the gospel, at first it may be one star begins to appear, a little light conveys itself to thy heart; but go forward, and then thou wilt find, when thy thoughts are amplified and ripened, there will be a clear light; more conveyed to thy soul; and in continuance the covenant of grace will appear bespangled with promises as heaven with stars, and all to give thee satisfaction. —*Salter*.

(3519.) This duty of set meditation is as hard as rare, and as uneasy as extraordinary, but experience teaches that the profit makes abundant recompense for our pains in the performance of it. Besides, as millstones grind hard at first, but being used to it, they grind easily, and make good flour; so the Christian wholly disused to this duty at first may find it difficult, but afterwards both facile and fruitful. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

3. Are not to deter us from it.

(3520.) Men who are sick and weakly in their bodies do not altogether abstain from food and physic, but rather use them, that they may recover their strength again; and though their appetite is small, yet they force themselves, that, by eating a little and a little, they may get a stomach. Shall a man who is dim-sighted shut the windows because the house is dark! Shall he not rather open them to let in the light that he may the better see to go about his business? And the colder a man feels himself, the more needful he thinks it to come to the fire and warm himself, or use some exercise, that so he may recover his natural heat. Thus, in like manner, the sight of our own natural wants and weaknesses is not a sufficient plea to bar us from the exercise of divine meditation, but rather incite us thereunto, it being an excellent means to clear up our sight, to enlighten our minds with more knowledge, to get spiritual health and strength, and to warm our cold and frozen hearts, that so, by God's assistance, we may perform service unto Him with more heat of godly zeal and fervour of devotion. —*Downame*, 1642.

VII. *ITS PROPER RESULTS.*

1. Prayer.

(3521.) In vain do we charge the gun, if we intend not to let it off. Meditation filleth the heart with heavenly matter, but prayer gives the discharge, and pours it forth upon God, whereby He is overcome to give the Christian his desired relief and succour. The promise is the bill or bond, wherein God makes Himself a debtor to the creature. Now, though it is some comfort to a poor man that hath no money at present to buy bread with, when he reads his bills and bonds, to see that he hath a great sum owing him; yet this will not supply his present wants, and buy him bread. No, it is the putting his bond in suit must do this. By meditating on the promise thou comest to see there is support in, and deliverance out of, affliction engaged for; but none will come till thou commencest thy suit, and by the prayer of faith callest in the debt. "Your heart shall live that seek the Lord." "They looked unto Him, and were lightened." God expects to hear from you before you can expect to hear from Him. If thou "restrainest prayer," it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading it at the bar. When, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then ply thee to the Throne of Grace, and spread it before the Lord. Thus David: "Remember Thy word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

2. Practice.

(3522.) Contemplation is an excellent part of Divine service, but charitable actions are more useful. . . . It is one thing to inquire which is in itself more excellent, and another thing to say which we are to choose; one thing to say this is to be preferred in estimation, and another to say this is to be preferred in practice. Ecstasies and raptures and conversing with blessed spirits are certainly actions and passions respectively of greater eminence than dressing the sores of poor boys in hospitals; and yet he that does this serves Christ and does good, while he that follows after the others may fall into the delusions of the devil. That which is best in itself is not best for me: it is best for the best state, but not for the state of men who dwell in imperfection. Strong meat is better than milk, but this is best for babes; and therefore he would but ill consult the good of his child who,

because it is a princely boy, would feed him with beef and venison, wild boar and the juice of great fishes. Certainly a jewel is better than a piece of frieze, and gold is a more noble and perfect substance than barley: and yet frieze and barley do in their season more good than gold and jewels, and are therefore much more eligible. For everything is to be accounted of in its own place and scene of eminency: the eye loves one best, and the tongue and palate, the throat and stomach love the other. But the understanding which considers both gives the value according to the degree of usefulness, and to the end of its ministry. Now though our understanding can consider things in their own perfections, and proportion honour and value to them; yet that which is better than *honour*, love, and desire, union and fruition are due to those things most, which it may be we *honour* least. And therefore there are some parts of the service of God which are like meat and clothes, and some are like gold and jewels; we value and admire these, but we are to choose the other; that is, we prefer one in discourse, and the other in use; we give better words to one, and better usages to the other. And therefore those parts of the Divine service which are most necessary, and do most good to mankind, are to be chosen before those that look more splendidly, and in themselves import more perfection. The foundation of a house is better than the roof, though the roof be gilded; and that part of the service of God which serves the needs of mankind most, is to be chosen before those which adorn him better. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(3523.) I would not only have my affections renewed, but also my actions reformed by my meditation. If I meditate what is good to be done, and do not the good meditated on, I lose my labour, and take much pains to no purpose. Cogitation is the sowing of the seed, action is the springing of it up. The former is hidden and under ground, the latter is visible, and many are the better for it. If the seed should still lie buried in the earth, it is lost and thrown away; it is the springing of it up that causes the harvest. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3524.) Our hearts and affections should answer our thoughts, as the echo the voice, and the wax the character in the seal. If our meditations do not better our hearts, they do nothing. Whilst they swim in the mind, as light things floating on the waters, they are unprofitable; but when they sink down into the affections, as heavy and weighty things, making suitable and real impressions there, then they attain their end. Our design in meditation must be rather to cleanse our hearts, than to clear our heads. "Whilst I was musing the fire burned." We strike fire by meditation to kindle our affections. This application of the thoughts to the heart is like the natural heat, which digests the food and turns it into good nourishment.

The close applying of our meditations to our hearts is like the applying and rubbing in oil on a benumbed joint, which recovers it to its due sense. He that omits it, doth as a chapman that appraises ware and cheapens it, but does not buy it, and so is never the better for it. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3525.) The Christian must not only pray his good thoughts, but practise them; he must not lock them up in his mind, but lay them out in his life. A council of war or of state is wholly useless, if there be none to execute what they determine. That kingdom flourishes best where faithful execution follows upon sound advisements: therefore the heathen pronounced that city safe which had the heads of old men for consideration, and the hands of young men for execution. Action without consideration is usually lame and defective: consideration without action is lost and abortive. Though meditation, like Rachel, be more fair; execution, like Leah, is most fruitful. Good intentions without suitable actions are like a piece charged without a bullet, which may make a noise, but does no good, no execution.

It is in vain to pretend, that, like Moses, we go into the mount of contemplation and converse with God, unless we come down as he did with our faces shining, our conversations more resplendent with holiness. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

MIRACLES.

1. Defined.

(3526.) A miracle is a work exceeding the power of any created agent, consequently being an effect of the Divine omnipotence. —*South*, 1633–1716.

2. Are not incredible.

(3527.) It seems to me that it needs no great power of faith to believe in the miracles, for true faith is a power, not a mere yielding. There are far harder things to believe than the miracles. For a man is not required to believe in them save as believing in Jesus. If a man can believe that there is a God, he may well believe that, having made creatures capable of hungering and thirsting for Him, He must be capable of speaking a word to guide them in their feeling after Him. And if He is a grand God, a God worthy of being God, yea (His metaphysics even may show the seeker), if He is a God capable of being God, He will speak the clearest, grandest word of guidance which He can utter intelligible to His creatures. For us that word must simply be the gathering of all the expressions of His visible works into an infinite human face, lighted up by an infinite human soul behind it,—namely, that potential essence of man, if I may use a word of my own, which was in the beginning with God. If God should *thus* hear the cry of the noblest of His creatures,—for such are all they who do cry after Him,—and in very deed show them His face, it is but natural to expect that the deeds of the great Messenger should be just the works of the Father done in little. If He came to reveal His Father in miniature, as it were (for in these unspeakable things we can but use figures, and the homeliest may be the holiest), to tone down His great voice—which, too loud for men to hear it aright, could but sound to them as an inarticulate thundering—into such a still small voice as might enter their human ears in welcome human speech, then the works that His Father does so widely, so grandly, that they transcend the vision of men, the Son must do briefly and sharply before their very eyes. —*George Macdonald.*

(3528.) If infidelity wishes to shake the Christian's faith in a personal God, it must account, not for the miracles of the first century merely, but for those of the nineteenth. —*Lyman Abbott.*

3. Reasonableness of our confidence that the New Testament miracles were really wrought.

(3529.) A man cannot be fairly required to believe anything very strange and unlikely, except when there is something still *more* strange and unlikely on the opposite side. Now that is just the case with respect to the Christian miracles; for, wonderful as the whole gospel history is, the most wonderful thing of all is, that a Jewish peasant should have succeeded in changing the religion of the world. That He should have succeeded in doing this without displaying any miracles would have been more wonderful than all the miracles that are recorded; and that He should have accomplished all this by means of *pretended* miracles, when none were really performed, would be most incredible of all. So that those who are unwilling to believe anything that is strange cannot escape doing so by disbelieving the gospel; but will have to believe something still more strange if they reject the gospel.

And it is the same in many other cases as well as in what relates to religion. We are often obliged to believe, at any rate, in something that is very wonderful, in order to avoid believing something else that is still more wonderful. For instance, it is well known that in these islands, and in several other parts of the world, there are great beds of seashells found near the top of hills, sometimes several thousand feet above the sea. Now it is certainly very hard to believe that the sea should ever have covered these places which now lie so far above it; and yet we are compelled to believe this, because we cannot think of any other way that is not far more incredible by which those shells have been deposited there.

And so it is with gospel history. We are sure that the Christian religion does now exist, and has overspread most of the civilised world; and we know that it was not first introduced and propagated (like that of Mohammed) by force of arms. To believe that it was received, and made its way, without miracles, would be to believe something more miraculous (if one may so speak) than all the miracles that our books record.

—*Whateley*, 1787–1863.

4. Their relation to natural law.

(1.) *Not distinguished from the effects of natural law in being works of God.*

(3530.) The distinction which is sometimes made, that in the miracles God is immediately working, and in other events is leaving it to the laws which He has established to work, cannot at all be admitted: for it has its root in a dead mechanical view of the universe, lying altogether remote from the truth. The clock-maker makes his clock, and leaves it; the ship-builder builds and launches his ship, and others navigate it; the world, however, is no curious piece of mechanism which its Maker constructs, and then dismisses from His hands, only from time to time reviewing and repairing it; but, as our Lord says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v. 17). He "upholdeth all things by the word of His power" (Heb. i. 3).

—*Trench.*

(2.) *Are not contraventions of natural law.*

(3531.) A miracle is commonly defined to be a contravention of the laws of nature. More properly speaking, it is only a higher operation of those same laws, in a form hitherto unseen. A miracle is perhaps no more a suspension or contradiction of the laws of nature than a hurricane or a thunderstorm. They who first travelled to tropical latitudes came back with anecdotes of supernatural convulsions of the elements. In truth, it was only that they had never personally witnessed such effects: but the hurricane which swept the waves flat, and the lightning which illuminated all the heavens or played upon the bayonets or masts in lambent flames, were but effects of the very same laws of electricity and meteorology which were in operation at home. —*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(3532.) A miracle is perhaps no more in contravention of the laws of the universe than the direct interposition of a whole nation, in cases of emergency, to uphold what is right in opposition to what is established, is an opposition to the laws of the realm. For instance, the whole people of Israel reversed the unjust decree of Saul which had sentenced Jonathan to death. But law is the expression only of a people's will. Ordinarily we see that expression mediately made through judges, office-bearers, kings; and so long as we see it in this mediate form, we are by habit satisfied that all is legal. There are cases, however, in which, not an indirect, but a direct expression of a nation's will is demanded. Extraordinary cases; and because extraordinary, they who can only see what is legal in what is customary, conventional, and in the routine of written precedents, get bewildered, and reckon the anomalous act illegal or rebellious. In reality, it is only the source of earthly law, the nation, pronouncing the law without the intervention of the subordinate agents.

This will help us to understand the nature of a miracle. What we call laws are simply the subordinate expressions of a will. There must be a will before there can be a law. Certain antecedents are followed by certain consequents. When we see this succession, we are satisfied, and call it natural. But there are emergencies in which it may be necessary for the will to assert itself, and become not the mediate but the immediate antecedent to the consequent. No subordinate agent interposes; simply the first cause comes in contact with a result. The audible expression of will is followed immediately by something which is generally preceded by some lower antecedent, which we call a cause. In this case you will observe there has been no contravention of the laws of nature; there has only been an immediate connection between the first cause and the last result. A miracle is the manifestation to man of the voluntariness of power.

—*Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(3533.) An organ is a certain instrument curiously framed or adjusted in its parts, and prepared to yield itself to any force which touches the keys. An animal runs back and forth across the keyboard, and produces a jarring, disagreeable jumble of sounds. Thereupon he begins to reason, and convinces himself that it is the nature of the instrument to make such sounds, and no other. But a skilful player comes to the instrument, as a higher presence, endowed with a supernatural sense and skill. He strikes the keys, and all melodious and heavenly sounds roll out upon the enchanted air.

Will the animal now go on to reason that this is impossible, incredible, because it violates the nature of the instrument, and is contrary to his own experience? Perhaps he may, and men may sometimes not be wiser than he. But the player himself, and all that can think it possible for him to do what the animal cannot, will have no doubt that the music is made by the same laws that made the jargon. Just so Christ, to whose will or touch our mundane system is as pliant as to ours, may be able to execute results through its very laws subordinated to Him, which to us are impossible. Nay, it would be itself a contradiction of all order and fit relation if He could not. To suppose that a being out of humanity will be shut up within all the limitations of humanity is incredible and contrary to reason. The very laws of nature themselves, having Him present to them as a new agent and higher first term, would require the development of new consequences and incidents in the nature of wonders. Being a miracle Himself, it would be the greatest of all miracles if He did not work miracles. —*Bushnell.*

(3534.) We should term the miracle not the infraction of a law, but behold in it the lower law neutralised, and for the time put out of working by a higher; and of this abundant analogous examples are evermore going forward before our eyes. Continually we behold in the world around us lower laws held in restraint by higher, mechanic by dynamic, chemical by vital, physical by moral; yet we say not, when the lower thus gives place in favour of the higher, that there was any violation of law, or that anything contrary to nature came to pass; rather we acknowledge the law of a greater freedom swallowing up the law of a lesser.

Thus, when I lift my arm, the law of gravitation is not, as far as my arm is concerned, denied or annihilated; it exists as much as ever, but is held in suspense by the higher law of my will.

The chemical laws which would bring about decay in animal substances still subsist, even when they are checked and hindered by the salt which keeps those substances from corruption.

The law of sin in a regenerate man is held in continual check by the law of the spirit of life; yet it is in his members still, not indeed working, for a mightier law has stepped in and now holds it in abeyance, but still there, and ready to work, did that higher law cease from its more effectual operation.

What in each of these cases is wrought may be against one particular law, that law being contemplated in its isolation, and rent away from the complex of laws, whereof it forms only a part. But no law does thus stand alone, and it is not against, but rather in entire harmony with, the system of laws; for the law of those laws is, that where powers come into conflict, the weaker shall give place to the stronger, the lower to the higher.

—*Trench.*

(3.) *Supernatural uses of natural law are neither inconceivable nor rare.*

(3535.) What is implied in a miraculous dispensation? I will not pause to attempt what has been so often attempted, the definition of a miracle. I will not in the meantime inquire, whether the speaking of it as a suspension of the ordinary laws of nature by the direct interposition of God, be a strictly accurate mode of expression or not; I will merely say, that to me it appears inaccurate. I do not conceive that suspension of an otherwise inevitable operation of one power or law in the universe by the control of a higher power, is to be regarded as miraculous. The law of gravitation, for example, is not truly to be regarded as superseded, because a man places his hand under a heavy body that is about to fall, and by the voluntary control that he has over his muscles prevents the law of gravitation from operating that particular effect. Now, believing that the power of God is not only everywhere present, but everywhere in action, believing that the action of all subordinate laws is ultimately the action of this highest law, I believe that the operation of the Divine power is not only everywhere present, but that its presence is necessary to the ultimate operation of all the subordinate laws or powers; and therefore I do not regard those powers or a course of nature as (strictly speaking) suspended, because that power, which is both present and necessarily present, shall by the direct will of God control any particular effect that those laws would otherwise have operated.

—*A. J. Scott*, 1866.

(3536.) The most rigid prevalence of law and necessary sequence among purely material phenomena may be admitted without apprehension by the firmest believer in miracles, so long as that sequence is so interpreted as to leave room for a power indispensable to all moral obligation and to all religious belief—the power of free will in man.

Deny the existence of a free will in man, and neither the possibility of miracles, nor any other question of religion or morality, is worth contending about. Admit the existence of a free will in man, and we have the experience of a power, analogous, however inferior, to that which is supposed to operate in the production of a miracle, and forming the basis of a legitimate argument from the less to the greater. In the will of man we have the solitary instance of an Efficient Cause in the highest sense of the term, acting among and along with the physical causes of the material world, and producing results which would not have been brought about by any invariable sequence of physical causes left to their own action. We have evidence, also, of an elasticity, so to speak, in the constitution of nature, which permits the influence of human power on the phenomena of the world to be exercised or suspended at will, without affecting the stability of the whole. We have thus a precedent for allowing the possibility of a similar interference of a higher will on a grander scale, provided for by a similar elasticity of the matter subjected to its influence. Such interferences, whether produced by human or by superhuman will, are not contrary to the laws of matter; but neither are they the result of those laws. They are the work of an agent who is independent of the laws, and who, therefore, neither obeys them nor disobeys them. If a man, of his own free will, throws a stone into the air, the motion of the stone, as soon as it has left his hand, is determined by a combination of purely material laws; partly by the attraction of the earth; partly by the resistance of the air; partly by the magnitude and direction of the force by which it was thrown. But by what law came it to be thrown at all? What law brought about the circumstance

through which the aforesaid combination of material laws came into operation on this particular occasion and in this particular manner? The law of gravitation, no doubt, remains constant and unbroken, whether the stone is lying on the ground or moving through the air; but neither the law of gravitation, nor all the laws of matter put together, could have brought about this particular result without the interposition of the free will of the man who throws the stone. Substitute the will of God for the will of man! and the argument, which in the above instance is limited to the narrow sphere within which man's power can be exercised, becomes applicable to the whole extent of creation, and to all the phenomena which it embraces.

—*Mansel*, 1820–1871.

(3537.) The great difficulty heretofore encountered, in establishing the faith of a supernatural agency, has been due to the fact that we have made a ghost of it; discussing it as if it were a marvel of superstition, and no definite and credible reality. Whereas it will appear, as we confront our difficulty more thoughtfully and take its full force, that the moment we begin to conceive ourselves rightly, we become ourselves supernatural. It is no longer necessary to go hunting after marvels, apparitions, suspensions of the laws of nature, to find the supernatural: it meets us in what is least transcendent and most familiar, even in ourselves. In ourselves we discover a tier of existences that are above nature, and, in all their most orderly actions, are doing their will upon it. The very idea of our personality is that of a being not under the law of cause and effect, a being supernatural. This one point clearly apprehended, all the difficulties of our subject are at once relieved, if not absolutely and completely removed.

If any one is startled or shocked by what appears to be the extravagance of this position, let him recur to our definition, viz., that *nature is the world of substance whose laws are laws of cause and effect, and whose events transpire, in orderly succession, under those laws; the supernatural is that range of substance, if any such there be, that acts upon the chain of cause and effect in nature from without the chain, producing thus results that by mere nature, could not come to pass.* It is not said, be it observed, as is sometimes done, that the supernatural implies a suspension of the laws of nature, a causing them, for the time, not to be—that, perhaps, is never done—it is only said that we, as powers not in the line of cause and effect, can set the causes in nature at work, in new combinations otherwise never occurring, and produce by our action upon nature results which she, as nature, could never produce by her own internal acting.

Illustrations are at hand without number. Thus nature, for example, never made a pistol, or gunpowder, or pulled a trigger; all which being done, or procured to be done, by the criminal in his act of murder, he is hung for what is rightly called his unnatural deed. So of things not criminal; nature never built a house or modelled a ship, or fitted a coat, or invented a steam-engine, or wrote a book, or framed a constitution. These are all events that spring out of human liberty, acting in and upon the realm of cause and effect, to produce results and combinations, which mere cause and effect could not; and at some point of the process in each, we shall be found coming down upon nature, by an act of sovereignty just as peremptory and mysterious as that which is discovered in a miracle, only that a miracle is a similar coming down upon it from another and higher being, and not from ourselves. Thus, for example in the firing of a pistol, we find materials brought together and compounded for making an explosive gas, an arrangement prepared to strike a fire into the substance compounded, an arm pulled back to strike the fire, muscles contracted to pull back the arm, a nervous telegraph running down from the brain, by which some order has been sent to contract the muscles; and then having come to the end of the chain of natural causes, the jury ask, who sent the mandate down upon the nervous telegraph, ordering the said contraction? And having found, as their true answer, that the arraigned criminal did it, they offer this as their verdict, and on the strength of the verdict he is hung. He had, in other words, a power to set in order a line of causes and effects, existing elementally in nature, and then, by a sentence of his will, to start the line, doing his unnatural deed of murder. If it be inquired how he was able to command the nervous telegraph in this manner, we cannot tell, any more than we can show the manner of a miracle. The same is true in regard to all our most common actions. If one simply lifts a weight, overcoming, thus far, the great law of gravity, we may trace the act back in the same way; and if we do it we shall come at last to the man acting in his personal arbitrament, and shall find him sending down his mandate to the arm, summoning its contractions and sentencing the weight to rise,—in which, as we perceive, he has just so much of power given him to vary the incidents and actings of nature as determined by her own laws—so much, that is, of power supernatural.

Finding now in this manner that we ourselves are supernatural creatures, and that the supernatural, instead of being some distant, ghostly affair, is similar to us as our own most familiar action; also, that nature, as a realm of cause and effect, is made to be acted on from without by us and all moral beings—thus to be the environment of our life, the instrument of our activity, the medium of our right or wrong doing toward each other, and so the school of our trial—a further question rises, viz., what will we think of God's relations to nature? If it be nothing incredible that we should act on the chain of cause and effect in nature, is it more incredible that God should thus act? Strange as it may seem, this is the grand offence of supernaturalism, the supposing that God can act on nature from without; on the chain of cause and effect in nature from without the chain of connection, by which natural causes are propagated—exactly that which we ourselves are doing as the most familiar thing in our lives! It involves, too, as we can see at a glance, no disruption by us of the laws of nature, but only a new combination of its elements and forces, and need not any more involve such a disruption by Him. Nor can any one show that a miracle of Christ (the raising, for example, of Lazarus) involves anything more than that nature is prepared to be acted on by a divine power, just as it is to be acted on by a human in the making of gunpowder, or the making and charging of a firearm. For though there seems to be an immense difference in the grade of the results accomplished, it is only a difference which ought to appear regarding the grade of the two

agents by whom they are wrought. How different the power of two men, creatures though they be of the same order; a Newton, for example, a Watt, a Fulton, and some wild Patagonian or stunted Esquimaux. So, if there be angels, seraphim, thrones, dominions, all in ascending scales of endowment above one another, they will, of course, have powers supernatural, or capacities to act on the lines of causes in nature that correspond with their natural quantity and degree. What wonder then is it, in the case of Jesus Christ, that He reveals a power over nature appropriate to the scale of His being and the inherent supremacy of His divine person? —*Bushnell.*

(3538.) The advocates of revelation do not deny the regularity and constancy of natural laws. We do not impeach the wisdom and perfection of these laws. We do not say that it was necessary for the Creator to modify their action in order to secure the ends for which they were established. The uniform connection between antecedent and consequent is a postulate both of Revelation and Science. If the connection were irregular and uncertain, there could be no scientific knowledge of the material world — nor could any miraculous evidence be given for the divine commission of an inspired prophet; the whole force of the argument from miracles rests on the constancy of the laws of nature; only a supernatural power can account for miraculous phenomena. But whether it is possible or probable that miracles should be wrought to authenticate a direct communication from God, is a question on which physical science has absolutely no right to pronounce an opinion. She cannot presume to limit the power of God; she cannot form any judgment as to the probability of His making a supernatural revelation of Himself to man, or as to the means He will select to prove that the revelation really comes from Him. That a power higher than natural law can manifest itself in the very provinces which belong to physical science is an obvious fact. Account for the elevation of my hand. Physiology will reply by describing the structure of my arm, the mechanical arrangements of the elbow and the wrist, the action of the muscles, and the influence of the motor-nerves. This is the region of law. But the movement of the hand is not accounted for yet, behind these physiological phenomena there is another power, my supernatural will. Nor will it do to say that the action of my will was but the necessary result of the motives which influenced me I am conscious of the power of choosing by what motive I will be determined. Trace back the chain of natural antecedents and consequents as elaborately as you will, and you will reach at last a force which is above nature, in attempting to explain so simple a phenomenon as the elevation of a human hand, nor can any explanation be given of the manner in which the supernatural volition is translated into the region of physical law. Take the Bible lying on this desk, why do you believe that it is the production of human thought and skill? Simply because there are no natural laws which, left to their own uncontrolled and unguided action, would produce a substance like paper, or impress on it the printed characters which represent human language, or bind the loose sheets into a volume. It is not a natural production at all; it is the creation of a supernatural will employing natural substances and natural laws to effect its purpose. What is miraculous differs from what is artificial simply in this—that in the one, effects are produced which can be accounted for by the action of the will of man; and in the other, effects are produced which can be accounted for only by the action of the will of God. —*R. W. Dale.*

5. Their design.

(3539.) The glory of Christ did not *begin* with the miracle wrought in Cana; the miracle only *manifested* it. For thirty years the wonder-working power had been in Him. It was not diviner power when it broke forth into visible manifestation, than it had been when it was unsuspected and unseen. It had been exercised up to this time in common acts of youthful life: obedience to His mother, love to His brethren. Well, it was just as divine in those simple, daily acts, as when it showed itself in a way startling and wonderful. It was just as much the life of God on earth when He did an act of ordinary human love or human duty, as when He did an extraordinary act, such as turning water into wine. God was as much, nay more, in the daily life and love of Christ, than He was in Christ's miracles. The miracle only made the hidden glory visible. The extraordinary only proved that the ordinary was Divine. That was the very object of the miracle. It was done to *manifest forth* His glory. And if, instead of rousing men to see the real glory of Christ in His other life, the miracle merely fastened men's attention on itself, and made them think that the only Glory which is Divine is to be found in what is wonderful and uncommon, then the whole intention of the miracle was lost.

Let us make this more plain by an illustration. To the wise man, the lightning only manifests the electric force which is everywhere, and which for one moment has become visible. As often as he sees it, it reminds him that the lightning slumbers invisibly in the dew-drop, and in the mist, and in the cloud, and binds together every atom of the water that he uses in daily life. But to the vulgar mind the lightning is something unique, a something which has no existence but when it appears. There is a fearful glory in the lightning because he sees it. But there is no startling glory and nothing fearful in the drop of dew, because he does not know, what the Thinker knows, that the flash is there in all its terrors. So, in the same way, to the half believer a miracle is the one solitary evidence of God. Without it he could have no certainty of God's existence.

But to the true disciple a miracle only *manifests* the Power and Love which are silently at work everywhere, as truly and as really in the slow work of the cure of the insane, as in the sudden expulsion of the legion from the demoniac—as divinely in the gift of daily bread, as in the miraculous multiplication of the loaves. God's glory is at work in the growth of the vine and the ripening of the grape, and the process by which grape-juice passes into wine. It is not *more* glory, but only glory more *manifested*, when water at His bidding passes at once into wine. And be sure that if you do not feel, as David felt, God's presence in the annual miracle, that it is *God*, which in the vintage of every year causeth wine to make glad the heart of man, the sudden miracle at Capernaum would not have given you conviction of His presence. "If you hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will you be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Miracles have only done their work when they teach us the glory and the awfulness that surround our common life. In a miracle, God for one moment shows Himself, that we may remember it is He that is at work when no miracle is seen.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(3540.) A miracle is by its very definition an exceptional case; if you could imagine miracle established into law, it would be miracle no longer. And it is a fact, in regard to the development of human thought, that it is exceptional cases that draw the attention of mankind to general laws. For example, those observations by which philosophers were first led to think of electricity as a principle pervading a certain region of the material world, were not instances of its normal condition, in which it exists, binding all matter together. It is not while electricity subsists in the form of chemical affinity, the acting principle of the combinations of the elementary principles of matter, that the attention of men is forced towards it: it is when it comes out as the spark from the electrical machine, or from the terrible thunder-cloud, that we are led to consider what this mysterious agency may be. And from these isolated cases we follow it on, we trace it to its lurking places, as it were, and ultimately find that it is a grand pervading universal law of the physical world. Do not suppose that the subject of illustration is lowered by such a comparison as this. At all events, it may assist towards intelligibility when I say that a miracle is an exceptional case, in like manner of the Divine procedure, introduced for the express purpose of calling man's attention to a permanent law of the Divine procedure. And the Jewish theocracy was a case in which God held a nation together by miracle, for the sake of calling man's attention to the abiding laws by which God, as the Creator of mankind, holds nations together in the proportion as these laws are observed.

—*A. J. Scott*, 1866.

(3541.) The Bible reveals to us the spiritual source of the physical world: shows to us that the supernatural is not antagonistic to the constitution of nature, but is the eternal source of it. The miracles of the Bible are not only emblems of power in the spiritual world, but also exponents of the miracles of nature, experiments, as it were, made by the Great Teacher in person, on a small scale and within a limited time, to illustrate to mankind the phenomena that are taking place over longer periods throughout the universe. All creation is a standing wonder, but it needs other wonders to reveal it to our careless eyes and insensible hearts. It needs the sudden multiplication of the loaves and fishes at Capernaum to explain to us the mystery of the harvest of the land and the sea. It needs the miracle of Cana to show to us who it is that is gradually converting water into wine in every vineyard. It needs the virtue flowing from the hem of Christ's garment at the touch of faith, to disclose to us the source and the meaning of the medicinal virtue stored up, for bodies blighted by the curse, in many a soothing anodyne and many a healing balm. It needs the destruction of the walls of Jericho by the trumpet blast to convince us that the seen is governed by the unseen, that the mountain must yield to the action of cold and heat, and the stable rock and massive castle in the course of years be withered away and dismantled stone by stone by the subtle and invisible forces of the air. It needs the calming of the stormy waters of Gennesaret to satisfy us that the powers of nature which seem so arbitrary, so destructive, so purely physical, are held in leash by Him who maintains the constant beneficent circulation of the elements. The philosophy of miracles is, therefore, just the revelation of the living God, as the God of nature; the revelation of God, not as violating, but as maintaining the order of His world: a revelation sudden and startling, to show to us what could not be shown so effectually in any other way, what "His hand is daily doing for the beautifying and glorifying of the earth and of life." As Mr. Westcott says, in his thoughtful work on Miracles, "The order of the universe has a spiritual root. The purpose of love which changes is also the purpose of love which directs it. He who can bind and loose the forces of nature has thus revealed the eternal purpose in which they originate."

—*Macmillan.*

(3542.) When God had some new tidings to tell to the world, which they could not have found out by their own sense and wit, He gave to the men whom He sent with the message the power of working miracles. The miracles were a sort of bell, which they rung in the ears of their generation, that people might listen to what they had to say, and believe that it came from Heaven. Thus when God sent Moses upon an errand to the Israelites, in order that the Israelites might attend to what he said, God gave him the power of working all manner of wonders. —*Goulburn.*

(3543.) The miracles of Christ have been very much perverted by discussions, and by not being looked at along the line in which they were meant to play. They were simply charities. They were, to be sure, alleged to have a certain influence among an abject and superstitious-minded people, but Christ Himself undervalued them as moral evidence. They were alternative, as evidence. "If you will not believe Me for My own sake," He says, "believe Me for My works' sake." He held that the radiant presentation of a divine nature ought to carry its own evidence; that when He appeared in speech, in conduct, in affluent affection, He was Himself His own best evidence; and yet, if they, by reason of obtuseness, could not believe in Him otherwise, He called upon them to believe in Him for the sake of His miracles. That would be better than nothing. But He discouraged and dissuaded men from seeking after miracles or signs. The miracles of Christ were, almost all of them, mere acts of benevolence. He was poor; He had neither money nor raiment to give; and yet there was suffering around about Him, and He relieved it. —*Beecher.*

6. Under what conditions they are authoritative.

(3544.) We have the highest possible authority, that of Scripture itself, to justify us in putting the question: whether miracles can, of themselves, work a true conviction in the mind? There are spiritual truths which must derive their evidence from within, which whoever rejects, "neither will he believe though a man were to rise from the dead" to confirm them. And under the Mosaic law, a miracle in attestation of a false doctrine

subjected the miracle-worker to death: whether really or only seemingly supernatural, making no difference in the present argument, its power of convincing, whatever that power may be, whether great or small, depending on the fulness of the belief in its miraculous nature. *Est quibus esse videtur.* Or rather, that I may express the same position in a form less likely to offend, is not a true efficient conviction of a moral truth, is not "the creating of a new heart," which collects the energies of a man's being in the focus of the conscience, the one essential miracle, the same and of the same evidence to the ignorant and to the learned, which no superior skill can counterfeit, human or demoniacal? Is it not emphatically that leading of the Father, without which no man can come to Christ? Is it not that implication of doctrine in the miracle, and of miracle in the doctrine, which is the bridge of communication between the senses and the soul? That predisposing warmth that renders the understanding susceptible of the specific impression from the historic, and from all other outward seals of testimony? Is not this the one infallible criterion of miracles, by which a man can know whether they be of God? The abhorrence in which the most savage or barbarous tribes hold witchcraft, in which, however, their belief is so intense as even to control the springs of life,—is not this abhorrence of witchcraft, and so full a conviction of its reality, a proof how little of divine, how little fitting to our nature, a miracle is when insulated from spiritual truths, and disconnected from religion as its end?

—*S. T. Coleridge*, 1772–1834.

(3545.) The fact that the kingdom of lies has its wonders no less than the kingdom of truth, would be alone sufficient to convince us that miracles cannot be appealed to absolutely and simply, in proof of the doctrine which the worker of them proclaims; and God's Word expressly declares the same (Deut. xiii. 1–5). A miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of him that brings it to pass. That which alone it claims for him at the first is a right to be listened to: it puts him in the alternative of being from heaven or from hell. The doctrine must first commend itself to the conscience as being *good*, and only then can the miracle seal it as *divine*. —*Trench.*

7. Their significance should be pondered.

(3546.) Often some one sees fair characters written, then praises he the writer and the characters, but knows not what they mean. He who understands the art of writing praises its fairness, and reads the characters, and comprehends their meaning. In one way we look at a picture, and in another at character. Nothing more is necessary for a picture than that you see and praise it: but it is not enough to look at characters, without at the same time reading them, and understanding their signification. So also is it with regard to the miracle. —*Ælfric*, 1091.

(3547.) As a boy that cannot write at all looks with wonder and admiration upon the performance of a writing master, who without thought can form the letters and sentences so as to make the page look like engraving, while the master himself has no idea that he is doing anything extraordinary; so men looked with wonder and admiration upon the miracles of Christ, by which He fed the multitude, turned water into wine, healed the sick, cast out devils, brought the dead from their shadowy land, and evoked victory out of defeat, while Christ Himself did not regard these things as of very great importance. They were merely the authentication of His divinity. The real thing for which He came was that which lay beyond this. His errand was to bring upon the human soul a cleansing power, an inspiring power, a formative power. He was to set us free from sin, inspire in us a longing for purity, and form our character on that basis. Accordingly, Christ is presented mainly in the New Testament, from beginning to end, in His relations to the soul of man. Even when He is compared with His Father, it is always as a means of exhibiting with greater power His curative relation to the human soul. —*Beecher.*

8. Their cessation.

(3548.) "Why," say you, "do not those things take place now?" Because they would not move unless they were wonderful, and if they were usual, they would not be wonderful.*

For the interchanges of day and night, and the settled order of things in heaven, the revolution of years divided into four parts, the fall and return of leaves to trees, the boundless power of seeds, the beauty of light, the varieties of colours, sounds, tastes, scents, let there be some one who shall see and perceive them for the first time, and yet such an one as we may converse with; he is stupefied and overwhelmed with miracles: but we contemn all these, not because they are easy to understand, —for what more obscure than the causes of theses?— but surely because they constantly meet our senses.

Therefore they were done at a very suitable time, in order that, by these a multitude of believers having been gathered together and spread abroad, authority might be turned with effect upon habits.

—*Augustine*, 353–429.

(3549.) But why did not Christ continue this communication of the Holy Ghost to His churches still, seeing our unbelief is strong, and we have still need of such help as well as they?

Answer 1. We have the full use and benefit of the Holy Ghost which was given then, that seal that was then set to the Christian doctrine and Scriptures stands there still. When Christ hath fully proved to the world the truth of His mediatorship, office, and doctrine, must He still continue the same actions? Is it not enough that He sealed it up once, but must He set a new seal for every man that requireth it in every age? Then miracles would be no miracles. Must your landlord seal your lease anew every time you will causelessly question his former seal?

Then, if Christ had done miracles among a thousand, every man that was not present should come and say, "Do the like before me also, or I will not believe." Will you put God to this, that either He

* In his "Retractiones," b. i. c. 14, 5, Augustine makes the following statement in regard to this passage:—"In another place, where I had made mention of the miracles which our Lord did while He was here in the flesh, I added, saying, 'Why,' say you, 'do not those things take place now?' and I answered, "Because they would not move unless they were wonderful, and if they were usual, they would not be wonderful.' But this I said because not so great miracles, nor all, take place now, *not because there are none wrought even now.*"

must work constant miracles in every age, and before every man, or else He must not be believed? What, if all Christ's works had been done at London, and we had not seen them here in the country, or what, if all this town had seen them except one man, should no man believe them but he that did see them? Should no man believe that there hath been any wars and fighting in England, but those that saw the battles? Or what, if these things had been done in our forefathers' days, should not we have believed them except they had been done in ours? We have as full testimony of Christ's and His apostles' true works as we can have of any of these. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(3550.) Certain it is, that now these extraordinary and miraculous powers are ceased, and that upon as good reason as at first they began. For when the spiritual building is consummate, and not only the corner stone laid, but the superstructure also finished, to what purpose should the scaffolds any longer stand? which when they leave off to contribute to the building, can serve for little else but to upbraid the folly of the builder. Besides, that by so long a continuance miracle would almost turn into nature, or at least look very like it; the rarities of heaven would grow cheap and common, and (which is very preposterous to conceive) they would be miracles without a wonder. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(3551.) In the beginnings of the world, before the moral sense became developed, it was useful to act upon the moral sense through the instrumentality of miracles. But as men's moral sense grows, and becomes capable of appreciating moral evidence, miracles cease;—as the nurse in the household is dispensed with when the child is grown so as to be able to take care of itself. —*Beecher*.

9. Folly of the demand that miracles should be repeated.

(3552.) [A doctrine once attested by miracle is for ever to be believed.] The contrary doctrine of the apostates is self-contradicting and absurd; for, whereas, they pretend that they, and they only, are bound to believe that see the miracles: by this means, they leave God incapable of convincing the world by miracles: for miracles would lose their convincing force, and be as no miracles, if they were common to all, and in all ages. For it is not so much the power that is manifest in that work simply considered, that proves it any testimony to the doctrine, or that would convince; but it is the extraordinary application of omnipotency that sealeth the truth. It is a work of as great power to cause the sun to move as to stand still, or the sea to keep its course as to change it, or the living to continue in life as for the dead to rise, and to give eye-sight at birth or in the womb, as to give it twenty years after: but it would not have confirmed Christ's doctrine so much if Lazarus had not died, as if he be raised again; or that a man be born with eyesight, as that he be restored to it that was born blind; and so of the rest. Now, these men would have every man, in every country and age in the world, to see miracles, or else not to be bound to believe; and I think, on the same gound, they must see particular miracles for the sealing of each particular truth that they receive; and, then, miracles would be common, and so lose their force and be as none: then, every infidel would say; "This is a common thing." If it were as common for the sun to stand still as to move, or for the dead to be raised as the sick to be healed or a child to be born, do you think it would be a fit evidence to convince these unbelievers of the Christian truth? *Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(3553.) The continuance of miracles from age to age would destroy their very nature, to which it is essential that they be rare and extraordinary; for what is ordinary and frequent we are apt to ascribe to the established laws of nature, however wonderful it be in itself. For example, if we saw the dead bodies rise from their graves as often as we see vegetables spring from seed rotten in the earth, we should be no more surprised at the one phenomenon than we are at the other, and our virtuosi would be equally busy to assign some natural cause for both.

And had we never seen the sun rise until this morning, we should justly have accounted it as great a miracle as any recorded in the Scriptures; but because it is common, we neglect it as a thing of course. Indeed, it is not anything in the event itself, or in the degree of power necessary for its accomplishment, that renders it miraculous, but its being uncommon, and out of the ordinary course of things. For example, the generation of the human body is not in itself less astonishing, nor does it require less power, than its resurrection; the revolution of the sun in its regular course is as wonderful, and as much requires a divine power, as its standing still in the days of Joshua. But we acknowledge a miracle in one case, but not in the other, because the one is extraordinary while the other frequently occurs. Hence it follows that the frequent repetition of miracles, as often as men are pleased to plead the want of evidence to excuse their infidelity, would destroy their very nature; and consequently, to demand their continuance is to demand an impossibility.

But suppose that man should be indulged in this request, it would not probably bring them to believe. If they are unbelievers now, it is not for want of evidence, but through wilful blindness and obstinacy; and as they that will shut their eyes can see no more in meridian light than in the twilight, so they that reject a sufficiency of evidence would also resist a superfluity of it. Thus the Jews, who were eye-witnesses of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, continued invincible infidels still. They had always some trifling cavil ready to object against the brightest evidence. And thus our modern infidels would no doubt evade the force of the most miraculous attestation by some wretched hypothesis or other. They would look upon miracles either as magical productions or illusions of their senses; or rather, as natural and necessary events, which they would indeed have some reason to conclude, if they were frequently performed before their eyes. Some have pretended to doubt of the existence and perfections of God, notwithstanding the evidences thereof upon this magnificent structure of the universe; and must God be always creating new worlds before these obstinate creatures for their conviction? Such persons have as much reason to demand it in this case as our deists have to insist for new miracles in the other. —*Davies*, 1724-1761.

(3554.) Let it be supposed that every one had a right to demand a miracle; that the occurrence of miracles was unlimited; that as often as you had

an ache, or trembled for the loss of a relation, you had but to pray and receive your wish.

Clearly in this case, first of all, the constitution of the universe would be reversed. The will of man would be substituted for the will of God. Caprice and chance would regulate all. God would be dethroned; God would be degraded to the rank of one of those beings of supernatural power with whom eastern romance abounds, who are subordinated by a spell to the will of a mortal, who is armed with their powers and uses them as vassals. God would be merely the genius who would be chained by the spell of prayer to obey the behests of man. Man would arm himself with the powers of Deity, and God would be his slave.

Further still. This unlimited extension of miracles would annihilate miracles themselves. For suppose that miracles were universal; that prayer was directly followed by a reply; that we could all heal the sick and raise the dead—this, then, would become the common order of things. It would be what we now call nature. It would cease to be extraordinary, and the infidel would be as unsatisfied as ever. He would see only the antecedent, prayer, and the invariable consequent, a reply to prayer; exactly what he sees now in the process of causation. And then, just as now, he would say, What more do you want? These are the laws of the universe! Why interpose the complex and cumbrous machinery of a God, the awkward hypothesis of a Will, to account for laws?

Miracles, then, are necessarily limited. The non-limitation of miracles would annihilate the miraculous. —*Robertson*, 1816-1853.

(3555.) We should naturally expect that miracles would be done when a new creed, or new faith, was to be introduced into the world, demanding the acceptance of mankind. For what is a miracle? It is not a mere freak of power; a rare and extraordinary display, like a rocket, to blaze before the senses, and elicit admiration and astonishment, when wrought for truth; it is the hand of omnipotent power, holding up the bright light of an eternal truth. The miracle is simply the credential of the document. What the seal is upon a lease, or deed, the miracle is upon the Bible. And when people say, Would it not be better to have the miracle repeated? we answer, if you once place your signature and the impression of your seal upon a deed or lease, lawyers would not think of asking you to come back and repeat it once a year, or once in six years, or twenty years. Once done, its significance lasts. So a miracle once done as an appendage to the document, is never exhausted.

—*Cumming.*

10. Are not the most wonderful works of God.

(3556.) Those things which are full of marvels for an investigation deeper than we can reach, have become cheap from custom in the eyes of men. Hence it comes to pass that, if a dead man be raised to life, all men spring up in astonishment. Yet every day one that had no being is born, and no man wonders, though it is plain to all, without doubt, that it is a greater thing for that to be created which was without being, than for that which had being to be restored. Because the dry rod of Aaron budded, all men were in astonishment; every day a tree is produced from the dry earth, and the virtue residing in dust is turned into wood, and no man wonders. Because five thousand men were filled with five loaves, all men were in astonishment that the food should have multiplied in their teeth; every day the grains of seed that are sown are multiplied in a fulness of ears, and no man wonders. All men wondered to see water once turned into wine; every day the earth's moisture being drawn into the root of the vine, is turned by the grape into wine, and no man wonders. Full of wonder then are all the things which men never think to wonder at, because, as we have before said, they are by habit become dull to the consideration of them.

—*Gregory*, 545-604.

(3557.) He that made wine on that day at the marriage-feast in those six water-pots which He commanded to be filled with water, the same does every year the like in vines. For, as what the servants put into the water-pots was changed into wine by the operation of the Lord, just so what the clouds pour forth is changed into wine by the operation of the same Lord. But at the latter we do not marvel, because it happens every year; by constant use it hath lost its wonder.

—*Augustine*, 353-429.

(3558.) God has wrought many miracles and daily works; but those miracles are much weakened in the sight of men, because they are very usual. A greater miracle it is that God Almighty every day feeds all the world, and directs the good, than that miracle was, that He filled five thousand men with five loaves: but men wondered at this, not because it was a greater marvel, but because it was unusual. Who now gives fruit to our fields, and multiplies the harvest from a few grains of corn, but He who multiplied the five loaves? The might was there in Christ's hands, and the five loaves were, as it were, seed, not sown in the earth, but multiplied by Him who created the earth.

—*Ælfric*, 1051.

(3559.) There is nothing that God has established in a constant course of nature, and which, therefore, is done every day, but would seem a miracle, and exercise our admiration, if it were done but once; nay, the ordinary things in nature would be greater miracles than the extraordinary which we admire most, if they were done but once. The standing still of the sun, for Joshua's use, was not in itself so wonderful a thing, as that so vast and immense a body as the sun should run so many miles in a minute. The motion of the sun were a greater wonder than the standing still, if all were to begin again; and only the daily doing takes off the admiration. —*Donne*, 1573-1631.

(3560.) Is it not now an argument of omnipotency to keep all the strings of nature in tune; to wind them up to a due pitch for the harmony He intended by them; to keep things that are contrary from that confusion they would naturally fall into; to prevent the jarrings which would naturally result from their various and snarling qualities; to preserve every being in its true nature; to propagate every kind of creature; order all the operations, even the meanest of them, when there are such innumerable varieties?

But let us consider, that this power of preserving things in their station and motion, and the renew-

ng of them, is more stupendous, than that which we commonly call miraculous.

We call those miracles which are wrought out of the track of nature, and contrary to the usual stream and current of it, which men wonder at because they seldom see them and hear of them, as things rarely brought forth in the world; when, the truth is, there is more of power expressed in the ordinary station and motion of natural causes, than in those extraordinary exertings of power. Is not more power signalised in that whirling motion of the sun every hour for so many ages, than in the suspending of its motion one day, as it was in the days of Joshua? That fire should continually ravage and consume, and greedily swallow up everything that is offered to it, seems to be the effect of as admirable a power as the stopping of its appetite a few moments as in the case of the Three Children. Is not the raising of some small seeds from the ground, with a multiplication of their numerous posterity, an effect of as great a power as our Saviour's feeding many thousands with a few loaves by a secret augmentation of them? Is not the chemical producing so pleasant and delicious a fruit the grape from a dry earth, insipid rain, and a sour vine, as admirable a token of Divine power as our Saviour's turning the water into wine? Is not the cure of diseases by the application of a simple inconsiderable weed, or a slight infusion, as wonderful in itself as the cure of it by a powerful word? What if it be naturally designed to heal; what is that nature? Who gave that nature? Who maintains that nature? Who conducts it, co-operates with it? Does it work of itself, and by its own strength? Why not then equally in all, in one as well as the other? Miracles indeed affect more, because they testify the immediate operation of God without the concurrence of second causes; not that there is more of the power of God shining in them than in the other. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3561.) The naturalist observed it to be one of the solemn follies of men, to value medicines not for their virtue, but the country where they grow, the climate from whence they come; if they have a barbarous name, they are reputed to have a mysterious efficacy, and those plants are neglected as unprofitable that are natives of their own soil. The rarity is esteemed more than merit of things. It is a greater wonder to give light to the sun, than to restore it to the blind, yet its daily presence does not affect us. If a chemist should extract a liquor of such an extraordinary virtue, that by pouring a few drops of it on the dust, a body should be formed, animated, and move, would any one be induced to believe it without the testimony of his own eyes, and would it not be a surprising wonder? yet innumerable creatures spring from the dust by the falling of rain, and few think it worthy of observation. The raising a dead body to life would astonish us, but we are unaffected that every day so many living men are born. Yet, if we consider things aright, the secret forming a body in the womb is an equal prodigy of power, and as truly marvellous, as the restoring the vital congruities to a carcass, that prepare it for the reception of the soul.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(3562.) What prodigies can Power Divine perform
More grand than It produces year by year,
And all in sight of inattentive man?
Familiar with the effect we slight the cause,
And, in the constancy of nature's course,
The regular return of genial months,
And renovation of a faded world,
See nought to wonder at. Should God again,
As once in Gibeon, interrupt the race
Of the undeviating and punctual sun,
How would the world admire! but speaks it less
An agency divine, to make him know
His moment when to sink and when to rise,
Age after age, than to arrest his course?
All we behold is miracle; but seen
So duly, all is miracle in vain. —*Cowper.*

MORALISTS.

1. Their excellences.

(1.) *To what they are due.*

(3563.) To us there seems a wide difference between the judge, with the robes of office on his back, mind in his eye, and dignity in his mien, and that poor, pale, haggard wretch at the bar, who throws stealthy glances around, and hangs his head with shame. Yet the difference that looks so great to man may be very small in the eyes of God; and would look small in ours if we knew the different upbringing and history of both. The judge never knew what it was to want a meal; the felon often went cold and hungry to bed. The one, sprung of wise, kind, reputable, and perhaps pious parents, was early trained to good, and launched, with all the advantage of school and college, on an honourable and high career; while the other, bred up a stranger to the amenities of cultivated and Christian society, had no such advantages. Born to misery, his struggles with misfortune and evil began at the cradle. None ever took him by the hand to lead him to church or school. A child of poverty, and the offspring of abandoned parents, he was taught no lessons but how to swear, and lie, and drink, and cheat, and steal. The fact is, it is just as difficult for some to be honest as it is easy for others. What merit has that judge in his honesty? None. He had no temptation to be else than honest. And so, I suspect, much of the morality—of that unblemished character and decent life in which many trust, saying to some poor guilty thing, "Stand aside, I am holier than thou," and pluming themselves on this, that they have not sinned as others have done — is due, less to their superior virtue, than to their more favourable circumstances. Have they not sinned as others have done? I reply, They have not been tempted as others have been. And so the difference between many honest men and decent women on the one hand, and those on the other hand on whom a brand of infamy has been burned and the key of a prison turned, may be just the difference between the green branch on the tree and the white ashes on the hearth. This is bathed in the dews of night and fanned by the breath of heaven, while that, once as green, has been thrust into the burning fire—the one has been tried in a way that the other has not. —*Guthrie.*

(2.) *Are superficial.*

(3564.) The generality of men who pretend to morality independently of religion (except those in whom the original goodness of their nature gets the

better of the badness of their principles), are such as have studied and practised the art of being easy and agreeable, without incommoding themselves, or denying themselves any pleasure within bounds. The difference between the vulgar and them consists in this, that the former, like marble in the block, retain a native ruggedness; whereas the latter have an equally impenetrable, but a more smooth and polished hardness of heart.

—*Seed*, 1747.

(3.) *Are incomplete.*

(3565.) God can love nothing but Himself and what He finds of Himself in the creature. All services without something of God's image and Spirit in them are nothing. As the product of a million of cyphers; though you still add to them, signifies nothing; but add one figure, an unit, the Spirit, grace, it will make the product to be many millions of high account with God. All the significancy depends upon the figure without which, if absent, the rest would be nothing. All moral perfections, without a new nature, are but cyphers in God's account: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." Grace is only a good work. "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it to the day of Christ;" intimating that their morality and their natural wisdom, before their regeneration, were not good works in the sight of God. They were good in their kind, as a crab may be said to be a good crab, but not a good pippin. It is not good, unless it be fruit brought forth in Christ; neither is it ordained as good to the day of Christ, to appear glorious at the time of His triumph. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3566.) All that can he said of him, all that he will say for himself, is that he has had it for his law to speak the truth, fulfil his promises, and deal fairly by his fellow-men. Still it is not, and has never been, his aim or object to do what is right to God: and that, if I am not mistaken, is a matter of much higher consequence, and more necessary to his real integrity. God is a person as truly as men are, more closely related to us than they, a better friend, one who has more feeling to be injured than they all, claims of right more sacred. What then does it signify that a man gives men their due, and will not give God His? Does it give one a title to be called humane, that he will not stick a fly with a pin because of his tenderness, and yet will stab, in bitter grudge, his fellow-man? Does it fairly entitle one to the name of a just man that he is honest and fair with men of one colour, and not with those of another—honest and fair on three days, or even five days in the week, and not on the days that remain? What then shall we think of the mere commercial integrity, just described, taken by itself? Calling it integrity, it is still integrity by halves, and, of course, without the principle; integrity by market standards only, and not by any standard that makes a real integer in duty. Real integrity begins with the principle, meaning to give every one his due; to be right with God, as with men, right against popularity as with it, right everywhere, wholly and eternally right.

—*Bushnell.*

2. Their lack of the one thing needful.

(3567.) One thing thou lackest." *Lack of one thing may be the lack of everything.*

The garden is beautifully laid out; the straight lines and the curves are exact; the terraces are arranged with artistic taste; but no *seed* is sown—and the summer says—"One thing thou lackest."

The machinery is perfect: cylinder, piston, valve, are in excellent order; no flaw is in the wheel, no obstruction in the flue; finer engine never stood on the iron way, everything is there but *steam*,—and the intending traveller says—"One thing thou lackest."

The watch has a golden case, the dial is exquisitely traced and figured, the hands are delicate and well-fixed; everything is there but the *mainspring;* and he who inquires the time says—"One thing thou lackest."

Conduct may be regulated in two ways; (1) by the hand, (2) by the heart: as with a watch so with the life. The face of the watch may be made to represent the truth by simply altering the hands, or it may be corrected by touching the interior works. Here is a young man who says—What shall I do to make my watch tell the hour accurately? He is answered. Thou knowest the great clocks by which time is kept in the city: he replies, "All these have I observed." He is then told to open his watch and correct the regulator. So is it with human life; many seek to correct it by the outside; they search for models, they inquire for footprints; but they neglect the life-spring within, and consequently never get beyond the affectation of artificialism, or the stiffness of Pharisaic conceit.

—*Joseph Parker.*

(3568.) Observation is continually noticing instances in which "one thing" seems to be everything; it is so in common life, it is so in all life. Here is a man listening to the most exquisite music; peal of trumpet, clash of cymbals, roll of drum, sweetness of the lute, sharpness of the clarionet, crash of a hundred brass instruments; to him it is simply a tumult, he sees no idea in the tempest, he does not rise and fall with the swelling rhythm of the wave and billow. Why? What is wanting? "One thing thou lackest,"—that one thing is an ear for music! Of what account is it that jewellery sparkles on his fingers, or that perfume is shed by every waive of his hand, or that the finest cloth covers his shoulders? The man is harmonically *dead*, and the music which rushes like a storm through the appreciative soul is to him "sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Two men walk by the same path; the gold of the same sunset is lavished on their way; they look at the same objects, and move towards the samegoal. One of them reaches home enriched with many mental pictures; the landscape is impressed upon his memory; the clouds are massed and coloured in his soul; he is not a tenant but a proprietor: his hand may be poor, but his spirit revels in affluence. The other traveller saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing; his eye was on the road, merely the servant of his feet, not the servant of his soul. One thing thou lackest,—an eye for the beautiful. It is only *one* thing, yet everything turns upon it, and without it garden and wilderness are equal in charm.

These reflections may serve to show the tremendous danger of the fallacy, that *if a man is right in the main he will be admitted into heaven.* The man who had no ear for music was right in the main; he was well educated, well connected, rich and generous, yet all this did not interpret one passage of the music to his dormant soul. The man who saw nothing in

the landscape was right in the main; he was honest, persevering, modest, and gentle, yet his eye was blind to beauty, and he cared not for hill or dale or stream or luxuriant wood. So is it with regard to the higher life; we may have much and yet have nothing. A man may walk well without being able to swim at all, yet all his strength as a pedestrian will not save him in the sea! The lack of "one thing" may involve ruin. A merchant may have a musical voice, but if he have no money he cannot maintain his credit; an orator may have great muscular strength, but if his *voice* should fail, what then!

Place yourself at the railway terminus: a traveller is there who has no ticket; is *that* of any consequence? It is only "*one* thing;" a very insignificant thing; why should the man be detained for want of it? He has an address card; he has a wedding card; he has a visiting card; will *they* not do? No! "One thing thou lackest." That "one thing" represents law, order, equivalent, authority, and in the absence of that *one particular thing* a thousand other things go for nothing!

Are we not thus all through life continually reminded that the absence of "one thing" is the ruin of all? —*Joseph Parker.*

(3569.) How important one thing may be. The want of one thing may make void the presence of all things else. Lacking its mainspring—which is but one thing—a watch with jewels, wheels, pinions, and beautiful mechanism, the finest watch indeed that was ever made, is of no more use than a stone. A sun-dial without its gnomon, as it is called, time's iron finger that throws its shadow on the circling hours—but one thing also—is as useless in broad day as in the blackest night. A ship may be built of the strongest oak, with masts of the stoutest pine, and manned by the best officers and crew, but I sail not in her if she lacks one thing—that trembling needle which a child running about the deck might fancy a toy; on that plaything, as it looks, the safety of all on board depends—lacking that, but one thing, the ship shall be their coffin, and the deep sea their grave. It is thus with true piety, with living faith. That one thing wanting, the greatest works, the costliest sacrifices, and the purest life, are of no value in the sight of God—are null and void.

Still further, to impress you with the valuelessness of everything without true piety, and show how its presence imparts such worth to a believer's life and labours, as to make his mites weigh more than other men's millions, and his cup of cold water more precious than their cups of gold—let me borrow an illustration from arithmetic. Write down a line of ciphers! You may add thousands, multiplying them till the sheets they fill cover the face of earth and heaven, they express nothing; and are worth nothing. Now take the lowest number of the ten, the smallest digit; and place that at their head—magic never wrought such a change! What before amounted to nothing rises instantly by the addition of one figure, one stroke of the pen, into thousands, or millions, as the case may be; and whether they represent pounds or pearls, how great is the sum of them! Such power resides in true faith—in genuine piety.

It may be the lowest piety—but one degree above zero; it may be the love of smoking flax; the hope of a bruised reed; the faith of a mustard seed; the hesitating, faltering confidence of him who cried, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." Still, so soon as it is inwrought by the Spirit of God, it changes the whole aspect of a man's life and the whole prospect of his eternity. It is that one important thing, wanting which, however amiable, moral, and even apparently religious we may be, our Lord addresses us, as He did the young ruler, saying, "One thing thou lackest." —*Guthrie.*

(3570.) The dahlia would surely be a very empress among flowers if it had but perfume equal to its beauty; even the rose might need to look to her sovereignty. Florists have tried all their arts to scentt his lovely child of autumn, but in vain, no fragrance can be developed or produced; God has denied the boon, and human skill cannot impart it. The reflecting mind will be reminded of those admirable characters which are occasionally met with, in which everything of good repute and comely aspect may be seen, but true religion, that sweet ethereal perfume of grace, is wanting; if they had but love to God, what lovely beings they would be, the best of the saints would not excel them, and yet that fragrant grace they do not seek, and after every effort we may make for their conversion, they remain content without the one thing which is needful for their perfection. Oh that the Lord would impart to them the mystic sweetness of His grace by the Holy Spirit! —*Spurgeon.*

3. Their acts are vitiated by their principles.

(3571.) According to the principle of a man, such is his end; if the barrel of the musket be crooked, it will never carry the bullet right; therefore thy principle must especially be minded. There be many things that move orderly, and yet their motion is not from a principle of life; as a mill moves by reason of the water, yet is no living creature. An outward principle of custom, or fashion, or glory, may make a man just and patient in his actions; many do the things commanded, not because they are commanded, but upon some sinister account. Morality and Christianity differ specifically: the moralist works from nature, a little refined by education; the Christian from nature, thoroughly renewed by the Holy Ghost. Where this spring is wanting, no motion can be true; be the fruit ever so fair to the eye, if the root whence it grows be not good, it will be unpleasant and distasteful. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3572.) The want of a renewed heart is a hair on the moral man's pen, that blurs and blots his copy when he writes fairest. His uprightness does others more good in this world than himself in the next. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3573.) "Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The archer may lose his game by shooting short as well as shooting wide. The hypocrite shoots wide, the moralist shoots short, of the mark. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3574.) It is a general principle that on judging of a responsible agent at any given time, we ought to take into view the whole state of his mind. We ought not to single out a particular, or view it under an exclusive aspect. As a second general principle, it must be taken into account, that the mental state of the agent cannot be truly good, providing he is in the meantime neglecting a known and manifest

duty. It will not be difficult to establish this principle, which is a necessary consequent of the first; and when admitted, the two include all men under sin.

Take as an illustration, a boy arrived at the age of responsibility, running away from his parents without provocation of any kind. Very possible, in the midst of the companions whom he meets with, he may be cheerful, kind, and obliging. Present this disinterested kindness to the moral faculty, and it will approve it as something becoming; and if nothing else is observed, it may seem as if he merited our warmest approbation. But present the whole complex moral state of the boy to the conscience, and the judgment will be instantly reversed. As long as the child is living in neglect of a bounden duty, the moral sense refuses to give a single mark of approval; all his kindness will not draw a single smile of complacency from the rightly-constituted mind, till he return to his father's house, and to his proper allegiance.

Analagous instances will present themselves to the reflecting. A person, let us suppose, has unjustly got possession of a neighbour's property. It is conceivable that, having done so, he may be benevolent in the use which he makes of his wealth; his hospitality may be the theme of admiration throughout the whole neighbourhood, and the praise of his charity may be in the mouths of hundreds of the destitute. Now, if this individual's original dishonesty is not established on sufficient evidence, we may say, in the judgment of charity, give him credit for generosity; but when the whole man is brought under our notice, the mind can give one, and but one judgment, and that is to condemn him, even when he is at the head of his own hospitable board, and scattering his munificence all around him.

Or take the case of a Brazilian sugar planter fitting out a slave ship, with instructions to the crew to proceed to the coast of Africa,, there to seize on a company of poor unoffending negroes, and bring them as slaves to his plantation. He makes it a part of his instructions that the captives shall be treated with great lenity on the voyage; and upon their landing, he does everything which kindness and consideration can prompt, to promote their comfort. Now, present the one side of this man's conduct to the mind—let a stranger be taken rapidly over the plantation, let him see the food provided for the slaves, the comfortable dwellings in which they reside, and the amusements allowed them, and there may be a sentence of approval pronounced; but present both sides of the picture, and the sentence will assuredly be one of severe reprobation.

A husband making ample, temporal provision for the wife carelessly forsaken, the libertine lavishing kindness on the person whom he has seduced, and with whom he is living in a state of sin—these are cases in point, as showing how the conscience may approve of a moral agent on his conduct being represented only under one aspect, and yet disapprove of it when brought fully under review: and showing, too, how the moral faculty cannot approve of an agent, even when doing an act good in itself, provided he is in a bad moral state, and living in the meanwhile in neglect of a clear and bounden duty.

History presents many examples of such a mixture of motives. Lilienhorm had been raised from obscurity and wretchedness by Gustavus, king of Sweden, promoted to the rank of Commandant of the Guard, and had the complete confidence of his sovereign. But when a conspiracy was formed against his master, he joined it, instigated by the hope held out to him of commanding the National Guard, and holding in his hand the destinies of the kingdom. Meanwhile he endeavoured, by a kind of compromise, to keep his allegiance to the king his benefactor. He wrote him an anonymous letter, informing him of an unsuccessful attempt that had been made to take his life some time before, describing the plan which the conspirators had now formed, and warning him against going to a particular ball, where the assassination was to be committed. In this way he sought to satisfy his conscience, when it threw out doubts as to the propriety of the course which he was pursuing. He spent the evening on which the conspiracy was to take effect in the king's apartment, saw him read the anonymous letter sent him, and upon the generous, headstrong king despising the warning, followed him to the ball, and was present when he was shot.

Now, take us to the closet of this man, and let us see him writing the letter which was fitted to save his sovereign—show us this and no more, and we say, How becoming! how generous! but let us follow him through the whole scene, and we change our tone, and arraign him of treachery; and we do so at the very instant when he writes the letter, and seems most magnanimous.

By the help of those principles we are enabled to bring home the sense of guilt to every man's conscience; not only the sense of individual sins, but of constant and abiding sinfulness. When there is not a sin of commission, there is a sin of omission; when there is not the sin of excess, there is the sin of defect.

In particular, we hold that every human soul is chargeable with ungodliness. Other sins are committed by individual men, some are addicted to one class of sins, and others to another; but this offence seems to be universal. All are not malevolent or selfish; all are not intemperate or deceitful; all are not proud and ambitious; but all seem to be ungodly. Other sins may be only occasional, but this seems to be perpetual and abiding, and renders all men guilty at all times, even when they are cherishing thoughts and feelings which in themselves are praiseworthy. Does any man stand up and say, I was in a virtuous state at such and such a time, when I was defending the helpless and relieving the destitute? We admit at once that these actions in themselves are becoming, as becoming as those of the disobedient son showing kindness to his companions; of the unjust man practising hospitality; of the slaveholder supplying his slaves with excellent food; of the husband providing handsomely for a wife abandoned; or of the conspirator sending a notice fitted to frustrate the conspiracy to which he was a party. If we could judge these acts apart from the agent, we should unhesitatingly approve of them. Nay, we do approve of the abstract acts, but we never for one instant approve of the agent. Before we can approve of the disobedient son, but kind companion, he must return to his obedience; of the unjust philanthropist, he must restore the fruits of his iniquity; of the liberal slaveholder, he must undo his deed; of the unfaithful husband in his kindness, ne must return to the society of his wife: of the notice sent by the conspirator, he

must first disconnect himself entirely and openly from the conspiracy;—and, in like manner, before we can thoroughly approve of man, even in his generosity, we must find him returning to his allegiance to God, making confession of his past sin, humbling himself before Him whom he has offended, and acknowledging that the very gifts which he is about to bestow, come from God, the author of all blessings.

As godliness is a constant duty, so ungodliness, habitually cherished, is a great master sin, reaching over the whole man, contaminating the service he pays, however proper it may be in itself. Does it not look as if an ungodly man could not do a truly virtuous act? Does it not look as if a man must first be made godly before he can do an act truly good? "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." —*M'Cosh.*

(3575.) When a man says to me, "When I saw that mother weeping, and her house burning, and when I rushed into the flames, and at the peril of my own life saved and restored to her her child, am I to be told that *that* was not a good action—that it was a sin in the sight of God?"

Not by me, friend, not by me. That *was* a good action. It was a hint of what there is planted in your nature by God; and it shows your guilt in not coming to the Sun of Righteousness, that all such things within you may be warmed into a continual life. A man who is capable of such generous acts ought to be ashamed not to be what the love of God would make him. And if he will not love God, and be made into His image, he needs *no other* condemnation. It is not by the fits and starts of your conduct that you are to be judged, but by its *whole course*. And if the centre and ruling principle of your life be not love to God, you are radically and fatally wrong.

When we tell you that you are without God, you run and gather up all your occasional emotions of gratitude towards Him, and of admiration for Him, and heaping them together before us, say, "What! *I* without God!" Now, you may feel admiration, even very warm admiration, for God—every refined and thoughtful mind must; and perhaps, when you are on the summit of your joys, just as you cross the highest line, you look off, and say, "Thank God! thank God!" it may be very heartily; but does your gratitude and love for Him go down beneath thought and feeling, and take hold upon the secret springs of your soul? Is your life directed, ruled, and formed by that love? Can you look upward and say, with glowing breast, "Father, Abba, Father!" If not, your love is but the starlight, and the moonlight, when it should be the light of the fervid sun. Why, when the sun shines with long, slant ray on Greenland, what lives or thrives beneath its power? But when he pours down straight from his meridian, there springs up life and luxuriant growth. Such love as you speak of is the slant beam of the winter sun, or like the shining of moonbeams on Nova Zembla. You cannot go to heaven with *that* love. You must be born again. Your *course* must be changed.

Suppose a shipmaster starts from New York harbour for the Mediterranean Sea. He goes beautifully out of the harbour, and steers straight for Greenland. Off Newfoundland he is hailed by another sail. His destination is inquired, and given. "Bound for Malta!" shouts the stranger. "You? Why, you're steering for the North Pole."

"Don't tell me *that*," returns our captain, very much offended—"don't tell me that. My ship is good, and well stored; my men are good, and they find me the most generous of captains. They have long sleeping hours, and short watches; they have abundance of all that is good for food. In my cabin are plenty of books and flowers, and we have fine times down there. We enjoy ourselves very much indeed—don't tell me that all this time we are on our way to any place but Malta; I don't believe it."

The stranger passes on, saying derisively—"I don't care how good you are to your men, or how many good books or beautiful flowers you have got below; all this is very fine, no doubt; but I say that the man that's going to Malta, and heading direct for the North Pole, is *a fool*." And so he is; all his flowers won't save him. His *course* must be changed; and it's just so about the sinner. He's heading for hell; and all the flowers, and all the good things that are in him, won't save him, if he don't *turn short about*. He is living for self, when he should be living for God. Self is his idol, when he should worship God. He is all wrong, wrong, and will certainly be lost if he doesn't come to Jesus for help, safety, and grace to fit him for heaven. —*Beecher.*

4. The difficulty of their task.

(3576.) The moralist says, "It has cost me severe labour to be as good as I am; how shall I ever be able to do greater things than these?" Friend, there is a rock which on one side is supported by the solid earth, on another side by other rocks, on a third by trees, but upon the fourth side it has no support, and it requires there but a few pounds' weight to tip it downward.

Now you may go and destroy yourself in efforts to remove that rock, and only imbed it deeper in the earth, or fasten it more firmly in the trees or among other rocks; but, push it *in the right direction*, and it is no longer there. I tell you it would not be half so hard to be a great deal better Christian, than to be the moralist you are. You are all the time pushing the rock the wrong way. Do you say, "Well, it is the most earnest desire of my life to become a Christian. What lack I yet? What is in the way?" I cannot tell—I might tell, in particular cases, but not generally. But, 'tis a question that each one can answer for himself, if he *is sincere* in wishing to know.

God will answer all prayer for help in such cases, when it is patiently and honestly continued.

—*Beecher.*

(3577.) *Morality* is to love what a candle is to the sun. A man wishes to explore a great house in the night. He takes a candle, and, scraping a match, sets fire to it; and with this flickering light, which is so feeble that his own steps almost put it out, and which only serves to dispel the darkness for a short distance before him, while it closes in just behind him, opening and shutting almost at the same moment,—with this light, he gropes about his dwelling; and, since it does little besides rendering the darkness more apparent, he makes his explorations with difficulty. But let him wait till the sun appears in the morning, and pours down its rays so that each crack and crevice of the building is suffused with the light of day, which

flows in at every open door and unbarred window, and then he will need no candle, and can walk without obstruction through the darkest passages, and all will be revealed to him. For a man to take his own reason, and his own conscious virtues, and attempt to live according to them, is like a man attempting to enlighten his way through his dwelling in the night with a lamp; but for a man to live in the conscious presence of God, and to look to Him for guidance, is as if a man found his way through his dwelling at mid-day, when it is illuminated, in every part by the glorious light of the sun. —*Beecher.*

(3578.) I understand morality to be, in its best statement, a system of conduct drawn from rules revealed to us in nature; and as such, it must be included in every true religion. But a life or character that is built up by studying and practising the best ethical rules that nature can give is deficient in the same way that a picture is that is perfectly painted and imperfectly lighted. What is a picture in a dark room good for? What are noble decorations in a house worth, if there is no light to reveal them? Nowhere—not in the store; not in the bank; not in the street; not even in the privacy and purity of the household—is morality more esteemed, and regarded as more essential, than in the teaching of the New Testament; but the New Testament teaches something beyond morality—as much beyond it as the blossom is beyond the leaf—namely, the soul's vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there anything better than that?

Here is a young man that has been led away to intemperance, to impurity, to dishonesty, to gambling; and, returning sick, and weary, and pained unto death in his own melancholy thoughts, to his native village, he begins to find the springs of life filling again, and the long days and nights begin to grow shorter; and, as the spring dawns, he begins, in the hope of a new summer and a new life, to make resolutions; and he says, "Now, I will not sin against the laws of health any more. I have been throwing away my life, and it is not wise." He resolves that, for the sake of being healthy in his body, he will refrain from going into those dissipations to which he has been addicted. And he says, "I see that a virtuous course in society is the best; I see that in the long run it is wise to give an equivalent for what you receive, and I am determined that henceforth I will live an industrious life and eschew gambling; I see that it is better for my health that I should be temperate in my diet and drink, and for that's sake I will live temperately." And so he does, till June comes in, when, in one of those chances—for so we call providences—which sometimes befall men, he is brought under the influence of a pure and noble nature, a woman, whose smile is to him more than a star in a stormy night to the bewildered mariner. And with much fear and trembling, carried through weeks and months, sure, at last, of her sympathy and her dawning affection, he says, "I cannot take it! I cannot take it! She does not know whom she loves." And in an agony of honesty, some evening, he pours out the whole history of his life, and says, "Mary, now disown the words you spoke;" and she, with ineffable beauty and tenderness, says, "If it please God to give you to me, then let me lead you higher than that temptation shall ever take you again." And from that hour he and she are one.

Now, the question that I want to put to you is this: Will this man, in the life that he is going to live, think any more of natural laws, of the prudence of being honest, or of the benefits of living temperately? Will he not say, "I want no other motive than this; she fills my life, and for her sake I will be honourable, and true, and right?" Is not that one motive of love so potential, and so inclusive of all other motives, that it lifts him above these lower considerations?

Now, let a man attempt to live a life of morality.

It is good enough, but it is hard and drudging work. It is good as far as it goes, but there is a life of love, when the bright vision of Christ dawns on the soul; when the Spirit of God says, "Thou art His, and He is thine;" when the soul wakes to the conviction, "Christ loves me; and the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Morality is good: but it is the lowest and poorest form of that which you can get in a higher and better form.

And when I preach thus, let no man say that I am undervaluing morality. I want to take that as well as all that there is above it; but it can be made easier than by any other means, by the transcendent power of Christ, "formed in you the hope of glory." —*Beecher.*

(3579.) Look at that stately ship. What a mighty hull she has—three hundred feet long; her masts a hundred feet high. How well set is her rigging, how clearly defined her spars. We may see her distinctly, but not *all*. Away down under the water, hiding at the ship's stern, there is a little plank that is of more importance than all that so proudly towers on the breast of the billows.

Neither hull, nor decks, nor mainmast, nor mizzen-mast, nor bowsprit, nor yards, nor sails, would be of any use without that plank down under water. Suppose that some person, ignorant of this fact, should attempt to guide that ship's course. He would say, in despair, after wearing himself out with fruitless efforts, "What *does* ail this ship? I have pulled at her bows; I have furled and unfurled her sails; I have tugged at every rope in her, but she will not keep her course. I cannot manage her. She will do nothing right. What can it mean?"

Now, suppose an old salt should say, "Have you tried the wheel?"

"Wheel?" says the man, "what wheel? No; I've tried no wheel."

"Lay hold here, my hearty," cries the sailor. The landsman grasps the wheel, and the little plank below turns two inches, and the ship, though she be ten times as large, and ten times as heavily laden, moves submissively round to the strength of one man's hand.

Now you may tug at your topmasts, or toil at your bows, and you will *die* with your course all wrong. You never will head for the safe harbour till you take your stand at the wheel.

Men who neglect Christ, and try to win heaven through moralities, are like sailors at sea in a storm, who pull, some at the bowsprit and some at the mainmast, but never touch the helm.

—*Beecher.*

5. Their weakness in temptation.

(3580.) They who delight in virtue, just as they do in a fine piece of painting or statuary, for its beauty, would part with it, if reduced to poverty, just as they would do with a fine piece of painting, to purchase the substantial conveniences of life. The principles of religion will support virtue and us, and be, like God, a "present help in trouble;" but all other principles, however entertaining at other times, will, like false friends, forsake us when we have most need of them, in the day of adversity.
—*Seed*, 1747.

6. Repentance toward God their first duty.

(3581.) A ship's company rise against their officers, put them in chains, and take the command of the ship upon themselves. They agree to set the officers ashore on some uninhabited island, to sail to some distant port, dispose of the cargo, and divide the amount. After parting with their officers, they find it necessary, for the sake of self-preservation, to establish some kind of laws and order. To these they adhere with punctuality, act upon honour with respect to each other, and propose to be very impartial in the distribution of their plunder. But while they are on their voyage, one of the company relents and becomes very unhappy. They inquire the reason. He answers, "We are engaged in a wicked cause!" They plead their justice, honour, and generosity to each other. He denies that there is any virtue in it. "Nay, all our equity, while it is exercised in pursuit of a scheme which violates the great law of justice, is in itself a species of iniquity."

"You talk extravagantly, surely we might be worse than we are, if we were to destroy each other as well as our officers."

"Yes, wickedness admits of degrees; but there is no virtue of goodness in all our doings; all has risen from selfish motives. The same principles which led us to discard our officers would lead us, if it were not for our own sake, to destroy each other."

"But you speak so very discouragingly; you destroy all motives to good order in the ship; what would you have us do?"

"Repent, return to our injured officers and owners, and submit to mercy."

"Oh, but this we cannot do: advise us to anything which concerns the good order of the ship, and we will hearken to you."

"I cannot bear to advise in these matters! Return, return, and submit to mercy!"

Such would be the language of a true penitent in this case; and such should be the language of a Christian minister to sinners who have cast off the government of God. —*Fuller*, 1754–1815.

7. Their need of salvation.

(3582.) When there is an estrangement of the soul from the Spirit of God and Christ, sanctifying, and comforting, and cheering it, then there is a death of the soul. The soul can no more act anything that is savingly and holily good, than the body can be without the soul. And as the body without the soul is a noisome, odious carcass, offensive in the eyes of its dearest friends, so the soul, without the Spirit of Christ quickening and seasoning it, and putting a comeliness and beauty upon it, is odious. All the clothes and flowers you put on a dead body cannot make it but a stinking carcass; so all the moral virtues, and all the honours in this world, put upon a man out of Christ, it makes him not a spiritual living soul; he is but a loathsome carrion, a dead carcass, in the sight of God and of all that have the Spirit of God. For he is under death. He is stark and stiff, unable to stir or move to any duty whatsoever. He has no sense nor motion. Though such men live a common natural civil life, and walk up and down, yet they are dead men to God and to a better life. The world is full of dead men, that are dead while they are alive, as St. Paul speaks of the "widow that lives in pleasures" (1 Timothy v. 6). A fearful estate, if we had spiritual eyes to see it and think of it.
—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(3583.) Thou art not, proud man, so fair for heaven as thou flatterest thyself. A man upon the top of one hill may seem very nigh to the top of another, and yet can never come there, except he comes down from that where he is. The mount of thy civil righteousness and moral uprightness (on which thou standest so confidently), seems, perhaps, level in thy proud eye to God's holy hill in heaven, yea, so nigh, that thou thinkest to step over from one to the other with ease. But let me tell thee, it is too great a stride for thee to take; thy safer way and nearer were to come down from thy mountain of self-confidence (where Satan hath set thee on a design to break thy neck), and to go the ordinary road, in which all that ever got heaven went; and that is by labouring to get an interest in Christ and His righteousness, which is provided on purpose for the creature to wrap up his naked soul in, and to place his faith on; and thus thy uprightness (which before was but of the same form with the heathen's moral honesty) may commence, or rather be baptized Christian, and become evangelical grace. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3584.) Dost not thou think that thou needest Christ as much as any other? There is a generation of men in the world, would almost make one think this was their judgment; who, because their corruptions have not (by breaking out into plague-sores of profaneness) left such a brand of ignominy upon their name, as some others lie under, but their conversations have been strewed with some flowers of morality, whereby their names have kept sweet among their neighbours, therefore they do not at all listen to the offers of Christ, neither do their consciences much check them for this neglect. And why so? surely, it is not because they are more willing to go to hell than others, for they do that to escape it, which many others will not; but because they think the way they are in will bring them in good time to heaven, without any more ado. Poor deluded creatures! Is Christ, then, sent to help only some more debauched sinners to heaven, such as drunkards, swearers, and of that rank? And are civil, moral men left to walk thither on their own legs? I am sure, if the Word may be believed, we have the case resolved clear enough; that tells but of one way to heaven for all that mean to come there. As there is but one God, so but one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus; and if but one bridge over the gulf, judge what is like to become of the civil righteous man (for all his sweet scented life) if he miss this one bridge, and goes on in the road he hath set out in for heaven. Oh remember, proud man, who-

thou art, and cease thy vain attempt. Art not thou of Adam's seed? hast thou not traitor's blood in thy veins? If "every mouth be stopped" (Rom. iii. 19, 20) how darest thou open thine? If "all the world become guilty before God, that by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in His sight;" where then shalt thou stand to plead thy innocency before Him who sees thy black skin under thy white feathers, thy foul heart through thy fair carriage? It is faith on Christ that alone can purify thy heart, without which thy washed face and hands (external righteousness, I mean) will never commend thee to God. And therefore thou art under a horrible delusion, if thou dost not think that thou needest Christ, and a faith to interest thee in Him as much as the bloodiest murderer, or filthiest Sodomite in the world. If a company of men and children in a journey were to wade through some brook, not beyond a man's depth, the men would have the advantage of the children; but if to cross the sea, the men would need a ship to waft them over, as well as the children: and they might well pass for madmen, if they should think to wade through, without the help of a ship, that is offered them as well as the other, because they are a little taller than the rest are; such a foolish desperate adventure wouldst thou give for thy soul, if thou shouldst think to make thy way through the justice of God to heaven without shipping thyself by faith in Christ, because thou art not so bad in thy external conversation as others.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3585.) In all works before grace there is no resignation of the soul to God in obedience; no self-denial of what stands in opposition to God in the heart; no clear view of the evil of sin; no sound humiliation under the corruption of nature; no inward purification of the heart, but only a diligence in an external polishing. All those acts cannot produce a habit of a different kind from them. Let a man be stilted up with the highest natural excellency; let him be taller by the head and shoulders than all his neighbours in morality, those no more confer life upon him than in the setting a statue upon a high pinnacle near the beams of the sun, inspireth it with a principle of motion. The increasing the perfection of one species can never mount the thing so increased to the perfection of another species. If you could increase mere moral works to the highest pitch they are capable of, they can never make you gracious, because grace is another species, and the nature of them must be changed to make them of another kind. All the moral actions in the world will never make our hearts, of themselves, of another kind than moral. Works make not the heart good, but a good heart makes the works good. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3586.) The human graces and virtues may bring a man at times close to the boundary of the kingdom, but there is still a limit between which is of vast importance in the inner life, and which shows itself more openly as time advances. It is as if a man were standing on the shore, close to where a ship is moored. There is but a line between, and a step may cross it. But the one is fixed, the other moves, and all the future of existence depends on that step,—new lands, a new life, and God's great wide world. In the spiritual sphere, to stand still is to fall away, to be left on that shore doomed to decay and death. To pass into God's kingdom is to move with it, not only up to the grandeur of His universe, but into the heritage of Himself.

—*Ker.*

(3587.) A pirate cannot be pardoned for his piracy because he is generous, and in most respects a moral fellow. He is out on the high seas as a pirate, and is game for hemp and gallows, though he read his Bible every day, and do a thousand kind and good actions every week. But if he repent of his ways and try to become an honest seaman, a few forgetful oaths may be forgiven him. If he is sailing right, and with right intentions, he will not be strictly dealt with, though he do knock down a man now and then when he ought not. So a man who has not accepted Christ as his Saviour, who is using himself just as God did not intend that he should be used, need not hope that his occasional good and generous deeds can do him any service in the matter of salvation. A man who has given himself to Christ can be forgiven and helped anew, if he halt and stumble, because his face is set in the right way, and his heart's desire is that he may attain unto a perfect obedience. His sins will be each day pardoned by the mercy of Him to whom he looks for all of this life and that which is to come.

—*Beecher.*

(3588.) It would be a very small thing for the captain of a piratical vessel to show that he kept it perfectly clean, that his men were orderly, and that he and they were guilty of no special violations of the etiquette of life. If a vessel is a piratical vessel, and at war with every civilised nation on the globe, that is enough to condemn it. Its organisation, the purpose of it, is radically, atrociously wrong. And these single virtues of a man's character are of little account, so long as the very foundation of his being is corrupt. It is a small thing for a man to show that he has never committed any memorable, flagrant sins. It is far better, of course, for a man to cultivate virtues, and abstain from vices. I would say nothing to discourage from any virtue, or to encourage in any vice. But I say that mere right-doing, and abstinence from wrong-doing, is not all that is required of men. A man's whole life is more than any individual act. The opposition of the heart to God is of itself a thing meriting judgment-day condemnation. Nothing more than this is required to exclude a man from the glory of the eternal heavens. —*Beecher.*

(3589.) Even such thoughts as these turn in men's minds: "We are told that we must do good deeds, and that every man shall receive of the Lord according to his deeds whether good or bad; and yet, at the same time, we are told that we shall not be saved if we have nothing but good deeds. And what, under such circumstances, will become of our good deeds, when, having passed through life, we come before the judgment-seat of Christ?" Well, I should think you thought yourselves to be trees, and your good deeds to be fruits that could be picked off. Good conduct reports and registers itself upon your character, and you have its reward there. It pays there if anywhere. Good conduct is not like bank-bills, like dollars, like gold or silver, that can be taken away from you or given back to you. A man receives the good that he does in himself and the bad that he does in himself. If you do good, so that you lay the substantial foundations of

righteousness in a nature that tends to grow, it is possible for God to confer salvation and happiness upon you; but if you do not lay such foundations, it is impossible even for God, except by a miracle, to make heaven in you. And as to your good conduct, I put a question to you. You say, "What will become of my good conduct, if it is not sufficient to save me?" Suppose you are in a prison, and you make a ladder six feet too short to reach the top of the wall, what do you do with the lower rounds when you find that they do not suffice for getting you out? The ladder is good for something if it enables you to climb high enough to escape, but if it is not, you might as well not have made it at all. There is something solemn in that. Many get almost into the kingdom of God, and miss, and pass on, and are punished. You had knowledge enough to show you the way, and you had impulse enough to carry you a good part of the distance; but you stopped before you had reached and grasped the thing for which you set out.

I never shall forget an incident that occurred many years ago, and that impressed my childish feeling, of one who was turned out from an unfeeling husband's house. It was on a bitter cold winter night; and she wandered toward her father's house, almost naked, and with shoeless feet. After wading through the snow till she was benumbed and exhausted, she sank down and died, and her stiff and marblelike form was found so near her home that if there had been a light burning in the window she could have seen it. There, right before the door-yard, where often she had plucked flowers in her girlhood, she gave over and perished.

I think with many persons it is just so. They wander through the black wilderness and terrible winter of sin till they almost see their Father's house, and then their strength is spent, and they die within a few steps of home. If it is worth your while to be good, it is worth your while to be so good that your goodness shall take hold on everlasting life.

—*Beecher.*

8. Are often farther from salvation than the profane.

(3590.) A man trusting in his morality, and looking no farther, is in the most dangerous condition to hinder him from repentance and faith that any man can be in; and so, by consequence and accidentally, such a state is the worst, worse than profaneness itself. For whereas a man must be humbled, and part with his own righteousness ere he can truly come to Christ, they are the farthest off from that work of any other. As ignorant people are far off (as the Gentiles were, because without the knowledge of God), so these, because of the want of knowledge of themselves. As take a man that has some wit, that is conceited of it, he is farther off from being a wise man than one who is moré a fool. Solomon says, "There is more hope of a fool than of him." Why? Because ere he become wise he must become a fool, as Paul tells us, "Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." It is a double task to make that man wise, to show him he is a fool, and then to give him wit. So nere is the difference between profane and civil men, that though these last have something that when grace is wrought will be more serviceable to grace than a profane man has, and is in itself, comparing things with things, higher; yet, compare it with the working of grace, this man is farther off the working of it, because a profane man will sooner see himself wicked. The publicans and sinners went faster to heaven than the Pharisees; yea, I say, there may be a greater nighness between the things, when yet there is a greater distance between the working of them and bringing them together. Thus, brother and sister are nigher in blood, but farther off marrying each other than two strangers; and thus two men upon the tops of two houses, opposite to each other in one of your narrow streets, —they are nearer to each other in distance than those below are, yet in regard of coming each to other they may be said to be farther off, for the one must come down, and then climb up again. Thus now a moral man, though he seems nearer to a state of grace, yet is really farther off; for he must be convinced of his false righteousness, and then climb up to the state of grace, to see himself as low and vile as the profanest man in the world, as every man when he is humbled does.

—*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(3591.) Take heed that thy morality be not thy snare. The young man in the Gospel might have been a better man if he had not been so good.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3592.) There seems to be a fitness in morality for the receiving special grace, because the violence and tumultuousness of sin is in some measure appeased, the flame and spark of it allayed, and the body of death lies more quiet in them, and the principles cherished by them bear some testimony to the holiness of the precepts. But though it seems to set men at a greater nearness to the kingdom of God, yet with all its own strength it cannot bring the kingdom of God into the heart, unless the Spirit opens the lock. Yea, sometimes it sets a man from the kingdom of God, as being a great enemy to the righteousness of the gospel, both imputed and inherent, which is the crown of the gospel: to imputed, as standing upon a righteousness of their own, and conceiving no need of any other: to inherent, as acting their self-reflection and self-applauses. What may seem preparations to us in matters of moral life, may in the root be much distant and vastly asunder from grace, as a divine of our own illustrates it, to mountains whose tops seem near together may in the bottom be many miles asunder. The root of that which looks like a preparation may be laid in the very gall of bitterness; as Simon Magus desiring the gift of the Holy Ghost, but from the covetousness of his heart. Other operations upon the soul which seem to be nearer preparations, as convictions, do not infer grace; for the heart, as a field, may be ploughed by terrors, and yet not sown by any good seed. Planting and watering are preparations, but not the cause of fruit; the increase depends upon God. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3593.) "Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

How could that be? The Pharisee was a man of good morals, and usually he was a man of educa-

tion and intelligence. Indeed, the Pharisee was eminently the reformer. He might almost be considered as the Puritan of the Jews. And yet Christ distinctly said that the publican and the harlot stood better than he. And when they repented, they showed more signs of amelioration than he.

How is it, then, that a man who has a whole round of morality, may, in the sight of God, be less salvable than they who have nothing but a germ of goodness? Well, let me put a case to you. Here is a conceited, pedantic man, about forty or forty-five years of age, who has a smattering of almost everything. He can talk a little, and write a little, and talk about almost everything, and write about almost everything. He thinks he has touched about all the depths of knowledge, and he sits in almost infinite complacency. You never can tell him anything but that he will say, "Yes, I have heard that before." You never can explain anything to him that he will not say, "I understood that long ago." There is nothing that in his estimation he is not perfectly familiar with. But in his kitchen there is a poor negro, that has lately escaped from bondage, and that, with a hunger that will not be appeased, is reading every book that he can get hold of. He knows that he is ignorant, and he feels degraded in every part of his nature, and he longs for knowledge with a consciousness of how much he needs it. Now, suppose you were to choose of these two the one that you thought would be the most likely to thrive on knowledge, which would you take? Would you choose the man that had stopped growing, and was satisfied with his knowledge, or the man that, being very ignorant, and being conscious of his ignorance, had an insatiable appetite for knowledge, and was just beginning to grow? If you wanted a tree to transplant, would you take that old tree whose branches have ceased to hold their leaves, except a few of the toughest of them, whose trunk is gnarled and rugged, and whose roots are decayed in the ground; or would you take that little whip-like tree in the nursery that is round and plump and vigorous, and full of sap, and that in every part asks, as it were, a chance to grow? Would you not take the tree which is young and small, but in which there is promise and prophecy for the future?

Now, when our Lord looked upon the Pharisees, He saw that they had done growing; that they were bark-bound; that they bore no fruit; that though comparatively they did not come far short in external morals, they had given themselves over to lethargy and spiritual pride, so that they could not be stirred. But when He looked at the publicans and harlots, He saw that the Spirit of God had touched them; that they were beginning to have a sacred rebound from their sins; that there was a thirst for knowledge springing up in them; and that their souls were praying for God's help, as the parched plains pray for dew and rain. And seeing these things, He said, "There is more chance for these than for the Pharisees." And when He said that, did He not say it to some of you? Is there not more chance for the poor, for the vicious, who are just turning from their vices, and who are willing and anxious to grow, than there is for many persons who are respectable, as it is said, and who not only do not wish to grow, but refuse to grow? Take heed to this matter!

—*Beecher.*

MORALITY.

1. The distinction between morality and religion.

(3594.) Morality is character and conduct, such as is required by the circle or community in which the man's life happens to be placed. It shows how much good *men* require of us. Religion is the endeavour of a man with all his mind, and heart, and soul, to form his life and his character upon the true elements of love and submission to God, and love and good will to man. A spiritual Christian is like a man who learns the principles of music, and then goes on to the practice. A moralist is like a man who learns nothing of the principles, but only a few airs by rote, and is satisfied to know as many tunes as common people do. —*Beecher.*

2. Is a field flower.

(3595.) There is a moral truth and uprightness, which we may call a field-flower, because it may be found growing in the wild and waste of nature.

—*Salter.*

3. Is not to be despised.

(3596.) Do not understand me as saying, because I think you ought to be born again of the Spirit, and because I believe divine grace will produce richer fruit than ever can come from an unregenerated nature, that you throw away everything. If you have nothing better than morality, keep that by all means.

If my child should come to me with coarse and rude garments, I should not hesitate to say to him, "My son, be clothed with better;" but the request that he should be clothed with better garments does not imply that the garments he has on are good for nothing. If he were dressed in linsey-woolsey, that would be better than nothing; though broadcloth would be still better. Even linsey-woolsey would be better than leather; but I would have him wear leather rather than he should wear something worse. And if it was a garment that but half covered the body, it would be better than a cincture of leather round the waist. But even a cincture of leather worn about the waist would be better than nothing at all.

Now, if an Indian, with a fragmentary dress, should present himself as a full-dressed man before you, would you deride the idea that he was properly clad? Would you have him throw away the little he had before he got more? Complete dress is what one wants: but is nothing short of that of any value?

I do not say to the young, "These moralities are of no value to you." They are of great value to you. Truth-speaking, fidelity, industry, cleanliness, punctuality, frugality, enterprise — these are real excellences. Have these at least. Have these anyhow. But will you be content with these? Is there not something in every human soul which has the touch of inspiration in it, and which leads it to aspire to something more than these qualities, which belong to the undeveloped mass of mankind? —*Beecher.*

4. Yet it is insufficient.

(3597.) "Is all a civil man's civility nothing? and are all moral virtues nothing? Are all these then good for nothing?"

I answer, "Yes, they are in themselves good, and they are good for something, but they are not good to make a man spiritually alive? If a man come

and offer you a brass sixpence, or a brass shilling; and you say, "No, it will not go:" and if he reply, and say to you, "But though it be brass, is it good for nothing?" you will say, "Yes, it is good for something, brass is good for something, but it is not good for money, it will not pay your debt, it is not sufficient to fetch you out of prison." So now say I. All moral virtues are in themselves good; but they can never make you spiritually alive; it is only grace, and union with Jesus Christ by the Spirit, that must make a man spiritually alive.

Bridge, 1600–1670.

(3598.) Moral virtue only restrains the outward man, it does not change the whole man. A lion in a grate is a lion still; he is restrained, but not changed, for he retains his lion-like nature still. So temporary grace restrains many men from this and that wickedness, but it does not change and turn their hearts from wickedness.

—*Brooke*, 1608–1680.

(3599.) Civility is a good staff to walk with among men, but it is a bad ladder to climb up to heaven. We must deny our holy things in point of justification. Alas, how are our duties chequered with sin! Put gold in the fire and there comes out dross; our most golden services are mixed with unbelief. Deny self-righteousness; use duty, but trust to Christ. Noah's dove made use of her wings to fly, but trusted to the ark for safety; let duties have your diligence, but not your confidence. —*Watson.*

(3600.) Morality must always precede and accompany religion, and yet religion is much more than morality. You buy a camellia, and determine, in spite of florists, to make it blossom in your parlour. You watch and tend it, and at length the buds appear. Day by day you see them swell, and fondly hope they will come to perfect flower; but just as they should open, one after another they drop off; and you look at it, despairingly exclaiming, "All is over for this year!" But I say, "What! the plant is thrifty. Are not Japonica roots, and branches, and leaves good?" "Yes," you answer; "but I do not care for them. I bought it for the blossom." Now, when we bring God the roots, and branches, and leaves of morality, He is not satisfied. He wants the blossoming of the heart; and that is religion. —*Beecher.*

(3601.) Morality is good as copper is good. But copper is not even silver; certainly it is not gold. Your morality is good as far as it goes; you are a thousand times better off with it than you would be without it. But it does not take you half way up the first pair of stairs; it certainly does not take you up where you can look out and sweep the whole heavens, and behold the stars at night, and enjoy the royalty of sunlight by day. You need to go higher than you can carry yourselves. You cannot find peace till you find it in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. —*Beecher.*

(3602.) Morality is not a substitute for spiritual religion, any more than industry and frugality are substitutes for patriotism. Every man ought to be frugal and industrious; but many are frugal and industrious who have no patriotism. A man may be very neat, and neatness is a good quality; yet, when he is attacked he may be a coward, and run out at the back door, and leave his wife and children to take care of themselves. Neatness, though it is a good quality, is no substitute for a man's fidelity to those who are under his trust. And so, in regard to the lower forms of morality, they are meritorious and excellent; but they are not all that you need. —*Beecher.*

(3603.) It cannot be a substitute for religion. And yet men who have only morality say, "What lack I yet?"

Says my vine, that has been growing now for eight years, and clambering up over the trellis and into the tree, "Do I need to grow any more? Am I not a stalwart vine already? Did you ever see leaves that were better than mine are?" It looks over some of the neighbouring vines, the Iona, the Delaware, and other choice varieties—and sees that they are small and covered with rust; and it says, "I never had rust on me like that. Those are your choice, famous vines, are they? Look at them. What are they worth? The leaves are bleared and wilted and early falling from mildew. Look at my great thick-lipped leaves." It runs up in the tree, and makes extra leaves, and they do not rust, and it looks down on these finer vines, and the little clusters, and small berries, and says, "See what a great vine I am!" Well, it is rank in the wood, and rank in the leaf; but there has not a grape grown on it since it had stood, and there will not one grow on it if it stands twenty years longer. And what is a grape-vine good for which has nothing but healthy leaves on it? Yet, is not good, healthy grape-wood a desirable thing? Are not healthy leaves very desirable on a grape-vine? Is it not desirable to have the leaves of a grape-vine free from mildew? It is not on account of what this grape-vine has that we reject it, but because it is deficient in those higher qualities which should make it what it was meant to be, and because it prides itself on the possession of lower and humbler developments.

I do not say that not stealing, and not swearing, and not drinking are not good things; but if you suppose that a plant is to have nothing but ground-leaves, you are mistaken. Where is the fruit? Where are the clusters? Where are the finer traits of spiritual excellence? You were born for something more than negatives—for something more than those virtues which consist in not doing evil. You were born in the image of God. And as He is Creator, something of His creating nature resides in you, as it does in every part of humanity. It is for you to develop the higher forms of manhood, and not to rest content with the lower forms. If you knew no better, you scarcely would be charged with dishonour, but since you do know better, it is dishonourable in you to live so far below that which God intended you should become. —*Beecher.*

(3604.) "Well, then," you will say, "what about those qualities when a man dies? A man has been industrious, and frugal, and honest, and moderately truth-speaking all his life long; and when he dies, and goes to judgment, what is to be done with these qualities which you say are good?" A man undertakes to jump across a chasm that is ten feet wide, and jumps eight feet; and a man says, "What is going to be done with the eight feet that he did jump?" Well, what *is* going to be done with it? It is one of those things which must be accomplished in whole, or it is not accom-

plished at all. A man lets out an anchor from a ship, and it goes to within a fathom of the bottom, but it does not touch; and a man says, "Is it not good as far as it goes?" How good is an anchor that does not touch the bottom? A man frames a building, and makes his mortises and tenons so that they come within an inch of fitting; and when he is reproached for his unskilful work, he says, "It is good as far as it goes." And how good is that? Men say, "We have all these minor qualities; we have these lower moralities: are they of no benefit to us?" Yes, they are of benefit to you now; they are of benefit to you in a thousand ways in this world; but they do not constitute that character which is to fit you for the world to come. They do not go to make the golden key which unlocks those mysteries of love which you have need of. These minor qualities are not a substitute for it. You go forth an ungrown spirit; you go forth with lower leaves without the bloom and the fruit; and the lower is no substitute for the higher. —*Beecher.*

(3605.) When we see men embowered under external moralities, and attempt to teach that morality is not enough, the impression arises that we undervalue morals. I do not undervalue morals any more than the tax-collector undervalues a hundred dollars, when I go to pay my taxes, and offer him that amount, when my bill is five hundred. He says, "I will not take it. It is not enough." He does not despise the hundred dollars. He merely says, "You must put more with it." And I do not despise morality because I say that it does not rise high enough. It is good as far up as it goes. So is a grape-vine good as far up as it goes, when it is two or three feet high; but it does not arrive at what it was planted for until it reaches that point where it has blossoms and clusters. It is the cluster that determines its value.

—*Beecher.*

5. It is at best a preparation for something better.

(3606.) Direct, intimate, hourly, and daily living with Christ, is the thing which the gospel proposes as its characteristic aim. Morality is a good thing. A man without it certainly cannot be a Christian, although he may not be one with it. When I mean to build me a house on a piece of ground that is unoccupied and overgrown, I send a gang of hands to grub out the old roots, to cut down the rank weeds, to grade the surface, and to make excavations preparatory to building; but after they have done all that—without which I could not have a house—I have not yet a house. All this is but preparatory. The house is yet to arise.

Moralities are mere day-labourers, who dig out the roots, and clear off the weeds, and get the ground ready for something else. Morals do but plough the soil—piety is the fruitful stem, and love the fair flower which springs from the soil. Good morals are indispensable to piety; and piety to a certain extent, is gauged by its sweet reaction upon morals; but morality does not constitute piety.

"But," some will say, "do you mean to teach that we are to despise morality, as an indifferent thing?" You are to despise it just as I despise the first leaves which the bean or the pea puts forth after it is planted. These are, to be sure, essential to the perfection of the plant, but they are not the vine itself. What God thought of when He made the bean, was a long twining stem, covered with pods of wholesome fruit. You know that when the bean grows, there first appears two fat leaves, just to heave up the ground. As soon as these open, up comes the germ. A man says to me, "I have got beans." I go and look at what he calls beans, and I see nothing but great succulent leaves, and I say to him, "These are not beans; they are mere reservoirs of juice, designed to nourish the plant till it can take care of itself. You have got nothing at all as yet." "What!" says he, "do you mean to despise these leaves? They are certainly good for something." "No," I reply, "I do not mean to despise them; but they are not the fruit which the plant was created to produce. They serve a good purpose, by nourishing the plant in order that it may grow and develop its blossoms and pods. For no other purpose are they good for anything." And morals are just the succulent leaf that help the germ of piety to start and nourish the plant, in order that it may grow and develop its legitimate fruit. Their office does not extend beyond that—not a step!

—*Beecher.*

6. It is good for this world only.

(3607.) Coin that is current in one place is valueless in another. Suppose an Indian, far in the western wilds, were to say, "I will become a trader with the whites. I will go to New York city and buy up half the goods there, and come back and sell them, and then what a rich Indian I shall be." He then collects all his wampum beads, which are his money, and compared with other Indians he is very rich, and away he journeys to yonder city. Imagine him going into Stewart's, and offering his wampum there in exchange for their goods. They are refused. They were money in the woods—in the city they are worthless. And there are thousands of men who are carrying with them, to offer at the judgment, what is no better than the Indian's beads. They are reckoning on their generosity, their prompt payment of all their debts, their various good natural qualities; but when they present them, they will all be found worthless trash. The things that have made them strong, and valued, and important here, will there be worse than useless to them. —*Beecher.*

OBEDIENCE.

I. *ITS IRKSOMENESS.*

(3608.) We cannot draw in the gears of obedience. We can travel a whole day after our dogs; but if authority should charge us to measure so many miles, how often would we complain of weariness! The bird can sit out the day-measuring sun, see his rise and fall without irksomeness, while she is hatching her eggs; if her nest were a cage, with what impatience would she lament so long a bondage! So the usurer, though he began his first bag with the first hour, and pulls not off his hands or his eyes till the eye of heaven is ashamed of it, and denies further light, he is not weary; let him sit at church two hours, the seat is uneasy, his bones ache, either a cushion to fall asleep with or he will be gone: Christ may justly and fitly continue His reproof upon such, "Can ye not watch with Me one hour?" —*Adams*, 1653.

II. *ITS NECESSITY.*

(3609.) It is not enough to understand the Word, to be able to talk and dispute of the testimonies of God, but to keep them. It is not enough to assent to them, that they are God's laws, but they must be obeyed. The laws of earthly princes are not obeyed as soon as believed to be the king's laws, but when we are punctual to observe them. This is to keep the commandment of God. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

III. *ITS REASONABLENESS.*

(3610.) It is an excellent representation of St. Austin; if a sculptor, after his fashioning a piece of marble in a human figure, could inspire it with life and sense, and give it motion and understanding, and speech, can it be imagined but the first act of it would be to prostrate itself at the feet of the maker, in subjection and thankfulness, and to offer whatever it is, and can do, as homage to him? The almighty hand of God formed our bodies, He breathed into us the spirit of life; and should not the power of love constrain us to live wholly according to His will? —*Bates*, 1625-1699.

IV. *ITS WISDOM.*

(3611.) God commands nothing but what is beneficial. "O Israel, what doth the Lord require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to keep His statutes, which I command thee this day, for thy good?" To obey God, is not so much our duty as our privilege: His commands carry meat in the mouth of them. He bids us repent, and why? that our sins may be blotted out (Acts iii. 19). He commands us to believe, and why? that we may be saved (Acts xvi. 31). There is love in every command: as if a king should bid one of his subjects dig in a gold mine, then take the gold to himself. —*Watson*, 1696.

V. *THE TEST OF SINCERITY AND LOVE.*

(3612.) Hypocrites may delight in the speculation, but a child of God is delighted in the obedience and in conformity to His word. "I have rejoiced in the way of His testimonies as much as in all riches," not only in the testimonies themselves—in the naked contemplation of these blessed truths—but in the way and practice of these things. He that loves his rule will study an exact conformity thereto. The love of a child of God to the word differs from that of a temporary believer in this way. A mere beholder of a rare piece of painting may be greatly pleased with it, and if he has a taste for the arts, his pleasure and satisfaction will be sensibly increased. But this is nothing to the enjoyment which an artist will find in it. What is it to the zest and delight which he takes in imitating, and copying it out, in expressing it, when he can by his own pencil copy it out to the life? So while the one contents himself with barren admiration and naked praise and acknowledgment, the true believer finds his delight when he can copy out the word of God, and transcribe it as the moral image of his God into his heart. —*Salter.*

(3613.) "Herein is My Father glorified." A king is made glorious by the obedience of the subjects throughout his realm. He is honoured in that way. The parent is honoured by the child. How? Not by his running around the neighbourhood and saying, "Oh, what a great man my father is!" or, "What a beautiful woman my mother is!" or, "What a splendid house my father has to live in!" For a child to do that would be ridiculous. We like to see a child manifest warmth and affection toward his parents; but publishing such things in the streets about one's parents is not glorifying those parents. If a child loves and honours his parents, he shows it by studiously fulfilling their known wishes. An affectionate and loving child does honour his parents in the eyes of all the neighbourhood. The teacher is honoured, not by what the pupil says, but by what he does. Find out what they want who are put over you, and do that; and then you honour them. And we honour, or, what is the same thing, we glorify God by fulfilling His known commands. —*Beecher.*

(3614.) "To obey is better than sacrifice." There are some soldiers here to-night. Now, suppose one of these received orders from the commanding officer to keep guard at such and such a door. All of a sudden he thinks to himself, "I am very fond of our commander, and I should like to do something for him." He puts his musket against the wall, and starts out to find a shop where he can buy a bunch of flowers. He is away from his post all the while, of course, and when he comes back he is discovered to have been away from the post of duty. He says, "Here is the bunch of flowers I went to get;" but I hear his officer say, "To obey is better than that; we cannot allow you—military discipline would not permit it—to run off at every whim and wish of yours and neglect your duty, for who knows what mischief might ensue?" The man, however much you might admire what he was doing, would certainly be made to learn by military law that "To obey is better than sacrifice." It is a holier and a better thing to do one's duty than to make duties for one's self and then set about them. —*Spurgeon.*

VI. *IS A GRADUAL ATTAINMENT.*

(3615.) Obedience to the law of God is a gradual attainment. It is a thing learned.

The musician is not born with the ability to play the organ or any other instrument. Many persons possess an innate musical faculty; but not one could do anything in music without education and without training. And so, although we have our spiritual natures, our innate tendencies to things virtuous and good, they are all obliged to conform to this law of education, training, drill. —*Beecher.*

VII. *CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE AND ACCEPTABLE OBEDIENCE.*

1. Accordance with the will of God.

(3616.) If we would please God, we must in the first place deny ourselves and our own wills, saying with our Saviour, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Neither must we ask counsel of carnal reason, nor, when we know God's will, dispute with flesh and blood whether it be fit or unfit, profitable or unprofitable, reasonable or against reason, to do that which God commands, but we must yield unto it absolute obedience, doing God's will as the saints and angels do it in heaven, cheerfully and readily, without gainsaying, doubting, or replying. For if earthly princes will not endure to have subjects scan their laws, nor examine their proclamations, to see with what reason they command, but require

absolute obedience in all things not repugnant to the law of God, and will not be served according to their subject's best intentions, but will have obedience squared by their laws; if every master in a family will be served according to his own pleasure, and will not for matter or manner leave it to his servant's choice, to perform what service best suits with their own humour and liking; and if the captain of a company, or general of an army, will not excuse a soldier the neglect of his commands, upon the fairest pretence: then how much less will the King of kings endure to have His will neglected, and ours preferred in His service? And how much more will He who is the Lord of hosts be displeased with us, if in our spiritual welfare we regard not what He commands, but perform such service as best suits with our own conceits? "No man that warreth," says the Apostle, "entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier; and if a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully;" that is, according to the orders appointed by him who is master of the games. And therefore let us not think to have the crown and garland of happiness, if we stint God of this royalty and privilege which we give unto men, not striving for the victory according to His will, nor offering unto Him that service which *He* requires, but such as seems good in our own eyes.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(3617.) In all true service of God it is essential that we serve Him *in the way of His appointment*. You would be grievously plagued if you had in your house a woman who was continually running up and down stairs, roaming into every room, opening every closet, moving this piece of furniture and dusting that, and generally keeping up a perpetual stir and worry; you would not call this service, but annoyance. All that is done contrary to orders is disobedience, not service; and if anything be done without orders, it may be excessive activity, but it certainly is not service. —*Spurgeon.*

2. It is all-comprehensive.

(3618.) An instrument, if only one string be out of tune, although the rest be well set, yet that one keeps such a jarring and harsh sound, that the lesson played thereon will relish as unmusically, in a skilful ear, as if all the strings were out of tune. And thus, if a man should abstain from swearing and drunkenness, yet if he were given to lust, or if from those three, and yet addicted to covetousness, it comes all to one reckoning. Let every man, therefore, look into his bosom sin, observing diligently that one jarring string, and never leave screwing and winding of it up till it be brought into right tune; and if that cannot be effected, break it, pluck it out: for God will have a complete harmonious consent, a resolution for universal obedience—otherwise, no acceptance. —*Cheshire*, 1641.

(3619.) A carnal heart is contented to go so far in God's commands as will serve his own turn, but there he stops. So far as might serve the elevation of Jehu to the crown of Israel, to setting him on the throne, so far he goes in the ways of God's command, but no farther. Such a heart is like the hand of a rusty dial; suppose the hand of a rusty dial (as now) at ten o'clock; look upon it, and it seems to go right, but it is not from any inward right state of the clock it does so, but by accident; for stay till after ten, and come again at eleven or twelve, and it stands still as before at ten. So let God command anything that may hit with a man's own ends, and be suitable to him, and he seems to be very obedient to God; but let God go on further, and require something that will not serve his turn, that will not agree with his own ends; and here God may seek for a servant; as for him, he will go no farther. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(3620.) God will be served with the whole heart; for all our good is in God, and therefore all our hearts must make out after God. God must have perfect obedience in the desire and endeavour, or else He will have none. Certainly that which must make any man acceptable, is not so much that there is somewhat done, but that that which God commands is done, or done in regard of the endeavour; for that indeed will be acceptable: though we cannot do all at once, if we bring somewhat to God as a part, and acknowledging the whole debt, work for the remainder, it will be accepted. As suppose a man owes you an hundred pounds, and brings you but fifty in part of payment, yet if he acknowledge the rest, and promise the payment of it, if you know he will be faithful in the payment of the other, you will accept it; but if a man bring you fourscore pounds in lieu of all, you will not accept it. So here it is; hypocrites say they cannot be perfect in this world, and so think to put off God with a little. It is true, if thou hadst an upright heart, and didst bring God but part and labour after the whole, He would accept it; but if thou bringst Him ten times more than a sincere heart can bring Him, it will not be acceptable, no, not ninety-nine pounds will be accepted, if brought instead of the whole.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(3621.) It is a sure sign of hypocrisy to be unrighteous and careless in civil dealings, how conscientious soever thou mayest seem to be in sacred duties. He that seems righteous towards men, and is irreligious towards God, is but an honest heathen; and he that seems religious towards God, and is unrighteous towards men, is but a dissembling Christian. To make conscience of one duty, and not of another, is to make true conscience of neither. The soul that ever had communion with God above, comes down like Moses out of the Mount with both tables in his hands, the second as well as the first, the first as well as the second. One stone in a mill, one oar in a boat, will do little good; there must be *two*, or no work can be done. A perfect man consists of two essential parts, a soul and a body; though the soul be the principal, and doth specificate the compound, yet the body is so necessary, that without it none can be a complete man. A Christian that is evangelically "perfect," is also made up of these two parts—*holiness* and *righteousness;* though holiness be the chief, as that which doth difference the saint, yet righteousness is so requisite, that there can be no true Christian without it. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3622.) Visibility and universality are Popish marks of a true Church, and Protestant marks of a true Christian. An hypocritical Jehu will do "some things;" a murderous Herod will do "many things;" but an upright Paul is "in all

things willing to live honestly." A ship that is not of the right make cannot sail trim, and a clock whose spring is faulty will not always go true; so a person of unsound principles cannot be constant and even in his practices. The religion of those that are inwardly rotten, is like a fire in some cold climates, which almost fries a man before, when at the same time he is freezing behind; they are zealous in some things, as holy duties, which are cheap, and cold in other things, especially when they cross their profit or credit; as Mount Hecla is covered with snow on one side, when it burns and casts out cinders on the other: but the holiness of them that are sound at heart is like the natural heat,—though it resorts most to the vitals of sacred performances, yet, as need is, it warms and has an influence upon all the outward parts of civil transactions. It may be said of true sanctity, as of the sun, "there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." When all the parts of the body have their due nourishment distributed to them, it is a sign of a healthy temper. As the saint is described sometimes by a "clean heart," so also sometimes by "clean hands," because he has both; the holiness of his heart is seen at his fingers' ends.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3623.) Herein is religion best seen, in an equal and uniform practice of every part of our duty: not only in serving God devoutly, but in demeaning ourselves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably, towards all men; not only in restraining ourselves from the outward act of sin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in subduing our lusts, and governing our passions, and bridling our tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life, must not only guard himself against the chief and common diseases which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them, but must likewise be careful to preserve himself from those which are esteemed less dangerous, but yet sometimes do prove mortal: he must not only endeavour to secure his head and heart from being wounded, but must have a tender care of every part; there being hardly any disease or wound so slight, but that some have died of it. In like manner, the care of our souls consists in a universal regard to our duty, and that we be defective in no part of it: though we ought to have a more especial regard to those duties which are more considerable, and wherein religion doth mainly consist; as piety towards God, temperance and chastity in regard to ourselves, charity towards the poor, truth and justice, goodness and kindness towards all men: but then no other grace and virtue, though of an inferior rank, ought to be neglected by us. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(3624.) Some will obey partially, obey some commandments, not others; like a plough which, when it comes to a stiff piece of earth, makes a baulk. But God that spake all the words of the moral law, will have all obeyed. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3625.) A good Christian is like a pair of compasses, one foot of the compass stands upon the centre, and the other foot of it goes round the circle; so a Christian by faith stands on God the centre, and by obedience goes round the circle of God's commandments. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3626.) An attention to one part will not prove our sincerity. It is an ancient song, you must keep minim time, or else you will put the whole choir out of tune, so look that you sing the new song of the Lord with trembling and accurate observation —miss neither cleff nor note, neither sound doctrine nor pious practice. Christ and His truth will not divide; and His truth hath not latitude and breadth, that ye may take some of it, and leave some of it; nay, the Gospel is like a small hair that hath no breadth, and will not cleave in two; it is not possible to twist and compound a matter betwixt Christ and Antichrist; and, therefore, ye must either be for Christ, or ye must be against Him. You must give Him an absolute obedience, or it is just nothing. —*Salter.*

3. It is unquestioning.

(3627.) Men, having an express commandment in God's Word to do thus and thus, must not gainsay and overthrow all with their own worldly wisdom and fleshly reason. Obedience must be no disputant, no framer of excuses. If the captain command a soldier a piece of service, must he tell him why? Is it not enough for the centurion to say to his servant, "*Do this, and he doeth it?*" Must the subject obey his prince in nothing, but when he is of his council? But if with men it were so, yet with God it may not so be, of whom it is sufficient for us but to know that we are commanded to obey whatsoever His will and pleasure is.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(3628.) You pretend also to sincere obedience. If we ask you whether you are willing to obey God? you will say, "God forbid that any should deny it." But when it comes to the particulars, and you find that He commandeth you that which flesh and blood is against, and would cost you the loss of worldly prosperity, then you will be excused; and yet, that you may cheat your souls, you will not professedly disobey; but you will persuade yourselves that it is no duty, and that God would not have you do that which you will not do. Like a countryman's servant, that promises to do all his master bids him; but when he cometh to particulars, threshing is too hard work, and mowing and reaping are beyond his strength, and ploughing is too toilsome; and in conclusion, it is only an idle life, some easy chars, that he will be brought to. This is the hypocrite's obedience. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3629.) The tendency of our minds is to the asking a reason for everything. It is so with doctrines. God reveals to us a truth: but we are not content to take it on the authority of revelation; we are for asking with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" we want to be able to explain the doctrine, and thus to find grounds for our belief, over and above the simple word of the Lord. But undoubtedly it is a higher, and must be a more acceptable, exercise of faith, when we receive a truth, because revealed, than when, because, besides being revealed, we can so arrange it that commends itself to our reason.

It is the same with commandments. God enjoins a certain thing: but we can hardly bring ourselves to obey, simply because He has enjoined it. We have our inquiries to urge—why has He enjoined it? if it be an indifferent thing, we want to know why He should have made it the subject of law? why not have let it alone? Why not? Because we may venture reply, He wishes to test the principle of obedience: He wishes to see whether His will

and His word are sufficient for us. In order to this, He must legislate upon things which in themselves are indifferent, neither morally good nor morally bad: He must not confine laws to such matters as robbing a neighbour's house, on which conscience is urgent; He must extend them to such matters as taking a bird's nest, on which conscience is silent.

It is the same as with a child. He is walking in a stranger's garden, and you forbid his picking fruit: he knows that the fruit is not his, and therefore feels a reason for the prohibition. But he is walking on a common, and you forbid his picking wild flowers; he knows that no one has property in these flowers, and therefore he cannot see any reason for your prohibition. Suppose him, however, to obey in both cases, abstaining alike from the flowers and the fruit, in which case does he show most of the principle of obedience, most of respect for your authority and of submission to your will? Surely, when he does not touch the flowers, which he sees no reason for not touching, rather than when he does not gather the fruit which he feels that he can have no right to gather.

It is exactly the same with God and ourselves. He may forbid things which we should have felt to be wrong even had they not been forbidden: He may forbid things which we should not have felt wrong, nay, which would not have been wrong unless He had forbidden them. But in which case is our obedience most put to the proof? not surely as to the thing criminal even without a commandment, but as to the thing indifferent till there was a commandment. God might have made it the test of Adam's obedience that he should not kill Eve—a crime from which he would have instinctively revolted: but it was a much greater trial that he should not eat of a particular fruit, for eating it was no crime till he was told not to eat it.

And we may justly believe that, in constructing the Jewish code, God interspersed laws for which there was no apparent reason, with others for which there was palpable, on purpose that He might see whether His people would obey His word, simply because it was His word? whether they would wait to know why He commanded, or be satisfied with ascertaining what He commanded. —*Melvill.*

(3630.) "Sir," said the Duke of Wellington to an officer of engineers, who urged the impossibility of executing the directions he had received, "I did not ask your opinion, I gave you my orders, and I expect them to be obeyed." Such should be the obedience of every follower of Jesus. The words which He has spoken are our law, not our judgments or fancies. Even if death were in the way it is—

> "Not ours to reason why—
> Ours, but to dare and die;"

and, at our Master's bidding, advance through flood or flame. —*Spurgeon.*

4. It is prompt.

(3631.) "Straightway" (Matt. iv. 20). True obedience knows no delays. —*Jerome*, 340–420.

5. It is exact.

(3632.) In religion no part is to be called little. A hair is but little; yet it hath a shadow. In the body a little disquiet is oftentimes cause of death. The ciniphes (Exod. viii. 17, 18) were but little; yet are they reckoned among the great plagues of God. Metellus, a nobleman of Rome, by receiving a hair in his milk was choked with it, and died thereof. Some things are small and do no hurt: some things, though they be small, do great hurt. Therefore doth God straitly charge His people to keep the law, saying, "Thou shalt not turn away from it, neither to the right hand nor to the left." And St. Paul saith: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." —*Jewel*, 1522–1571.

6. It is cheerful.

(3633.) True obedience hath no lead at its heels. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3634.) Sincerity makes the soul willing. When it is clogged with so many infirmities as to disable it from the full performance of its duty, yet then the soul stands on tip-toes to be gone after it; as the hawk upon the hand, as soon as ever it sees her game, launcheth forth, and would be upon the wing after it, though possibly held by its sheath to the fist. Thus the sincere soul is inwardly pricked and provoked by a strong desire after its duty, though kept back by infirmities. A perfect heart and a willing mind are joined together; 'tis David's counsel to his son Solomon, to serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3635.) May be when the sincere soul is about a duty he doth it weakly, yet this very willingness of the heart is wonderful pleasing to God. How doth it affect and take the father, when he bids his little child go and bring him such a thing (that may be as much as he can well lift), to see him not stand and shrug at the command as hard, but runs to it and puts forth his whole strength about it! Though at last may be he cannot do it, yet the willingness of the child pleaseth him so, that his weakness rather stirs up the father to pity and help him, than to provoke him to chide him. Christ throws this covering over His disciples' infirmities, "*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" Oh! this obedience, that like the dropping honey, comes without squeezing, though but little of it, tastes sweetly on God's palate; and such is sincere obedience. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3636.) Serve God with gladness and cheerfulness of heart, as one that hath found the way of life, and never had cause of gladness until now. If you see your servant do all his work with groans, and tears, and lamentations, you will not think that he is well pleased with his master and his work. *Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3637.) Obey God willingly (Isa. i. 19). That is the best obedience, that is cheerful, as that is the sweetest honey which drops out of the comb. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3638.) The true obedience of faith is a cheerful obedience; God's commands do not seem grievous. What say you to this? Do you look upon God's command as your burden, or privilege; as an iron fetter about your leg, or a gold chain about your neck? *Watson*, 1696.

(3639.) "I wish I could mind God as my little dog minds me," said a little boy, looking thoughtfully on his shaggy friend; "he always looks so pleased to mind, and I don't." What a painful truth did this child speak! Shall the poor little dog thus readily obey his master, and we rebel against God,

who is our Creator, our Preserver, our Father, our Saviour, and the bountiful Giver of everything we love? —*Christian Treasury.*

7. It is fervent.

(3640.) Obedience without fervency is like a sacrifice without fire. Why should not our obedience be lively and fervent? God deserves the flower and strength of our affections.

—*Watson*, 1696.

8. It is sincere.

(3641.) Obedience must be sincere. An action may look like a friendly act when there is nothing of friendship and goodwill in the heart. Every precept requires not only an outward but an inward conformity, not only a bodily action but a spiritual frame. God would not have the skin of a sacrifice without the flesh and entrails, nor the carcass of obedience without truth in the inward parts (Ps. li. 6). Christ intends not only an outward appearance, but respects the form of every action. Duties are not differenced by the outward garb, but inward frame. Waters may have the same colour, yet one may be sweet and the other brackish. Two apples may have the same colour, yet one may be a crab and the other of a delightful relish. A serpent has a speckled skin, but an inward poison.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

9. It is prompted by love to God.

(3642.) The son of a poor man, that hath not a penny to give or leave him, yields his father obedience as cheerfully as the son of a rich man, that looks for a great inheritance. It is, indeed, love to the father, not wages from the father, that is the ground of a good child's obedience. If there were no heaven, God's children would obey Him, and though there were no hell, yet would they do their duty, so powerfully doth the love of the Father constrain them. —*De Trugillo.*

10. It aims at the glory of God.

(3643.) Two things are chiefly to be eyed in obedience, the principle and the end: a child of God though he shoots short in his obedience, yet he takes a right aim. —*Watson*, 1696.

11. It is constant.

(3644.) Obedience must be constant: "Blessed is he who doth righteousness at all times." True obedience is not like a high colour in a fit, but is a right sanguine: it is like the fire on the altar, which was always kept burning (Lev. vi. 13). Hypocrite's obedience is but for a season; it is like plastering work, which is soon washed off: but true obedience is constant. —*Watson*, 1696.

VIII. *ITS REWARDS.*

1. Peace of conscience.

(3645.) Obedience and holy walking bring peace: "Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them." As there is peace in nature when all things keep their place and order. This peace others cannot have. There is a difference between a dead sea and a calm sea. A stupid conscience they may have, not a quiet conscience. The virtue of that opium will soon be spent, conscience will again be awakened.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3646.) A circus came to town; and everybody knows how the music, and the grand tent and horses, set all the little boys agoing. Quarters of dollars and shillings are in great demand; and many a choice bit of money have the circus-riders carried away, which was meant for better purposes. A little boy was seen looking around the premises with a great deal of curiosity. "Halloa, Johnny!" said a man who knew him, "going to the circus?" —"No sir," answered Johnny; "father don't like 'em." — "Oh well! I'll give you money to go, Johnny," said the man. "Father don't approve of them," answered Johnny. "Well go for once, and I'll pay for you."—"No, sir," said Johnny; "my father would give me money if he thought it were best; besides, I've got twenty-five cents in my strong box, — twice enough to go." — "I'd go, Johnny, for once: it is wonderful the way the horses do," said the man. "Your father need'nt know it." — "I shan't," said the boy. "Now why?" asked the man. "'Cause," said Johnny, twirling his bare toes in the sand, "after I've been, I could not look my father right in the eye, and I can now."

2. Comfort in death.

(3647.) The spiritual life is a living to God, when He is made the end of every action. You have a journey to take, and whether you sleep or wake your journey is still agoing. As in a ship, whether men sit, lie, or walk, whether they eat or sleep, the ship holds on its course and makes towards its port. So you are all going into another world, either to heaven or hell, the broad or the narrow way; and then, do but consider how comfortable it will be at your journey's end, in a dying hour, to have been undefiled in the way. Then wicked men that are defiled in the way will wish they had kept more close and exact with God; even those who now wonder at the niceness and zeal of others, when they see that they must in earnest enter into another world; oh, then, that they had been more exact and watchful, and stuck closer to the rule in their practice, discourses, compliances! Men will have other notions then of holiness than they ever had before; oh, then they will wish that they had been more circumspect! Christ commended the unjust steward for remembering that in time he should be put out of his stewardship. You will all fail within a little while; then your poor, shiftless, naked souls must launch out into another world, and immediately come to God: how comfortable will it be then to have walked closely according to the line of obedience! —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

PATIENCE.

I. *NATURE OF TRUE PATIENCE.*

1. It is neither ignorant nor apathetic.

(3648.) Some you shall see very still and quiet in affliction, yet mere strangers to this peace, ignorant of Christ the peace-maker, walking in opposition to the terms God offers peace in the gospel upon, and yet very calm in affliction. Certainly all is not right with this poor creature; if he had any sense how it is with him, he would have little patience to see himself under the hand of God, and not know but it may leave him in hell before it hath done with him. When I see one run over stones and hard way

barefoot, and not complain, I do not admire his patience, but pity the poor creature that hath benumbed his feet, and as it were soled them with a brawny dead kind of flesh, so as to lose his feeling: but save your pity much more for those whose consciences are so benumbed, and hearts petrified into a senseless stupidity, that they feel their misery no more than the stone doth the mason's saw which cuts it asunder. Of all men out of hell, none more to be pitied, than he that hangs over the mouth of it, and yet is fearless of his danger; while thus the poor wretch is incapable of all means for his good. What good does physic put into a dead man's mouth? if he cannot be chafed to some sense of his condition, all applications are in vain. And if afflictions (which are the strongest physic) leave the creature senseless, there is little hope left that any other will work upon him.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3649.) Nor are we to take for this Christian grace the callousness which sometimes follows trials of great severity. They say that the wretch condemned to the Russian knout feels only the few first blows. After these have cut to the bone, and brought away long stripes of flesh from his quivering back, the power to feel is gone. The nerves are crushed, their life destroyed; his head droops, and the lash falls on the dying man as if he were already dead. And some such callousness has come over hearts that have suffered many and severe afflictions; future trials giving them no more pain than the hot iron gives the blacksmith's horny hand. I once knew one, a Christian widow, who had early lost the husband of her youth. Other losses succeeded. The pledges of their love, a son and daughter, were snatched from her arms; her house was left unto her desolate. But these blows did not, as many feared, break that bruised reed. A pious woman, she was patient, resigned to the will of the widow's Husband; still it was not patience that replied to my sympathy, when, alluding to her first great trial, she said, "My first grief made so large a hole in my heart, that now it can hold no common sorrow. —*Guthrie.*

2. It is not stubborn.

(3650.) Some bear their sufferings as, if we are to believe the stories we have read, the Indian bears his tortures. Tied to the stake, abandoned of hope, looking on his last sun, a crowd of enemies dance round him with frantic gestures and brandished knives; and they go round and round in the horrid dance, though avoiding to wound, they strike at his throat and face; but the red man stands motionless, erect: nor shrinks, nor winks, nor gives sign of terror. Ingeniously cruel, they search out the most delicate seats of feeling, and thrust the burning match up to the quick. Inch by inch they cut his living form to pieces; but, with blood, they wring out no groan from that defiant man. Naming their braves he has slain and scalped in the battle, this hero of the forest sings his bold death-song, scorning their powers of torture. How different from the central object in this savage scene the form of Christian patience, her head meekly bowing to the hand of God; heaven in her eye; resignation in her face; and on her pale lips the seal of silence! It is pride, not patience, thus sustains yonder haughty savage—stubborn endurance, the power of an iron will. And in some who, uncomplaining, suffer pain, or loss, or wrong, or calumny, their silence, though they get credit for patience, may be but pride. It is a well-known fact, that a man who stands erect can carry a heavier burden on his head than he can on his back; and raising itself to the occasion, pride has stood erect under crushing burdens, confronted misfortune, and, while smarting under insult and injuries, has scorned to gratify its enemies by betraying a sign of pain. This is but the counterfeit of patience. —*Guthrie.*

3. It is not ostentatious.

(3651.) There is a patience that cackles. There are a great many virtues that are hen-like. They are virtues, to be sure; but everybody in the neighbourhood has to know about them. —*Beecher.*

II. *ITS EXCELLENCY.*

(3652.) They who are wicked, although they cannot see the goodness of other virtues, yet can see the goodness of patience, and perceive when they see a patient man and an impatient man both sick of one disease, yet both are not troubled alike, but that he who has most patience has most ease, and he who is most impatient is most tormented, like a fish which strives with the hook.

—*Henry Smith*, 1560–1591.

(3653.) The nobleness of a Christian is seen in his patience. Magnanimity is patient; like the flint which hath fire in it, but it appears not till it be stricken. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3654.) Patience is the best chemist, for out of coarse earth she can draw pure gold, out of trouble peace, out of sorrow joy, out of persecution profit, out of affliction comfort. She teacheth the bondman in a narrow prison to enjoy all liberty. He hath within those strict limits his galleries, his walks, his orchards: though he be alone, he never wants company; though his diet be penury, his sauce is content: all his miseries cannot make him sick, because they are digested by patience. It makes the poor beggar rich: though he goes for his drink to the well, for his bread to another's cupboard, for his garments to the refuse of a cast wardrobe; yet he looks with as cheerful a countenance, as he that "was clothed in purple, and fared sumptuously every day:" or he that said to his soul, "Eat, drink, and be merry," for this man had but a purpose to be merry, but the patient man is merry indeed. A superior's unjust frowns are all one to him with his flattering smiles; and causeless aspersions do but rub his glory the brighter. The jailers that watch him are but his pages of honour, and his very dungeon but the lower side of the vault of heaven. He kisseth the wheel that must kill him; and thinks the stairs of the scaffold of his martyrdom but so many degrees of his ascent to glory. The tormentors are weary of him, the beholders have pity on him, all men wonder at him; and while he seems below all men, below himself, he is above nature. He hath so overcome himself, that nothing can conquer him. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3655.) Patience is the true peace-maker. It is the soft answer that breaketh wrath; cross and thwarting language rather strengthens it: as a flint is sooner broken with a gentle stroke upon a feather bed, than stricken with all the might against a hard coggle. —*Sanderson*, 1587–1662.

(3656.) Do we desire to lighten our load of sorrow? Oh! there is a buoyancy and strength in the meek and patient spirit, that bears it as the appointment of God. Like the branches of the palm, so significant of victory, that seem to develop an elastic power in proportion to the weight that is laid upon them, it puts on new strength under every pressure of additional affliction. Patience is as a case of armour round the heart, which deadens the blows inflicted on it; while impatience not only strips off that covering, but lays the very quick, in all its tenderness and delicacy of nerve, bare to the wounding knife.

—*Wiseman*, 1802–1864.

III. *ITS NECESSITY.*

(3657.) So many things fall out contrary unto our minds every day, that he who wants patience in this world is like a man who stands trembling in a field without his armour, because every one can strike him, and he can strike none. So the least push of pain, or loss, or disgrace, troubles that man more who has not skill to suffer, than twenty trials can move him who is armed with patience, like a golden shield in his hand, to break the stroke of every cross, and save the heart though the body suffers. For while the heart is whole, all is well. "A sound spirit," says Solomon, "will bear his infirmity, but a wounded spirit what can sustain?"

—*Henry Smith*, 1560–1591.

(3658.) Every Christian soldier's escutcheon must be: "Patience," and his motto: "I serve."

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3659.) Patience hath her work too; for the most godly conversation will be exercised with troubles. Either the good we would have shall be deferred, or the evil we would not have shall be imposed; we shall mar all if we lose our patience. The same measure of trouble being laid upon two men, is far lighter to him that bears it with patience. Of how pure wood soever an instrument is made, yet if it warp with the sun, or crack with the weather, we dislike it. Let us not lose our credit of the holiness by the least murmur of impatience.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3660.) Patience to the soul is as bread to the body, the staff of either the natural or spiritual life: we eat bread with all our meats, both for health and relish; bread with flesh, bread with fish, bread with broths and fruits. Such is patience to every virtue; we must hope with patience, and pray in patience, and love with patience, and whatsoever good thing we do, let it be done in patience.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3661.) If because you are Christians you promise yourselves a long lease of temporal happiness, free from troubles and afflictions, it is as if a soldier going to the wars should promise himself peace and continual truce with the enemy: or as if a mariner committing himself to the sea for a long voyage should promise himself nothing but fair and calm weather, without waves and storms; so irrational it is for a Christian to promise himself rest here upon earth. Well, then, let us learn beforehand how to be abased, and how to abound. He that is in a journey to heaven must be provided for all weathers; though it be sunshine when he first sets forth, a storm will overtake him before he comes to his journey's end. It is good to be forearmed, afflictions will come, and we should prepare accordingly. We enter upon the profession of godliness, upon these terms, to be willing to suffer afflictions if the Lord see fit: and therefore should arm ourselves with a mind to endure them, whether they come or no. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3662.) The Christian's patience is his back on which he bears his burdens; and some afflictions are so heavy, that he needs a broad one to carry them well. But if hope lay not the pillow of the promise between his back and the burden, the least cross will prove intolerable. It is therefore called "the patience of hope."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

IV. *ENCOURAGEMENTS TO ITS EXERCISE:*

1. Under provocation.

(3663.) We should prevent reproach as much as we can; but then we must bear it when we cannot avoid it. God will try how we can bear the injuries of men. The grace of patience must be tried as well as other graces. We read that Shimei went railing upon David to the peril of his life. Saith David, "It may be God hath bid him curse." A mad dog that bites another makes him as mad as himself. So usually the injuries and reproaches of others foster up our revenge, and then there is no difference between them and us. They sin, and we sin. Revenge and injury differ only in order; injury is first, and revenge is next. Saith Lactantius, "If it be evil in another, for thee to imitate him, to be mad as he, to break out in passion and virulency, it is more evil in thyself, because thou sinnest twice, against a rule and against an example." —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

2. Under persecution.

(1.) *Impatience will but aggravate our misery.*

(3664.) When a bird comes to be immured in the cage, being taken from its natural range in the air and the woods, and begins to feel the injury of a restraint and the closeness of a prison, it strives and flutters to recover its native liberty; and perhaps with striving breaks a wing or a leg, and so pines away: and after all this unquietness, is yet forced at last to die in the cage.

It is so with a person overpowered in his right, and bereaved of it by those with whom he cannot grapple. Christianity and reason command him not here to labour in vain, but to make a virtue of necessity and to acquiesce, expecting the issues of Providence, which disposes of things by a rule known only to itself. And by so doing a man is no worse than he was before; but the peace is maintained, and the rewards of patience may be well expected. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(2.) *Persecution affords an opportunity for the display of our Christian graces.*

(3665.) This is the true valour of a Christian, when he can bear his cross without murmuring, overrule his own nature drawing him to revenge, return benefits for injuries, and overcome evil with goodness, according to the example of our Heavenly Father. Then he shows his fortitude, and most gloriously triumphs over his spiritual enemies, when he vanquishes without striking, and though unarmed of all offensive weapons doth courageously march into the field, having nothing in his hand but the shield of patience, and by bearing the blows gets

the greater victory. Then he shows his valour and unmatchable strength, when like a firm rock he stands in a sea of miseries, and, when the huge billows of affliction beat upon him, is not moved, but breaks them in pieces with their own violence. Finally, then doth Christian prowess and magnanimity appear, when we keep our standing, as it were daring afflictions after one assault to encounter us again; and with unwearied and invincible constancy continue the fight, till, our enemies being overcome, our great commander the Lord of hosts sounds the retreat, either giving us the warrant of His word for our leaving the field, or calling us by death to receive that glorious crown of victory.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(3.) *It only befalls us by God's permission, and for our good.*

(3666.) Joseph said to his brethren, "You did intend me hurt, but God did intend me good." So it may be said concerning all ungodly, wicked men: they do intend evil against the Church and people of God, but God intends His people's good, and, in conclusion, effects it.

—*Whitaker*, 1647.

(4.) *God will bring us triumphantly out of it.*

(3667.) When we see one in the streets from every dunghill gather old pieces of rags and dirty clouts, little would we think that of those old rotten rags, beaten together in the mill, there should be made such pure fine white paper, as afterwards we see there is. Thus the poor despised children of God may be cast out into the world as dung and dross, may be smeared and smooted all over with lying amongst the pots; they may be in tears, perhaps in blood, both broken-hearted and broken-boned; yet, for all this, they are not to despair, for God will make them one day shine in joy, like the bright stars of heaven, and make of them royal imperial paper, whereon He will write His own name for ever. —*Balquanqual*, 1634.

(5.) *The hour of our deliverance is at hand.*

(3668.) The saint's night is darkest a little before their deliverance; as a little before the dawning of the day the darkness is most dense and terrible. So it was in Egypt a little before Israel's deliverance, and their return from captivity. And this should mightily encourage us, in these times, not to be disheartened though our miseries should increase, for the darker and the bigger the cloud is, it will the sooner break; therefore wait with patience.

—*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

3. Under the apparent delays of Providence.

(3669.) The duty that David brought his heart to, before he had a full enjoyment of what he looked for, was patient waiting, it being God's use to put a long date oftentimes to the performances of His promises. David, after he had the promise of a kingdom, was put off a long time ere he was invested to it; Abraham was an old man before he enjoyed his son of promise. Joseph stayed a long time before he was exalted; our blessed Saviour Himself was thirty-four years old before He was exalted up into glory.

God defers, but His deferring is no empty space, wherein no good is done; but there is in that space a fitting for promises; whilst the seed lies hid in the earth, time is not lost, for winter fits for a spring, yea, the harder the winter, the more hopeful the spring; yet were it a mere empty space, we should hold out, because of the great things to come; but being only a preparing time, we should pass it with less discouragement. Let this support us in all the thwartings of our desire. It is a folly to think, that we should have physic and health both at once. We must endure the working of God's physic. When the sick humour is carried away purged, then we shall enjoy desired health. God promises forgiveness of sin, but thou findest the burden of it daily on thee. Cheer up thyself: when the morning is darkest, then comes day; after a weary week comes a Sabbath, and after a fight victory will appear. God's time is best, therefore resolve upon waiting His leisure.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

4. Under affliction.

(1.) *Impatience will only increase and prolong our misery.*

(3670.) When a child, being corrected of his father, suffereth it patiently, his father hath the more pity upon him, and holdeth his hand, and ceaseth the sooner; but if the child show himself forward, cry anything loud, or murmur and grudge against him, then is the father the more angry and fierce over him, and beateth him the more sharply: even so our Heavenly Father punisheth the patient man the more easily, and healeth him the sooner; but toward them that murmur against Him He showeth Himself sharp and fierce.

—*Wermullerus*, 1551.

(3671.) Considerable are the causes why a broken leg is incurable in a horse and easily curable in a man: the horse is incapable of counsel to submit himself to the farrier, and, therefore, in case his leg be set, he flings, he flounces, and flies out, unjointing it again by his misemployed mettle, counting all binding to be but shackles and fetters unto him; whereas a man willingly resigneth himself to be ordered by the chirurgeon, preferring rather to be a prisoner for some days than a cripple all his life. Thus, it were heartily to be wished that men would not be like the horse or mule, which have no understanding, but let patience have its perfect work in them, so that when they are, as it were, overwhelmed in a deluge of distress, finding no way to get out, they would tarry God's time, and though deliverance come not in an instant, yea, though to wait be irksome at the present, in due time they shall certainly receive comfort.

—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3672.) A man under God's affliction is like a bird in a net; the more he strives, the more he is entangled. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3673.) It is not wise to fret under our trials; the high-mettled horse that is restive in the yoke but galls his shoulder; the poor bird that dashes herself against the bars of the cage but ruffles her feathers, and aggravates the sufferings of captivity.

—*Guthrie.*

(2.) *Affliction is inevitable in this life.*

(3674.) The whole creation groans, and God's children bear a part in the concert. They have their share in the world's miseries; and domestical crosses are common to them with other men in the

world: yea, their condition is worse than other's. Chaff and corn are threshed in the same floor, but the corn is grinded in the mill and baked in the oven. Jeremiah was in the dungeon when the city was besieged. The world hates them more than others, and God loves them more than others. The world hates them because they are so good, and God corrects them because they are no better. There is more care exercised about a vine than a bramble. God will not let them perish with the world. Great receipts call for great expenses first or last. God sees it fitting sometimes at first setting forth, as the old Germans were wont to dip their children in the Rhine to harden them, so to season them for their whole course, and they must bear the yoke from their youth or first acquaintance with God (Heb. x. 32). Sometimes God lets them alone while they are young and raw, and of little experience, as we are tender of trees newly planted, as Jacob drove as the little ones were able to bear. "He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able." They are let alone till middle age, till they are of some standing in religion; "Moses when he was come to years" (Heb. xi. 24). Sometimes they are let alone till their latter time, and their season of fighting comes not till they are ready to go out of the world, that they may die fighting and be crowned in the field; but first or last the cross comes, and there is a time to exercise our faith and patience before we inherit the promises.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3.) *Afflictions are the chastisements of a loving Father.*

(3675.) If we endure grievous afflictions, and find that our Heavenly Father doth correct us sharply, we are not to impute it to any want of love in Him, as though He took any pleasure in our pain, but are to lay the fault wholly upon ourselves, who are so stubborn and undutiful, that more gentle corrections would not reclaim us. For if there be such love and tenderness in earthly parents (which notwithstanding is but a little drop distilled into them from this fountain, or rather ocean, of mercy and compassion) that they desire, and chiefly delight in showing their kind affection to their children, and in giving to them all testimonies of love; and are loath to correct them for their faults, if any admonitions will amend them, never thinking stripes seasonable but when they see them necessary; yea, if their love is such that, according to the same necessity, they are not willing to give them one blow more than they think necessary for their amendment; then how much less will the Lord exceed this measure of necessity, seeing He both infinitely excels all earthly parents in love and goodness, as being not only gracious, but the God of grace, and not only loving, but Love itself (1 John iv. 8); and is alike infinite in wisdom, and therefore cannot, like earthly parents, be deceived in the proportion of His chastisements, but justly knows how much is necessary, and neither too much, nor too little, for the amendment of His children. —*Downame*, 1644.

(3676.) God is the greatest of kings and potentates, but yet has nothing of a tyrant in His nature, how ill and tragically soever some may represent Him. He takes no delight in our groans, no pleasure in our tears, but those that are penitential. It is no pastime to Him to view the miseries of the distressed, to hear the cries of the orphan or the sighs of the widow. "God does not willingly afflict the children of men:" He seems to share in the suffering, while He inflicts it; and to feel the very pain of His own blows, while they fall heavy upon the poor sinner. Judgment is called God's "strange work;" a work that He has no proneness to, nor finds any complacency in: and therefore, whensoever He betakes Himself to it, we may be confident that it is not for the sake of the work itself, but that He has some secret, overruling design of love, which He is to compass after an unusual, extraordinary way. He never lops and prunes us with His judgments, because He delights to see us bare, and poor, and naked, but because He would make us fruitful; nor would He cause us to pass through the fiery furnace, but to purge and to refine us. For can it be any pleasure to the physician to administer loathsome potions or bitter pills? or can it be any satisfaction to a father to employ a chirurgeon to cut off his child's arm, were not the taking away a part found necessary to secure the whole? Common humanity never uses the lance to pain and torture, but to restore the patient. But now, the care and tenderness of an earthly parent or physician is but a faint shadow and resemblance of that infinite compassion and affection which God bears to His children, even in the midst of His severest usage of them. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(4.) *God watches over His people in their trials.*

(3677.) Thou seest sometimes a father setting down his little one upon its feet to try its strength, and see whether it be yet able to stand by itself or no; but withal he holds his arms on both sides to uphold it, if he sees it incline either way, and to preserve it from hurt. Assure thyself thy Heavenly Father takes care of thee with infinitely more tenderness in all thy trials either by outward afflictions or inward temptations. "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand." Never did goldsmith attend so curiously and punctually upon those precious metals he casts into the fire, to observe the very first season, and be sure that they tarry no longer in the furnace than the dross be wasted, and they be thoroughly purified and fitted for some excellent use, as our gracious God lovingly waits to take thee out of trouble and temptation, when the rust is removed from thy spiritual armour, thy graces shine out, and thou art heartily humbled and happily fitted to do Him more glorious service for the time to come.

—*Bolton*, 1572–1631.

(5.) *The purpose of our affliction is to restore us to spiritual health.*

(3678.) Like as they that are diseased can be content to suffer any of the members of their body to be cut off and to be burnt, so that they might be eased thereby of their continual pain, which is yet but transitory, and be made whole again; even so ought we willingly to suffer our Lord God, and to be quiet when He sendeth us adversity, whereby we may be relieved of eternal pain, and obtain health, bliss, and salvation for our souls.

—*Wermulerus*, 1551.

(3679.) Our Physician makes these outward blisters in our bodies, to draw out the poisonous corruption that is in our souls: and therefore let us endure what He imposes with patience, and never

murmur against Him for effecting His cure; knowing that it is but childish folly to abhor the medicine more than the disease, and that we count them madmen who rage against the physician who intends their recovery.

Let us rather rejoice that the Lord is content to minister to us, because seeing He undertakes to cure us by these medicines, it is a sign that we are not past recovery. For when in our diseases our estate is desperate, He leaves us to our own appetite, to have what our hearts can desire, and to take our fill of the pleasures of sin. —*Downame*, 1644.

(3680.) The Lord takes away from His children worldly honours, when He sees that they would be by them puffed up with pride, and become insolent and vain-glorious. Thus He deprives them of riches, when they would be unto them thorns, to choke and hinder the growth of His heavenly graces, or incitements to sin, or the means and instruments to further them in wicked actions, or, like camel's hunches, hinder them from entering into the straight gate which leads to happiness. Thus He takes from us parents, children, and dear friends, when, if we should still enjoy them, we would make them our idols, setting our hearts upon, loving, or trusting in them more than in God Himself. So He deprives us of our earthly pleasures, when He sees that we would prefer them before heavenly joys; and causes us to find many troubles, crosses, and afflictions in the world, because He knows that if it should smile and fawn upon us, we would make a paradise of the place of our pilgrimage, set our hearts and affections upon these transitory trifles, and never care to travel in the way of holiness and righteousness which leads to our heavenly country.

As therefore skilful physicians do not only apply medicines for the curing of diseases, when men are fallen into them, but also in time of infection, and when they see some distemper in them through the abounding of humours, give wholesome preservatives to maintain health, and to drive away the approaching disease; so our heavenly Physician uses these potions of afflictions, not only to cure us of the diseases of sin, but also to purge away our inward corruptions, and so to prevent these deadly sicknesses of the soul.

The consideration whereof should move us to bear all our afflictions with much patience and comfort. —*Downame*, 1644.

(3681.) Look upon thy affliction as thou dost upon thy physic; both imply a disease, and both are applied for a cure,—that of the body, this of the soul. If they work, they promise health; if not, they threaten death. He is not happy that is not afflicted, but he that finds happiness by his affliction. *Quarles*, 1592–1644.

(3682.) Provoke not God, and nothing will proceed from Him but what is good and comfortable. He does not punish or chasten men for holiness and well-doing; no, it is for want of holiness. Shall the physician be blamed for the trouble of physic, when the patient has contracted a surfeit that makes it necessary?

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3683.) Under trials we act the part of children, and suffer ourselves to be governed by sense, and not by reason. Take a sick child, it is in vain to reason with him. He shuns the bitterness of the draught; he will not suffer you to touch the sore place, though you assure him it is the only means by which he can be restored to health. No matter, the child is under the dominion of sense, not of reason, and he is, therefore, wholly governed by the feelings of his senses. So, when cast into the furnace, and under the hands of our gracious Refiner, we are no longer men, but children. It is the flesh which now dictates, and not the spirit. What cares the flesh for argument or reason? it will not assuage its pain, or take away its suffering. It would turn away from the cup, however medicinal, and from the hand of Him who would heal us. —*Salter.*

(3684.) The woes of broken health and grim depression; the pains, the unspeakable agonies by which human bodies are wrenched for whole years; the wrongs of orphanage; pestilence, fire, flood, tempest, and famine,—how can a good God launch His bolts on men, we ask, in severities like these? And the sufferers themselves sometimes wonder, even in their faith, how it is that if God is a father, He can let fall on His children such hail-storms of inevitable, unmitigated disaster. No, suffering mortal! a truce to all such complainings. These are only God's merciful indirections, fomentations of trouble and sorrow, that He is applying to soften the rugged and hard will in you. These pains are only switches to turn you off from the track of His coming retributions. If your great, proud nature could be won to the real greatness of character by a tenderer treatment, do you not see, from all God's gentle methods of dealing with mankind, that He gladly would soften your troubles? And if diamonds are not polished by soap, or oil, or even by any other stone, but only by their own fine dust, why should you complain that God is tempering you to your good only by such throes and lacerations and wastings of life as are necessary.

—*Bushnell.*

(6.) *We are under the care of a Physician who is "too wise to err, and too good to be unkind."*

(3685.) When we have on our bodies wounds or deeply-festered sores, we voluntarily send for the surgeon, and yield ourselves into his hands to be used at his discretion, for the effecting of the cure. We are content that he should not only apply healing plasters, but tormenting corrosives, and that he should search our sores to the bottom, lance and sear, yea, cut off a member for the preservation of the whole body: and fearing lest we should not have courage and strength enough to endure these tortures, we are willing to be bound, that we may not by our struggling and striving hinder him in his courses. So when we are diseased, we crave the help of the learned physician, and are content for the curing of our sickness to follow his direction, to swallow bitter pills and loathsome potions, to use strict diet or total abstinence, and to eat, drink, sleep, and labour, not according to our appetite and natural disposition, but according to his direction; yea, all this we not only patiently endure, but are ready to gratify their pains with thankfulness and reward. And therefore if in uncertain hope to recover the health of our body, which can last but for a moment, and is ready presently after the cure to languish again, falling into a relapse of the old grief, or into other diseases more dangerous

than they, we are content to endure all these miseries at the appointment of mortal men, who often are unfaithful, seeking more their own gain than our health, and often unskilful, neither truly knowing the nature of our disease nor the means how to cure it; how much more should we with all alacrity and cheerfulness endure any crosses and afflictions, when they are used by our heavenly Physician and Surgeon for the curing and healing our souls of the dangerous diseases and sores of sin, which would bring us in the end unto everlasting death, seeing we are certainly assured that He will by this means recover us unto perfect and never-decaying health, as being most faithful and careful over us, and in His wisdom and skill infinite and all-sufficient for the effecting of the cure.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(3686.) When we see that our heavenly Physician has provided divers kinds of medicines for His divers patients; let us not wonder at it. For either their diseases are diverse, or they are diverse in their constitution; and it beseems not the skill of our heavenly Physician, like the ignorant empiric to apply one salve for all sores, and the same medicine for all kind of maladies, but to fit the remedy according to the nature of the infirmity, and condition of the party. And if we have a potion of the largest size and loathsome in taste appointed for us, let us not think it too much, and murmur against our physician, who knows better than we what medicine is fittest for the curing of our diseases. Neither let us say that others have worse sores and more gentle salves, more dangerous sicknesses, and more easy remedies; for if we are often mistaken in our bodily diseases and think that we are in no peril, when the physician sees that our sickness is almost desperate, and in this regard rest not upon our own feeling, but upon his skill, and willingly take that which he prescribes, then how much more may we be deceived in the sicknesses of our souls, thinking our dangerous diseases to be but small infirmities, and deep consumptions in grace but some little distemper and faint languishing; and therefore how much rather should we refer ourselves wholly to the skill and wisdom, of God who cannot err for want of judgment, because He knows all things, nor for want of care, because His love is infinite.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(3687.) If there be such love and care in a faithful and learned physician that, according to his skill, he will take for the ease of his patient the gentlest courses which he thinks sufficient for the effecting of the cure, how much more may we be assured that our heavenly Physician, who never fails for want of skill, and is also infinite in love and goodness, will never use sharper means than our sickness requires. And, therefore, if we with patience and contentment resign ourselves over to the skill and fidelity of our earthly physicians, though they sometimes fail in both, and do not limit them either in respect of the quantity or quality of their physic, how much more should we wholly rely upon the Lord, neither presenting to Him what we must take, nor how long we must be under cure. —*Downame*, 1644.

(3688.) A surgeon, when he meeteth with a sore festered, applieth some sharp corrosive to eat out the dead flesh that would otherwise spoil the cure, which, being done, the patient, it may be, impatient of anguish and pain, cries out to have it removed. "No," says the surgeon, "it must stay there till it hath eaten to the quick, and effected that thoroughly for which it is applied;" commanding those that are about him to see that nothing be stirred till he come again to him. In the meantime, the patient, being much pained, counts every minute an hour till the surgeon comes back again; and if he stay long, thinketh that he hath forgotten him, or that he is taken up with other patients, and will not return in any reasonable time; when, as it may be, he is all the while but in the next room to him, attending the hour-glass, purposely set up till the plaster have had its full operation. Thus, in the self-same manner, doth God deal oftimes with His dearest children, as David and St. Paul. The one was instant, more than once or twice, to be rid of that evil; and the other cries out as fast, "Take away the plague from me, for I am even consumed," &c.; but God makes both of them to stay His time. He saw in them, as in all others, much corrupt matter behind, that was as yet to be eaten out of their souls; He will have the cross to have its full work upon us, not to come out of the fire as we went in, nor to come off the fire as foul and as full of scum as we were first set on.

—*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

(3689.) I observe, when such operations are necessary, if people are satisfied of a surgeon's skill and prudence, they will not only yield to be cut at his pleasure, without pretending to direct him where, or how long he shall make the incision, but will thank and pay him for putting them to pain, because they believe it for their advantage. I wish I could be more like them in my concerns. My body is, through mercy, free from considerable ailments, but I have a soul that requires surgeon's work continually; there is some tumour to be discussed or laid open, some dislocation to be reduced, some fracture to be healed almost daily. It is my great mercy, that One who is infallible in skill, who exercises incessant care and boundless compassion towards all His patients, has undertaken my case; and complicated as it is, I dare not doubt His making a perfect cure. Yet alas! I too often discover such impatience, distrust, and complaining, when under His hand, am so apt to find fault with the instruments He is pleased to make use of, so ready to think the salutary wounds He makes unnecessary or too large; in a word, I show such a promptness to control were I able, or to direct His operations, that, were not His patience beyond expression, He would before now have given me up. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(3690.) When we are pierced with afflictions, the way is not to go to God and say, "Take away this thorn." God says, "No; I put it there to bleed you where you are plethoric." Suffering well borne is better than suffering removed. —*Beecher.*

(3691.) I will bear it
With all the tender sufferance of a friend,
As calmly as the wounded patient bears
The artist's hand that ministers his cure.

—*Otway.*

(7.) *Affliction is a vocation whereby God honours us, and in which we may glorify Him.*

(3692.) When we are exercised with grievous afflictions, let us not murmur against Him that inflicted them, but let us bear all with patience and comfort, yea, with joy and thankfulness. For so we may assure ourselves, that as we much glorify God by our sufferings, so by these trials He vouchsafes to us a double honour. For first He honours us by enriching us with His graces; and then by trying of them, whilst thereby their worth and excellency is manifested to all that behold us in these conflicts; and lastly, He will honour us by crowning His graces in us, when by trial they are approved. Even as the skilful armourer first graces his armour by good workmanship, then by bringing it to the proof, and lastly by causing it to be employed in the prince's service.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(3693.) The general honours the soldier, first by training him to the wars, and making him expert in all feats of chivalry; then by giving him a place of employment fit for his gifts and good parts; and finally by rewarding and crowning his victories, causing him to sit with himself in his chariot of triumph.

As therefore the valiant soldier murmurs not against his captain, when, having a high opinion of his fortitude, he appoints him to services full of danger and difficulty, but accounts himself much honoured, in that he thinks him worthy of such employments; and contrariwise, thinking his valour and abilities undervalued, is full of discontent if he should be appointed to base and easy services, which any coward or fresh-water soldier could achieve without difficulty or danger; so much less have we any cause of repining when our great Commander, who best knows our abilities, employs us in services of a high nature. Yea, rather we have cause of thanksgiving and rejoicing, seeing He has first honoured us with gifts fit for these attempts, and now honours us by giving us opportunity of employing them, and approving them in the trial, and will hereafter crown us with victory. Neither do any of His soldiers perish in their magnanimous attempts, seeing He protects them in all dangers, and never matches them with any enemy but such as He enables them to overcome.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(3694.) The learned scholar takes great delight when he is posed in difficult questions, according to the measure of his knowledge, that he may approve his sufficiency both to his master and fellows; and contrariwise thinks himself wronged and disreputed, if having read the best authors, he be examined in the first rudiments of grammar or in the A B C. And so in like manner we are much honoured by God, when having received from Him many and great virtues, He also brings us into great and many trials; seeing that as our virtue and strength are fitted according to the power of our enemies who encounter us, so shall our crown be fitted to our graces, and the glory of our crown to the greatness of the victory. —*Downame*, 1644.

(3695.) Suffering in all its forms is, and should be looked upon as being, a vocation. There are many, and these real Christians, persons interested in God's service, who regard suffering in a shallow, superficial point of view, as an interference with their vocations, and consequently miss all the golden opportunities of growth in grace and knowledge which it holds out. Their plan of life is put out of joint, and, as it appears, their usefulness impeded by some accident or some grievous sickness; their activity is at an end, or at an end for a time,—quietness is imposed upon them as a condition of life, or of recovery; they chafe and fret at the restraint, because, as they themselves put it, they are precluded from actively doing good. Now what does this fretting indicate? What but this, that they love not the will of God, but merely the satisfaction which accrues in the natural order of things from a consciousness of doing good to others; and to cling to this satisfaction is only a higher form of self-love—not the love of God. The truth is that God, in sending them the sickness or the accident, has been pleased in His wisdom and love to change their vocation, and if minded to be really loyal to His will, they must accommodate and familiarise themselves to the idea, not that their occupation is gone, but simply that it is altered.

As an illustration, let us imagine the conduct of a campaign by the commander-in-chief of the forces of an empire. No one but he himself is in full possession of his plans; he has laid his schemes with a deep foresight and with the most correct calculation of contingencies, but communicates the whole of them to no subordinate. Advices from home, and from the generals of detachments, are arriving all day long at headquarters, and despatches are as continually going out; but no one knows any more of the contents than concerns his own position and duties. Many lookers-on, who cannot see the whole game, misjudge the commander. There is an outcry that he risked unfairly in an enterprise almost desperate, the lives of a small party; but the real truth is, as men would see if they could but know the whole, that this risk was absolutely essential to the safety of the entire force, and that by the exposure of a score of men to fearful odds, the lives of twenty thousand have been secured. Let us now suppose that suddenly some officer is commanded to hold himself and his troop in readiness to undertake some important manœuvre—to go up into a breach, or to storm a fortress, or to meet and cut off an enemy's supplies—suppose that this enterprise exactly suits both the capacities and inclination of the man on whom it is devolved; that there is room in it for the display of powers which he is conscious of possessing; that it gives him just the opportunity which he coveted of achieving distinction. He is making his preparations with all sanguineness, and anticipating the final order to depart, when lo! the order arrives, but it peremptorily alters his destination; he is not to be of the storming party, he is to go into a secluded dingle with his men, far out of the way of the operations, and there lie still, and send out scouts to make observations of the country, and report. It is a hard trial to one who was girding himself for active service, and longing for an opportunity for displaying prowess and forethought; and it is difficult to bear, just in proportion as there is room to doubt the wisdom of the commander's general arrangements, and his considerateness for the individual officer whose destination he thus arbitrarily changes. But supposing these to be beyond all question, supposing that hitherto the most consummate skill had been shown in every arrangement of the campaign, and that on

many previous occasions the general had shown the very kindest, and even the most affectionate, regard to the interests of this particular officer, would it then be found impossible or even difficult to reconcile the mind to such a disposition of things? Surely not, when once cool reflection had succeeded to the sting of the disappointment.

And when our Heavenly Father changes our whole plan of life by His providential despatches, and virtually sends us the order, "Lie still; and let another gird and carry thee instead of thy girding thyself, and walking on Mine errands 'whither thou wouldst';" shall we venture even to remonstrate, when we are assured by the testimony of His word, that both His wisdom and His care for us are unbounded? and when our own experience of life, brief as it has been, re-echoes this testimony? Ah! to love God is to embrace His will when it runs counter to our inclinations, as well as when it jumps with them. —*Goulburn.*

(8.) *The issue of all afflictions is good to the people of God.*

(3696.) Job out of his own experience says: "He knoweth my way and trieth me, and I shall come forth like the gold." In respect of which happy issue given by the Lord to all our trials, we have just cause to bear them all with patience and comfort, with joy and thanksgiving. For if we be not counterfeit metal, but good gold, why should we fear the furnace of affliction, seeing it will not consume us like straw or chaff, but only try us, and in trying purify us; that coming to the touchstone we may be approved, and so be reserved for ever in God's treasury of blessedness? If we be good grapes, why do we fear the press of tribulation, which will not destroy us, but bring us to perfection, making us fit wine for God's own use? If we be good wheat, why should we be grieved to come under the flail or fan, seeing it will not hurt us, but only separate and cleanse us from the straw and chaff, that we may be laid up for God's own store in the graneries of heavenly happiness? Finally, if we be God's soldiers in the Church militant, why should we not with joy and Christian courage skirmish with the world assaulting us daily with troubles and afflictions, seeing by this conduct our valour is tried, that being approved it may be crowned; and we assured of God's continual assistance, which will defend us in the fight, and in the end give us the victory?

Let us therefore leave fear and horror, murmuring and repining, to false dissemblers and faithless men, to whom alone these miseries are hurtful and dangerous. Let counterfeit and drossy Christians fear the fiery trial, seeing in it they are sure to be consumed. Let hypocrites, who like fair green leaves make a goodly show but yield no sweet juice of holiness, fear the wine-press and vintage, because their pressing will bring no profit, but they shall be cast away or trodden under foot. Let the chaff and straw fear the flail and fan, because being thereby separated from the good wheat, they shall be either burnt with fire, or cast upon the dunghill. Let dastards and cowards, traitors and enemies, tremble and grieve, when they are encountered by afflictions, seeing in this fight they are led captive of sin, and afterwards for ever imbondaged in the prison of hell and destruction. As for God's faithful ones, let them endure all these trials with patience, comfort, and rejoicing, seeing they do by exercising, manifest God's graces, that He may be glorified in His gifts, and His gifts crowned in them. —*Downame*, 1644.

(3697.) I have observed that towns which have been casually burnt, have been built again more beautiful than before. Mud walls, afterwards made of stones; and roofs, formerly but thatched, after advanced to be tiled. The Apostle tells me that I must not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to happen unto me. May I likewise prove improved by it. Let my renewed soul, which grows out of the ashes of the old man, be a more firm fabric and strong structure, so shall affliction be my advantage. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3698.) The thorn is one of the most cursed and angry and crabbed weeds that the earth yields, and yet out of it springs the rose, one of the sweetest smelled flowers, and most delightful to the eye, that the earth has. Your Lord shall make joy and gladness out of your afflictions, for all His roses have a fragrant smell. —*Rutherford*, 1661.

(3699.) God doth not take the axe into His hand to make chips. His people, when He is hewing them, and the axe goes deepest, may expect some beautiful piece at the end of the work. It is a sweet meditation Parisiensis hath upon Rom. viii. 28,—We know that all things work together for good to them that love God: "Where, O my soul, shouldst thou be more satisfied, free of care and fear, than when thou art among thy fellow-labourers, and those that come to help thee to attain thy so much desired salvation, which thy afflictions do?" They work together with ordinances and other providential dealings of God for good, yea thy chief good; and thou couldst as ill spare their help as any other means which God appoints thee. Should one find, as soon as he riseth in the morning, some on his house-top tearing off the tiles, and with axes and hammers taking down the roof thereof, he might at first be amazed and troubled at the sight, yea, think they are a company of thieves, and enemies come to do him some mischief; but when he understands they are workmen sent by his father to mend his house, and make it better than it is (which cannot be done without taking some of it down), he is satisfied, and content to endure the present noise and trouble, yea thankful to his father, for the care and cost he bestows on him: the very hope of what advantage will come of their work, makes him very willing to dwell a while amidst the ruins and rubbish of his old house. I do not wonder to see hopeless souls so impatient in their sufferings, sometimes even to distraction of mind; alas! they fear presently (and have reason so to do) that they come to pull all their worldly joys and comforts down about their ears, which gone, what, alas! have they left to comfort them, who can look for nothing but hell in another world? But the believer's heart is eased of all this, because assured from the promise, that they are sent on a better errand to him from his Heavenly Father, who intends him no hurt, but rather good, even to build the ruinous frame of his soul into a glorious temple at last, and these afflictions come, among other means, to have a hand in the work, and this satisfies him, that he can say, Lord, cut and hew me how Thou wilt, that at last I may be polished and framed according to the platform which love

hath drawn in Thy heart for me. Though some ignorant man would think his clothes spoiled when besmeared with fuller's earth or soap, yet one that knows the cleansing nature of them will not be afraid to have them so used.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3700.) Consider that all your trials shall work for your good, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Why then should you fret, seeing God designs your good in all? The bee sucks sweet honey out of the bitterest herbs; so God will by afflictions teach His children to suck sweet knowledge, sweet obedience, and sweet experience out of all the bitter afflictions He exercises them with. That scouring and rubbing which frets others, shall make them shine the brighter; and that weight which crushes and keeps others under, shall but make them, like the palm-tree, grow better and higher; and that hammer which knocks others all in pieces, shall but knock them nearer to Christ, the corner stone. Stars shine brightest in the darkest night; torches give the best light when beaten; grapes yield most wine when most pressed; spices smell sweetest when pounded; vines are the better for bleeding; gold looks the better for scouring; juniper smells sweetest in the fire; chamomile, the more you tread it, the more you spread it. Where afflictions hang heaviest, corruptions hang loosest; and grace that is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose-leaves, is then most fragrant when the fire of affliction is put under to distil it out. —*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(3701.) As musicians sometimes go through perplexing mazes of discord in order to come to the inexpressible sweetness of after-chords, so men's discords of trouble and chromatic jars, if God be their leader, are only preparing for a resolution into such harmonious strains as could never have been raised except upon such undertones. Most persons are more anxious to stop their sorrow than to carry it forward to its choral outburst. "Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, *afterward*, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." —*Beecher.*

(3702.) Are you crushed by some recent grief? Is it hard to say and mean, "Thy will be done"? Does your trial look as if it could never wear towards you an expression of beneficence? A statue, reflecting more than mortal grace and loveliness, will disguise and distort its matchless proportions to one standing beneath its pedestal. Be patient: you are too near. Wait; and "good" (Rom. viii. 28) shall not fail to disclose its perfect image.

—*Henry Batchelor.*

(9.) *All temporal sorrows are but "light afflictions," in comparison with the evils from which they deliver us, and the glories for which they prepare us.*

(3703.) Grievous and heavy trials did Paul very frequently and abundantly sustain; but in very deed the Holy Spirit was with him in the wasting of the outward man, to renew the inner man from day to day, and by the taste of spiritual rest in the affluence of the delights of God, to soften down, by the hope of future blessedness, all present hardships, and to alleviate all heavy trials. Lo, how sweet a yoke of Christ did he bear, and how light a burden! so that he could say that all those hard and grievous sufferings, at the recital of which every hearer shudders, were a *light tribulation;* as he beheld with the inward eyes—the eyes of faith—at how great a price of things temporal must be purchased the life to come, the escape from the everlasting pains of the ungodly, the full enjoyment, free from all anxiety, of the eternal happiness of the righteous.

Men suffer themselves to be cut and burnt, that the pains, not of eternity, but of some more lasting sore than usual, may be bought off at the price of severer pain.

For a languid and uncertain period of a very short repose, and that, too, at the end of life, the soldier is worn down by all the hard trials of war, restless it may be for more years in his labours than he will have to enjoy his rest in ease.

To what storms and tempests, to what a fearful and tremendous raging of sky and sea, do the busy merchantmen expose themselves, that they may acquire riches, inconstant as the wind, and full of perils and tempests, greater even than those by which they were acquired!

What heats and colds, what perils from horses, from ditches, from precipices, from rivers, from wild beasts, do huntsmen undergo! what pain of hunger and thirst, what straitened allowances of the cheapest and meanest meat and drink, that they may catch a beast! and sometimes, after all, the flesh of the beast for which they endure all this is of no use for the table. And although a boar or a stag be caught, it is more sweet to the hunter's mind because it has been caught, than to the eater's palate because it is dressed.

By what sharp corrections of almost daily stripes is the tender age of boys brought under! By what great pains, even of watching and abstinence, are they exercised, not to learn true wisdom, but for the sake of riches, and the honours of an empty show, that they may learn arithmetic, and other literature, and the deceits of eloquence!

Now in all these instances, they who do not love these things feel them as great severities; whereas they who love them endure the same, it is true, but they do not seem to feel them severe; for love makes all, the hardest and most distressing things, altogether easy, and almost nothing. How much more surely, then, and easily, will charity do, with a view to true blessedness, that which mere desire does as it can, with a view to what is but misery! How easily is any temporal adversity endured if it be that eternal punishment may be avoided, and eternal rest procured! Not without good reason did that vessel of election say with exceeding joy, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

—*Augustine*, 353–429.

(3704.) Let me wither and wear out mine age in a discomfortable, in an unwholesome, in a penurious prison, and so pay my debts with my bones, and recompense the wastefulness of my youth with the beggary of my age; let me wither in a spital, under sharp, and foul, and infamous diseases, and so recompense the wantonness of my youth with that loathsomeness in mine age; yet, if God withdraw not His spiritual blessings, His grace, His patience, —if I can call my suffering His doing, my passion His action, all this that is temporal is but a cater-

pillar got into one corner of my garden, but a mildew fallen upon one acre of my corn; the body of all, the substance of all, is safe, as long as the soul is safe. *Donne*, 1573–1631.

10. *Afflictions endure but "for a moment."*

(3705.) As an apprentice holds out in hard labour, and (it may be) bad usage, for seven years or more, and in all that time is serviceable to his master without repining, because he sees that his bondage will not last always: thus should every one that groaneth under the burden of any affliction whatsoever bridle his affections, possess his soul in patience, and cease from all murmuring, considering well with himself, that the rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the lot of the righteous; that weeping may abide at evening, but joy cometh in the morning; and that troubles will have an end, and not continue for ever. —*Webb*, 1658.

(3706.) The cloud of trial while it drops, Christian, is rolling over thy head, and then comes fair weather with eternal sunshine of glory. "Canst thou not watch with Christ one hour?"
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

V. *ITS POWER.*

1. Exemplified in Job.

(3707.) The enemy, full of rage, and striving to conquer the firm breast of that holy man, set up against him the engines of temptation, spoiled his substance, slew his children, smote his body, instigated his wife, and while he brought his friends to console him, urged them to the harshest upbraiding. One friend too, who was more cruel in his reproaches, he reserved with the last and bitterest invective; that by the frequency of the stroke, if not otherwise, the heart might be reached by that which was ever being repeated with a fresh wound. For because he saw that he had power in the world, he thought to move him by the loss of his substance, and finding him unshaken, he smote him by the death of his children. But seeing that from that wound which made him childless he even gained strength to the greater magnifying of God's praise; he asked leave to smite the health of his body. Seeing, moreover, that by the pain of the body he could not compass the affecting of the mind, he instigated his wife, for he saw that the city which he desired to storm was too strong: therefore by bringing upon him so many external plagues, he led an army as it were on the outside against him, but, when he kindled the feelings of his wife into words of mischievous persuasion, it was as though he corrupted the hearts of the citizens within. For so from external wars we are instructed how to think of those within. For an enraged enemy, that holds a city encircled by his surrounding armies, upon perceiving its fortifications to remain unshaken, betakes himself to other methods of attack, with this object, that he may corrupt the hearts of some of the citizens also within; so that, when he has led on the assailants from without, he may also have co-operation within, and that when the heat of the battle increases outside, the city being left without succour by the treachery of those within, of whose faith no doubt is felt, may become his prey.

And thus a battering-ram having been planted on the outside, as it were, he smote the walls of this city with blows many in number, as the several times that he brought tidings of calamities; while on the inside, he, as it were, corrupted the hearts of citizens, when he set himself to undermine the strong bulwarks of this city by the persuasions of the wife. In this manner he brought to bear, from without, an hostile assault from within, baneful counsels, that he might capture the city the sooner, in proportion as he troubled it both from within and from without. But because there are times when words are more poignant than wounds, he armed himself, as we have said, with the tongues of his friends. Those indeed that were of graver years, might perchance give the less pain by their words. The younger is made to take their place, to deal that holy bosom a wound so much the sharper, the meaner was the aim that he impelled to strike blows against it. Behold the enemy mad to strike down his indomitable strength, how many darts of temptation that he devised, see what numberless beleaguering engines he set about him! See how many weapons of assault he let fly, but in all his mind continued undaunted, the city stood unshaken.

It is the aim of enemies, when they come up face to face, to send off some in secret, who may be so much the more free to strike a blow in the flank of the hostile force, in proportion as he that is fighting is more eagerly intent upon the enemy advancing in front. Job, therefore, being caught in the warfare of this conflict, received the losses which befell him like foes in his front; he took the words of comforters like enemies on his flank, and in all turning round the shield of his steadfastness, he stood defended at all points, and ever on the watch, parried on all sides the swords directed against him. By his silence he marks his unconcern for the loss of his substance; the flesh, dead in his children, he bewails with composure; the flesh in his own person stricken, he endures with fortitude; the flesh in his wife suggesting mischievous persuasions, he instructs with wisdom. In addition to all this his friends start forth into the bitterness of upbraiding, and coming to appease his grief, increase its force. Thus all the engines of temptation are turned by this holy man to the augmentation of his virtues; for by the wounds his patience is tried, and by the words his wisdom is exercised. Everywhere he meets the enemy with undaunted mien, for the scourges he overcame by resolution, and the words by reasoning. —*Gregory*, 545–604.

2. Exemplified in our Lord.

(3708.) There was in Christ *regnum patientiæ*, a kingdom of patience, as well as *regnum potentiæ*, a kingdom of power and glory. There was a kingdom of patience; that is such a kingdom as Christ exercised in His greatest abasement, whereby He made all things, even the worst, to be serviceable to His own turn and the Church's. So in every member of His, there is a kingdom of patience set up, whereby He subjects all things to Him. To make it yet clearer.

When Christ died, which was the lowest degree of abasement, there was a kingdom of patience then. What! when He was subdued by death and Satan, was there a kingdom then? Yes, a kingdom, for though visibly He was overcome and nailed to the cross, yet invisibly He triumphed over principalities and powers. Christ never conquered more than on the cross. When He died He killed death, and Satan, and all. And did not Christ reign on the cross when He converted the thief?

when the sun was astonished, and the earth shook and moved, and the light was eclipsed? Who cares for Cæsar when he is dead? But what more efficacious than Christ when He died? He was most practical when He seemed to do nothing. In patience He reigned and triumphed; He subjected the greatest enemies to Himself, Satan, and death, and the wrath of God, and all. In the same manner all things are ours, the worst things that befall God's children, death, and afflictions, and persecutions. There is a kingdom of patience set up in them. The Spirit of God subdues all base fears in us, and a child of God never more triumphs than in his greatest troubles. This is that that the Apostle says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." How is that, that in those great troubles we should be "conquerors and more"? Thus the spirit of a Christian, take him as a Christian, reigns and triumphs at that time. For the devil and the world labour to subdue the spirit of God's children and their cause. Now to take them at the worst, the cause they stand for, and will stand for it; and the spirit they are led with is undaunted. So that the Spirit of Christ is victorious and conquering in them, and most of all at such times. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

VI. *MUST HAVE ITS PERFECT WORK.*

(3709.) As it is not sufficient for a good pilot to take pains in breaking one dangerous billow, or in passing one storm, but he must show the like care and diligence in well governing the ship, till he arrive safely at the wished haven; and as it is not enough for a good soldier to show great valour in the first brunt of the battle, if afterwards he shamefully flee, or fight faintly and cowardly, but he must courageously continue fighting, till he have vanquished the enemy and obtained victory: so it is not sufficient to the being of Christian patience, that we brook and bear well one storm of misery, and through our slackness and negligence sink or be wrecked in the next; but after one billow of affliction and tempest of trouble is past, we must expect and prepare ourselves to endure another, until we safely arrive in the haven of happiness. It is not enough for a Christian soldier that he demean himself well in the first conflict with afflictions, if he afterwards grow weary of fighting, and flee out of the field by using unlawful means of escape; or fight faintly and not without grudging and murmuring against his commander for bringing him into the troubles and dangers; but he must constantly continue his courage, after one encounter expecting and preparing himself to sustain another, and never cease showing his unwearied magnanimity till he have obtained a full and final victory. —*Downame*, 1644.

(3710.) Patience must not be an inch shorter than affliction. If the bridge reach but half-way over the brook, we shall have but an ill-favoured passage. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3711.) Patience is seen in waiting as well as suffering. To bear a little while is but the imperfect work of patience, some lesser degree of it; as to know a letter or two in the book is but an imperfect kind of reading. But to bear much and long, that is the perfect work. To lift up some heavy thing from the ground argues some strength; but to carry it for an hour, or all day, is a more perfect thing. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(3712.) When the husbandman has laboured in his field and sown his seed, he cannot at once raise bread. What avails his haste? What avails his fretting? He may fret because the frost sets in; he may fret because there seems to him to be too much rain; but how will his fretting benefit him? Will his impatience alter the state of the ground? will it change the weather? will it forward the harvest? His impatience can do no good; but his patience can: his trusting of God, and quieting of himself to wait the appointed seasons, sleeping and rising, and rising and sleeping, while the corn is growing he knows not how. Thus "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain;" that is, he comes into the order of God: he has patience with God: he goes on, trusting that, in God's way, he shall obtain the promised harvest. "Now, therefore," as if the Apostle had said—"Look at him. You must hope for success in the same way. Does he use means? So must you; and you must have patience like him." —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(3713.) You are tender-hearted, and you want to be true, and are trying to be; learn these two things from our text,—never to be discouraged because good things get on so slowly here, and never to fail to do daily that good which lies next to your hand. Do not be in a hurry, but be diligent. Enter into the sublime patience of the Lord. Be charitable in view of it. God can afford to wait; why cannot we, since we have Him to fall back upon? Let patience have her perfect work, and bring forth her celestial fruits. Trust God to weave in your little thread into the great web, though the pattern shows it not yet. When God's people are able and willing thus to labour and wait, remember that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; the grand harvest of the ages shall come to its reaping, and the day shall broaden itself to a thousand years, and the thousand years shall show themselves as a perfect and finished day! —*George Macdonald.*

PRAYER.

I. *ITS NATURE.*

(3714.) Prayer may be supplication, or thanksgiving, or confession. Or it may be simple intercourse. He that *muses* toward God prays. If you can conceive of a child in the presence of a parent most beloved that speaks, that is silent, that speaks again, that is again silent; now thought, now fancy, now feeling, in turn, as it were, wheeling the orb of its little mind round completely, so that on every side it receives light or gives forth light to the parent, the intercourse of that child with the parent is the fittest symbol of true prayer. PRAYER IS THE SOUL OF A MAN MOVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD, for the purpose of communicating its joy, or sorrow, or fear, or hope, or any other conscious experience that it may have, to the bosom of a parent. —*Beecher.*

II. *IS THE NATURAL EXPRESSION OF NEED.*

(3715.) A company of men say they cannot pray privately, their spirits are barren. They intimate much pride of spirit, for if a man be sensible of his wants you need not supply him with words. If a poor tenant come to a landlord, and find he has a hard bargain, let him alone for telling his tale. I warrant you he will lay open the state of his wife and children, and the ill year he has had; he will be eloquent enough. Take any man that is sensible of his wants, and you shall not need to dictate words to him. There is no man that has a humble and broken heart, though he be never so illiterate, but he will have a large heart to God in this kind.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(3716.) Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3717.) Prayer is not a bondage to a heart that is full of holy feeling, and a head that is full of divine knowledge; but it is the language which the promptings of the thoughts within us send rushing to our tongue, which it were the cruellest bondage of nature to stifle. Why, it were to muzzle reason, and knowledge, and piety, and purpose, and gratitude, and devotion,—to doom to deep dungeons of silence the spirit which boundeth for the liberty of utterance and enterprise. And who could endure that confinement? It were death, and worse than death, to be first charged with so much elastic, buoyant, resolute animation, and then bound down to rest and quietude by the same power which filled us. Have ye seen a dumb man under strong mental excitement? How he distorts his countenance with fearful expression, and his body with frightful gesture, and opens wide the portals of speech, and strives to give motion to his fastened tongue, while hollow workings of ineffectual sound are heard deep in his breast, and his whole body, hands, and feet, and writhing frame, labour and are in distress,—so that the very soul of every beholder is touched with pity and deep regret to see a fellow-creature so frustrated of the glorious faculty of expressing thought! Even such unspeakable pain, such severe amputation of the religious man's nature, would you cause were ye to deprive him of prayer, which is the utterance of strong desire, and purpose, and feeling unto his Maker.

—*Irving*, 1792–1834.

(3718.) There is a sense in which it may be said that prayer is natural to man. Go to what country you will, and you will find men performing religious rites, and foremost among these is prayer. It is an exercise natural to the human race. "But so many people do not pray," you say. True; and so many people do not work. And yet we all admit that we are created with a view to work; the hands are designed on purpose that they might work; many, nevertheless, violate the law of their nature and refuse to work. But labour is natural to man for all that. In like manner we are constituted with a view to prayer; it is the free, spontaneous outgush of our deeper being. Sometimes we are thrown into circumstances in which it is not only natural, but imperative on us to cry to Him who is able to save us. That was the case now with Jacob. He was reduced to a dread extremity; his possessions were in imminent peril; the "mother with the children" was in extreme danger; his own life might be snatched away at any moment. In such narrow straits humanity is always compelled to pray; it cannot help it. When in health and prosperity you may frame elaborate theories to demonstrate the absurdity of prayer; but let death stare you in the face, let a heavy sorrow or bereavement overtake you, and you cannot help praying. Job asks concerning the hypocrite, "Will he always call upon God?" The question implies that the godly calls upon God at all times; but even the hypocrite, the ungodly, calls sometimes, when deep troubles encompass his path and darken his soul with their dense shadows. Tom Paine has spent his days in ridiculing religion, he makes merry at the expense of those that believe in another world; but watch him one day as he crosses the Atlantic. The sea rises, the sky lowers, the wind howls, the vessel tosses restlessly to and fro. The tempest grows in fury; the huge waves threaten to engulf the ship; the wild wind madly yells in the sails and fills the air with clack and clamour; the crew and passengers are fully persuaded that the vessel cannot live long in such a sea. Where is Tom Paine, the boastful, vaunting infidel? On his knees, beseeching the Almighty with tears and supplications to have mercy on his soul. I do not say that to censure the man or to taunt him with inconsistency, but rather to vindicate his character. He was not so bad as he seemed to be, not quite as heartless as he tried to persuade the world he was. All honour to the inconsistencies of infidels; they only prove that their hearts are better than their theories, that their lives are nobler than their faith.

—*J. C. Jones.*

(3719.) *Sinking times are praying times* with the Lord's servants. Peter neglected prayer at starting upon his venturous journey, but when he began to sink his danger made him a suppliant, and his cry, though late, was not too late. In our hours of bodily pain and mental anguish, we find ourselves as naturally driven to prayer as the wreck is driven upon the shore by the waves. The fox hies to its hole for protection; the bird flies to the wood for shelter; and even so the tried believer hastens to the mercy-seat for safety. Heaven's great harbour of refuge is All-prayer; thousands of weather-beaten vessels have found a haven there, and the moment a storm comes on, it is wise for us to make for it with all sail. —*Spurgeon.*

III. *IT IS A RESOURCE AVAILABLE FOR ALL GOD'S PEOPLE IN ALL THE EMERGENCIES OF LIFE.*

(3720.) I once saw a grand procession, in which an oriental monarch, surrounded by a thousand life-guards, moved to the sound of all kinds of music. Some unknown subject had a request to urge. He knew the utter impossibility of one breaking through the guards that day and night surround his majesty. That humble person, perhaps, had some dear friend in prison, who, according to oriental custom, could never be tried or freed while the prosecutor's malice or purse held out. They

have no Habeas Corpus law among nations without the Bible.

This poor creature took the only possible way known to one unable to bribe the officers, and flung his petition over the heads of the guards, and it fell at the feet of the sovereign. In a moment one of the life-guards pierced it with his bayonet, and flung it back into the crowd. Alas! the proud, pleasure-loving monarch, amid the luxuriant splendours of his court, palace, army, and plans of reaping renown, never so much as dreamed of noticing the prayer of that broken heart and crushed spirit. Not thus does the King of kings treat the humblest suppliant who seeks His help!

—*Van Doren.*

(3721.) The communion table is but occasionally spread, and the doors of the church may be thrown open only once a week; but the pages of the Bible are always open, and the gates of prayer, like those of heaven, are never shut. Prayer is like a private postern, through which, as well by night as by day, we have the privilege of constant access to the palace and presence of the King. In the words we learned from a mother's lips, and lisped at her knee, prayer is the first door that is open; and it is the last that is shut. There, where a man is tossing on the bed of death, and the Bible lies shut on his pillow, for he cannot read it, and to the promises of the gospel, which we pour into his ear, he gives no sign of assent, for he cannot hear us. Mark these moving lips; listen to these broken sentences! Behold he prayeth! and his spirit, breathed out in a groan or sigh, flies heavenward on the wings of prayer. —*Guthrie.*

(3722.) A little boy once went with his father to see a telegraph office. He had an uncle in a far-off city, and he asked his father to send him some message. He did so. After waiting about half an hour the answer came. It was, "I will come to see you at Christmas, and bring you some pretty toys." The little boy thought this very wonderful indeed. As they walked homewards he could talk of nothing else but the telegraph wires. "Father," said he, "did you ever hear of a message being sent so far, and an answer returned in so short a time?" "Oh! yes, my son; I know a way by which messages are sent, and answers brought back, in a much less time than by the telegraph wires."—"Do tell me," said the little boy, "what it is, and how it can be quicker and better than that?" The father then said to him, "You remember that it was some time before you could get a chance to send your message. You had to wait until others were attended to. But in the way I speak of, you are not hindered by others. Thousands can send their messages at the same moment, and answers can be sent back to them all. Then there are the wires, and the machinery, and the electricity, and the man who works it. These must all be kept in good order; and they take a good deal of care and attention. Besides, there are only certain hours in the day when your messages can be sent. Now, by the plan I tell you of, you need none of these things. You need no man to tell the message to, no wires to carry it, no machine to keep in order, and you can send your message at midnight, or at day-dawn, or any moment you please." "What, father," said the little boy, "and get an answer to your message as soon as by the telegraph?"—"Yes, and a great deal sooner," said the father, "even before you tell with your lips what you want, the answer may come back. Besides, the office of the telegraph is always in some town or city, and you must go to it before you can send your message. But the way I speak of does not require this. You may be in your chamber, or lying on your bed, or hunting in the woods, or in the fields, or at school, or anywhere else, and you can send your message, and get an answer immediately. Then you always have to write down your message by the telegraph. But the other way you need not write it down at all. The little boy who has not learned his letters, and the poor servant who cannot read, can send their messages as well, and get the answers as soon, as the wisest and greatest men in the world. However simple and ignorant, they may be attended to just as soon and as kindly as the king on his throne." "Well, well," said the little boy, "that is, indeed, a wonderful thing. Why have I never heard of that before? Do tell me where I shall find an account of it." "I will," said the father; "you will find the fullest and best account of it in the Bible." By this time they had reached home, and the little boy ran and brought the Bible. The father told him where to open, and he read the following passages (Isa. lxv. 24; lviii. 9; Dan. ix. 21–23). —*Meade.*

(3723.) "Pull the night-bell." This is the inscription we often see written on the doorpost of the shop in which medicines are sold. Some of us have had our experiences with night-bells when sudden illness has overtaken some member of our households, or when the sick have rapidly grown worse. How have we hurried through the silent streets, when only here and there a light glimmered from some chamber window! How eagerly have we pulled the night-bell at our physician's door; and then, with prescription in hand, have sounded the alarm at the place where the remedy was to be procured. Those of us who have had these lonely midnight walks, and have given the summons for quick relief, know the meaning of that Bible-text, "Arise! cry out *in the night!*"

Seasons of trouble and distress are often spoken of in God's Word under the simile of *night*. The word vividly pictures those times when the skies are darkened, and the lights that gladden the soul have gone out, and it is not easy to find one's way. Enemies may be stealing on us in the darkness. Apprehensions gather like fancied spectres, to make us uneasy or afraid. If prosperity be likened to the noonday, the seasons of perplexity or distress may be likened to the "night." Perhaps some of the readers of this paragraph may be in a gloomy night-season of poverty, or bereavement, or of spiritual doubt and depression. Each heart knoweth its own bitterness. Friend, arise, and pull the night-bell of prayer! God your Father says to you, "Call upon me in the time of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

—*Cuyler.*

(3724.) But whatever may be the fortune of our lives, one great extremity at least, the hour of approaching death, is certainly to be passed through. What ought then to occupy us? What can then support us? Prayer. Prayer with our blessed Lord was a refuge from the storm: almost every word He uttered during that tremendous scene was

prayer—prayer the most earnest, the most urgent; repeated, continued, proceeding from the recesses of the soul; private, solitary; prayer for deliverance; prayer for strength; above everything, prayer for resignation. —*Paley*, 1743–1805.

IV. *IS INDISPENSABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.*

1. To its existence.

(3725.) Prayer is to be regarded not only as a distinct exercise of religion, for which its own time must be set apart, but as a process woven into the texture of the Christian's mind, and extending through the length and breadth of his life. Like the golden thread in a tissue, it frequently disappears beneath the common thread. It disappears, and is hidden from the eye; yet nevertheless, it is substantially there, like a stream running under ground for a certain period of its course. Suddenly, the thread emerges into sight again on the upper surface of the tissue, and suddenly again disappears; and thus it penetrates the whole texture, although occasionally hidden. This is a very just illustration of the matter in hand. Look from without upon the Christian's life, and you will see divers occupations and employments, many of which, it may be, call for the exercise of his mind. But beneath the mind's surface there is an under current, a golden thread of prayer, always there, though often latent, and frequently comes up to view not only in stated acts of worship, but in holy ejaculations. —*Goulburn.*

2. To its sustenance.

(3726.) A godly man will seek God's face evermore (Ps. cv. 4, and cxvi. 2); he calleth upon God as long as he liveth. Breathing heavenward in prayer is the beginning and ending of his spiritual life upon earth, as we see in Paul (Acts ix. 6) and Stephen (Acts vii. 60). Paul begins his life with prayer, and Stephen ends his with it.

He never taketh his leave of prayer till he is entering into the place of praise. Prayer is his element; he cannot live without it, and communion with God in it. Prayer is the vessel by which he is continually trading into the Holy Land; he sendeth it out fraught with precious graces,—faith, hope, desire, love, godly sorrow, and the like, and it cometh home many times richly laden with peace, joy, and increase of faith. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3727.) Many are the lawful amusements of the Christian, but that which gives the highest zest to his life is the spirit of prayer. He should be careful not to step aside, but dwell in the atmosphere of prayer. Like the ambient air, which yields, yet fills all space, and wide interfused embraces the whole earth as the principle which supports life, quickening, and invigorating wherever it comes—such should be the spirit of prayer, till through every space of life it be interfused with all your employments, and wherever you are, and whatever you do, embrace you on every side. Like a pleasure ever omnipresent, never impeding, but gently leaving room for, and indescribably animating, and giving pleasure to, every other enjoyment. —*Satter.*

(3728.) The first true sign of spiritual life, prayer is also the means of maintaining it. Man can as well live physically without breathing, as spiritually without praying. There is a class of animals—the cetaceous, neither fish nor sea-fowl, that inhabit the deep. It is their home; they never leave it for the shore; yet, though swimming beneath its waves and sounding its darkest depths, they have ever and anon to rise to the surface that they may breathe the air. Without that these monarchs of the deep could not exist in the dense element in which they live, and move, and have their being. And something like what is imposed on them by a physical necessity, the Christian has to do by a spiritual one. It is by ever and anon ascending up to God, by rising through prayer into a loftier, purer region for supplies of Divine grace, that he maintains his spiritual life. Prevent these animals from rising to the surface, and they die for want of breath; prevent him from rising to God, and he dies for want of prayer. "Give me children," cried Rachel, "or else I die." Let me breathe, says a man gasping, or else I die. Let me pray, says the Christian, or else I die. —*Guthrie.*

V. *IS A TEST OF CHARACTER.*

1. In regard to the objects for which men pray.

(3729.) It has been a subject of common observation and remark that among a very large proportion of the peoples of the world there has been almost wholly wanting an ethical element in prayers. Material benefits, not spiritual gifts, are generally desired. Of the forms of word-prayer, perhaps the rudest is that of the Zulu. He worships the spirits of deceased relatives, and his full ritual is given as "People of our house—children!" People of our house, rain, or cattle, or whatever else he wants. When he sneezes, he supposes "the spirits" close at hand, and he only "wishes a wish" by saying what he wants, as "cattle," "good luck."

In Central Africa, the fetish man prays for blessings on the medicine he uses. The Polynesian prays to his "Compassionate Father," or some other god, for a blessing, or to "let food grow."

The red Indian prays for "good luck in hunting," or that he may be able to "take scalps—to take horses;" that he may find "the enemy asleep;" or, on the great lakes, that the waters may be calm while he passes over.

The Karen, in Burmah, prays that his fields may be guarded, and that the spirit of any one entering to destroy the crops may be bound with two strings which be puts in the paddy-fields for the purpose.

Men do not always hold a remarkable moderation in these earthly wishes. The wild tribes of Central India not only pray for preservation from "snakes, tigers, and stumbling blocks," but one of the Khond prayers is to the effect that the harvest may be so great that so much of the seed shall fall as it is being gathered, that when he comes next season he may find it already growing in such quantity as that it shall "look like a young cornfield."

A few prayers, however, are discoverable for moral character. The Aztec prays for specific virtues to be imparted to his rulers; and the ancient Aryan, of Vedic times, though he mostly prayed for sheep and cows and other comforts, yet sometimes said: "Through want of strength, thou strong one, have I gone astray. Have mercy," &c. The Parsee prays for forgiveness for deceit, idolworship, and other faults.

Classical heathendom would swell our illustrations beyond proportion. Pericles, Cornelius Scipio, Plato and others, commenced important affairs with prayer. Prayer was made to preface transactions in the Senate and in military affairs; while orations, the beginning of the year, meals, and even games and wagers, were accompanied with prayer.

—*Gracey.*

2. In regard to the temper in which men pray.

(3730.) A gracious man is never weary of spiritual things, as men are never weary of the sun, but though it is enjoyed every day, yet long for the rising of it again. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3731.) Among the wonders which science has achieved, it has succeeded in bringing things which are invisible, and impalpable to our senses, within the reach of our most accurate observations. Thus the barometer makes us acquainted with the actual state of the atmosphere. It takes cognisance of the slightest variation, and every change is pointed out by its elevation or depression, so that we are accurately acquainted with the actual state of the air, and at any given time. In like manner the Christian has within him an index by which he may take cognisance, and by which he may measure the elevation and degrees of his spirituality—it is the spirit of inward devotion. However difficult it may seem to be to pronounce on the invisibilities of our spirituality, yet there is a barometer to determine the elevation or depression of the spiritual principle. It marks the changes of the soul in its aspect towards God. As the spirit of prayer mounts up, there is true spiritual elevation, and as it is restrained, and falls low, there is a depression of the spiritual principle within us. As is the spirit of devotion and communion with God, such is the man. —*Salter.*

3. In the regularity with which men pray.

(3732.) Grace works uniformly, and discovers a comely proportion in its actings. Haply you may see the son of a prince on some high day, in richer and more glorious apparel than on another day that is ordinary; but you shall never find him in sordid, ragged, and beggarly clothes, still he will be clad as becomes a king's son. Possibly, yea, it is likely, that you may see the Christian come forth in an extraordinary day and duty, with more enlargement of affections in prayer, and all his graces raised to a higher glory in their actings than ordinary; but you shall never find him with his robe of grace laid aside; still the true saint will declare his high birth by his every-day course; he will not live in the neglect of ordinary duties, and cast off communion with God in his daily walking. Oh, 'tis the brand of an hypocrite to have his devotion come by fits, and like a drift of snow, to lie thick in one place and none in another; to seem for zeal like angels at a time, and live like atheists many weeks after. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3733.) The Christian is enjoined to "pray without ceasing:" not that he can be always engaged in the positive act, but he ought to have what I call a holy aptitude of prayer. The bird is not always on the wing, but is ready to fly in an instant; so the believer is not always on the wing of prayer, but he has such a gracious aptitude for this service, that he is prepared in an instant, when in danger or need, to fly for refuge to God. —*Salter.*

4. In regard to the period during which men pray.

(3734.) "Will the hypocrite pray always?" No as the wheel wears with turning, till it breaks at last, so doth the hypocrite. He prays himself weary of praying; something or other will in time make him quarrel with that duty, which he never inwardly liked; whereas the sincere believer hath that in him, which makes it impossible he should quite give over praying, except he should also cease believing. Prayer is the very breath of faith; stop a man's breath, and where is he then? 'Tis true the believer, through his own negligence, may find some more difficulty of fetching his praying breath at one time than at another, as a man in a cold doth for his natural breath. Alas! who is so careful of his soul's health, that needs not bewail this? But for faith to live, and this breath of prayer to be quite cut off is impossible. We see David did but hold his breath a little longer than ordinary, and what a distemper it put him into, till he gave himself ease again by venting his soul in prayer: "I held my peace, and my sorrow stirred, my heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know my end." Dost thou, O man, find thyself under a necessity of praying, as the little babe who cannot choose but cry, when it ails or wants anything, because he hath no other way to help itself, than by crying to hasten its mother or nurse to its help? The Christian's wants, sins, and temptations continuing to return upon him, he cannot but continue also to pray against them. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee," saith David: "wherever I am, I'll find Thee out; prison me, banish me, or do with me what Thou wilt, Thou shalt never be rid of me," "I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

VI. *WHAT PROFIT SHOULD WE HAVE, IF WE PRAY UNTO HIM?*

1. The protection of God's providence will be extended to us.

(3735.) In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favour. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived for a long time [81 years]; and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel: we shall be divided by our little, partial, local interests; our prospects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a by-word down to

future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, or conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business; and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.

—*Benjamin Franklin: Speech in Convention for forming a Constitution for the United States*, 1787.

2. The promises of God's Word will be fulfilled to us.

(3736.) Prayer is the gold key that opens heaven. The tree of the promise will not drop its fruit, unless shaken by the hand of prayer.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(3737.) We are sometimes told that prayer is very useful in its influence on ourselves, though it cannot be supposed to influence God; and that we ought to pray, therefore, to produce in ourselves pious feelings, without expecting any direct answer from Him whom we invoke. But who would pray if deprived of all hope of any answer to prayer? Without faith it is impossible to pray; for "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Not only must we have faith in His existence, but in the fact that He does answer prayer. Both are needed for this exercise. The secondary benefit is dependent on the possibility of receiving a primary and direct benefit. In the very act of seeking the latter we secure also the former, but the expectation of the objective boon prompts the act which produces the subjective benefit. As well might a physician advise a patient to walk every morning to drink of a certain spring, the real benefit being the walk, but the inducement being the water, which at the same time he stated would not be found, as the spring was dry. The exercise of prayer—this walk of faith—is incalculably beneficial to the soul; but it is essential to prayer that there should be the expectation of obtaining that for which we pray. —*Newman Hall.*

3. We shall be reminded of our dependence on God.

(3738.) If the bounties of Heaven were given to man without prayer, they would be received without acknowledgment. Prayer, administering the perpetual lesson of humility, of hope, and of love, makes us feel our connection with heaven through every touch of our necessities; it binds us to Providence by a chain of daily benefits; it impresses the hearts of all with a perpetual remembrance of the God of all. —*Croly.*

4. The burden of our soul will be relieved by the very act of prayer.

(3739.) It is a mercy to pray, though I never have the mercy prayed for. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(3740.) Did you ever see a little child rushing home from school in hot haste, with glowing cheeks and tearful eyes, burning and smarting under some fancied or real injustice or injury in his school life? He runs through the street; he rushes into the house; he puts off every one who tries to comfort him. "No, no! he doesn't want them; he wants mother; he's going to tell mother." And when he finds her he throws himself into her arms and sobs out to tell her all the tumult of his feelings, right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable. "The school is hateful; the teacher is hard, and the lessons are too long; he can't learn them, and the boys laugh at him, and won't she say he needn't go any more?"

Now, though the mother does not grant his foolish petitions, she soothes him by sympathy; she calms him; she reasons with him; she inspires him with courage to meet the necessary trials of school-life—in short, her grace is sufficient for her boy; her strength perfects his weakness. He comes out tranquillised, calm and happy—not that he is going to get his own foolish wishes, but that his mother has taken the matter in hand and is going to look into it, and the right thing is going to be done.

Now this is an exact illustration of the kind of help it is for us, "in *every* thing by prayer to make known our requests to God." The very act of confidence is in itself tranquillising, and the Divine sympathy meets and sustains us.

—*Mrs. Beecher Stowe.*

5. We shall be calmed in, and strengthened for, life's conflicts.

(3741.) Prayer does not directly take away a trial or its pain, any more than a sense of duty directly takes away the danger of infection, but it preserves the strength of the whole spiritual fibre, so that the trial does not pass into the temptation to sin. A sorrow comes upon you. Omit prayer and you fall out of God's testing into the devil's temptation; you get angry, hard of heart, reckless. But meet the dreadful hour with prayer, cast your care on God, claim Him as your Father though He seem cruel—and the degrading, paralysing, embittering effects of pain and sorrow pass away, streams of sanctifying and softening thought pour into the soul, and that which might have wrought your fall but works in you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. You pass from bitterness into the courage of endurance, and from endurance into battle, and from battle into victory, till at last the trial dignifies and blesses your life. The force of prayer is not altogether effective at once. Its action is cumulative. At first there seems no answer to your exceeding bitter cry. But there has been an answer. God has heard. A little grain of strength, not enough to be conscious of, has been given in one way or another. A friend has come in and grasped your hand—you have heard the lark sprinkle his notes like raindrops on the earth—a text has stolen into your mind, you know not how. Next morning you awake with the old aching at the heart, but the grain of strength has kept you alive—and so it goes on; hour by hour, day by day, prayer brings its tiny sparks of light till they orb into a star; its grains of strength till they grow into an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. The answer to prayer is slow; the force of prayer is cumulative. Not till life is over is the whole answer given, the whole strength it has brought understood. —*Stopford Brooke.*

6. Our characters will be ennobled.

(3742.) Would you measure in some sort the gains of this communion with God to which we are

admitted and invited, consider only what we may gain by communion with good and holy men, and then conclude from this less to the greater. Consider, I say, the elevating, ennobling influences which it exercises on the character to live in habitual intercourse with the excellent of the earth, with those whose conversation is in heaven, the tones of whose minds are high and lofty and pure. Almost without being aware of it, we derive some of their spirit into ourselves; it is like an atmosphere of health which we unconsciously inhale. But how much more must this be the case, how far mightier the reactive influence for good, when we continually set before us, when we live in fellowship with Him, who is the highest, the purest, and the best, in whom all perfections meet, from whom all true nobleness proceeds; when thus, I say, our fellowship is not with men, who have caught a few glimpses of the glory of God, but with God Himself, from whom all greatness and glory proceed?
—*Trench.*

(3743.) We know those who have been used to kings' courts or educated society from others. By their voice, accent, and language, and not only so, by their gestures and gait, by their usages, by their mode of conducting themselves and their principles of conduct, we know well what a vast difference there is between those who have lived in good society, and those who have not. What indeed is called "good society" is often very worthless society. I am not speaking of it to praise it; I only mean, that, as the manners which men call refined or courtly are gained only by intercourse with courts and polished circles, and as the influence of the words there used (that is, of the ideas which those words, striking again and again on the ear, convey to the mind), extends in a most subtle way over all that men do; over the turn of their sentences and the tone of their questions and replies, and their general bearing, and the spontaneous flow of their thoughts, and their mode of viewing things, and the general maxims or heads to which they refer them, and the motives which determine them, and their likings and dislikings, hopes and fears, and their relative estimate of persons, and the intensity of their perceptions towards particular objects; so a habit of prayer, the practice of turning to God and the unseen world, in every season, in every place, in every emergency (let alone its supernatural effect of prevailing with God),—prayer, I say, has what may be called a natural effect, in spiritualising and elevating the soul. A man is no longer what he was before; gradually, imperceptibly to himself, he has imbibed a new set of ideas, and become imbued with fresh principles. He is as one coming from kings' courts, with a grace, a delicacy, a dignity, a propriety, a justness of thought and taste, a clearness and firmness of principle, all his own. Such is the power of God's secret grace acting through those ordinances which He has enjoined us; such the evident fitness of those ordinances to produce the results which they set before us. As speech is the organ of human society, and the means of human civilisation, so is prayer the instrument of divine fellowship and divine training.
—*Newman.*

7. Our souls will be enriched.

(3744.) Prayer chiefly is the soul's communion with God. It is chiefly translation. It is chiefly transfiguration. It was worth more to Peter, James, and John, to stand for an hour and see the spirits dawn through the heaven, and talk with Christ, whose face shone as the sun, and whose raiment was white as the light, than if the three tabernacles which they craved had been built of diamonds and rubies on the mountain-top. It is what we get by the *soul* that makes us rich.
—*Beecher.*

(3745.) In praying we are blessed. It is with prayer as with study. When a youth is at college, he is apt to fancy that the chief reward of his industry will be the prize, the scholarship, or the degree for which he is contending; but in after years he finds that the most coveted scholastic prize is not to be compared in value with that clearness, strength, and discipline of the understanding which in his studies he is unconsciously acquiring. So in prayer, we are apt to imagine that the chief benefit of our supplications will be the obtainment of the blessing for which we make request; and yet nothing outside of us that can be secured by prayer is comparable in preciousness with the changes wrought *in* us by heartfelt and prolonged communion with God. —*R. A. Bertram.*

8. We shall be prepared for heaven.

(3746.) It is plain to common sense that the man who has not accustomed himself to the language of heaven will be no fit inhabitant of it when, in the Last Day, it is perceptibly revealed. The case is like that of a language or style of speaking of this world; we know well a foreigner from a native.
—*Newman.*

VII. *THE METAPHYSICS OF PRAYER.*

1. The secret of its usefulness and power.

(3747.) Prayer is useful,—1. As an act of obedience to God's command.

2. As the performance of a condition, without which He hath not promised us His mercy, and to which He hath promised it.

3. As a means to actuate, and express, and increase our own humility, dependence, desire, trust, and hope in God, and so to make us capable and fit for mercy, who else should be incapable and unfit.

4. And so, though God be not changed by it in Himself, yet the real change that is made by it on ourselves, doth infer a change in God by mere relation or extrinsical denomination; He being, according to the tenor of His own covenant, engaged to punish the unbelieving, prayerless, and disobedient, and to pardon them that are faithfully desirous and obedient. So that in prayer, faith and fervency are so far from being useless, that they as much prevail for the thing desired *by qualifying ourselves for it*, as if indeed they moved the mind of God to a real change; even as he that is in a boat, and by his hook layeth hold of the bank, doth as truly by his labour get nearer the bank, as if he drew the bank to him. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(3748.) Prayer procures deliverance from trouble, just as Naaman's dipping himself seven times in Jordan procured him a deliverance from his leprosy; not by any virtue in itself adequate to so great an effect, you may be sure, but from this, that it was appointed by God as the condition of his recovery; and so obliged the power of Him who appointed it to give force and virtue to His own institutions.

beyond what the nature of the thing itself could otherwise have raised it to. —*South*, 1633-1716.

2. Is not rendered unnecessary by God's faithfulness to His promises.

(3749.) "God's promises, by reason of His unchangeableness, may be relied on; what occasion, then, of prayer, seeing the thing promised will come round of its own steady accord, whether you open your lips or no?" The answer is short and simple. These promises are made only to those who expect, and desire, and ask for them. They are not promised indifferently, and come out of their own accord to all, but to such only who have meditated them, and who value them, and desire them, and earnestly seek them; being, in truth, too valuable to be thrown about to a scrambling mob; being the high and holy attractions by which God intended to work upon the nature of man, and lead it out of its present low and sunken estate into glorious liberty and unwearied ambition of every noble excellence. They are prizes in the hand of God to stimulate the soul's activities,—more glorious prizes than laurel wreaths, or the trumpetings of fame, or principalities and thrones,—and they are yielded only to an application of faculties, at the least, as intense and ardent as is put forth in pursuit of human ambition. God doth not cheapen His promises down to a glance at them with the eye, or a mouthing of them with the tongue, but He requireth of those that would have them an admiration equal to that of lovers, an estimation equal to that of royal diadems, and a pursuit equal to that of Olympic prizes. —*Irving*, 1792-1834.

3. It is not rendered unnecessary by God's unchangeableness.

(3750.) Another cavil against prayer is drawn from the unchangeableness of God. This objection is another instance of the ease with which men find objections to religion, and you have only to apply it to another subject in order to discern its fallacy. In the administration of justice, its inflexibleness or unchangeableness is that very quality which makes all men bold in offering their petitions in its courts. If it were at the call of power, or party, or selfishness, or favouritism, or even of mercy, it would be unheeded, instead of awfully respected, and surely calculated on. So far from hindering men from addressing prayers which are consistent with the laws promulgated, its steadiness of purpose is the very life of all such petitions. A man has no sooner claim for redress than he expects it and sues it out. A man is no sooner defrauded in an inferior court, than he expects and petitions for justice in a superior. The flocking of all the injured in the kingdom to the judges as they go their rounds, and to the magistrates where they reside, is the clearest proof of the effect of an unchangeable mood of operations in begetting confidence, and calling forth active and urgent requests.

Now, it is so not only in matters of justice, but in every other department of our affairs. A father that is constant in his procedure is sure to beget expectation, and desire, and confidence in his children; who, knowing where to find his will and pleasure, look for it, and converse of it, and calculate on it as a thing secure. A friend that is constant in his friendship, a counsellor that is constant in his wisdom, a master that is constant in his requirements, a man that is consistent in his public or private behaviour,—each one of these begets expectation and anticipation, which are the very food of desire and of prayer. For there is little or no desire of a thing which we have no hope of obtaining. It is the expectation begotten which turns chance or indifference into desire, and the desire to possess is the only thing which can justify the request to obtain. So that without expectation there is no prayer properly so-called, and without constancy of procedure no expectation will be generated; so that constancy is the soul of prayer.

On the other hand, I am willing to allow that while constancy, either in the laws of nature, or the ways of men, or the promises of God, begets expectation and desire and prayer in that direction to which they constantly tend, it never fails to destroy expectation, and along with it desire and prayer, in the opposite direction. If justice be inflexible, it is vain to petition against it; if a father be unbending from the rules of his household, his children soon learn to confine their wishes and prayers within the given bounds. And a friend who is known to be staunch is not bored with undermining surmises; nor a counsellor that is always wise, with fallacious sophisms; nor a master that is firm, with vain suits for relaxation.

While steadiness of purpose and character is the life of expectation and prayer within the bounds of its fixed procedure, it is the death of all without them.

Now, though these illustrations bring out by example the truth of that doctrine, that the unchangeableness of God, instead of begetting torpor, is like the loadstone, which, though restful itself, draws all things towards it, that it is all the ground upon which rests that anticipation which is both wind and sails to the movements of the mind; yet these same illustrations, especially that from justice and an unchangeable father, have in them a hardness and sternness which may have engendered a wrong conception of God, which it is necessary to remove before advancing further. If God's promises did embrace nothing but abstract justice, and measure out nice and strict desert, then their unchangeableness were the death-blow to all expectation of future weal; but seeing they contain mercy, and forgiveness, and peace, and everlasting blessedness to all who receive His oracles and walk thereby,—being a rule not to equity only, but a rule to mercy and to bounty, and to whatever else is amiable and attractive to the soul of man,—it comes to pass that their stability and unchangeableness is the stability and unchangeableness of that wise and wide and lovely administration which sufficeth to comfort and upbind the fallen, as well as to strike down and discomfit the refractory and rebellious. —*Irving*, 1792-1834.

(3751.) Prayer is not designed, as some have mischievously construed it, to alter the purpose of God. Some have said, "God is omniscient, and knows all things. God has His sovereign purposes, and has declared all things. Is it therefore," they say, "possible that your prayers can alter the purpose of Heaven; or that He whose plans have been chalked out from everlasting can be moved to turn aside from it by the earnestness or eloquence of your entreaties?" The objection that has been often made to prayer, is practically such as this—

"God is omniscient, therefore He knows what you want. What is the use of telling Him?" The answer is plain. God is omnipotent. He can give you harvest without sowing. What is the use of sowing? But nevertheless you sow, and nevertheless we pray; and your common-sense will tell you that it is truer and more scriptural than the metaphysics of the schools. It will be told us, God is immutable in all His plans and purposes and acts; therefore why try to make Him change? God is immutable in the principles of His government, but He is not immutable in His acts. For instance, God did not create once, God did create once, and now He has ceased from creating. Here are three distinct and different acts; yet God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. God therefore may be immutable in the principles of His government, but not in the modes in which He carries those principles in development.

But, you say, "We see that God governs the world by second causes. If there be a frost, fruits will be nipped; if there be no rain, the earth will be parched; and we shall find this law always and everywhere." We see a little into God's great plans, and then we pronounce upon them; just as some geologists see a few feet down through the rind of the earth, and then pronounce upon its inner contents. It may be and is true, that God does commonly work the world by second causes; only these second causes that we see are the results of our discovery; and you know a discovery made by man can be corrected and improved; the fact that God hears prayer is not our discovery, but His revelation of His own will, which we know absolutely to be true. But grant that "God works by second causes, therefore," we reply, "it is not needless to implore Him, or necessary to suppose He will alter these and disturb nature to suit us." Suppose a chain stretching from the throne down to the very footstool. Of course each link is dependent on the previous link, or each third cause upon the second, and each second upon the first, and all upon the staple that fixes it to the throne of God. Very well, you answer, how can He do anything that you ask without dislocating the chain; removing one link, and substituting another at our prayer; which would be disorganisation and confusion. The solution is plain. May not the power of God be transmitted down that chain as the electric fluid is transmitted along the wire; not injuring the medium by which it travels, and yet achieving stupendous results at the end at which it arrives? May not God, therefore, without dislocating a single link, without ceasing to act by second cause, send an influence through the whole series of causes that will be an answer to your prayer, and yet in full conformity with all the fixed arrangements of His own mighty and glorious universe? And if God has decrees—as we admit He has—may not His decree include in its execution our desire? And may it not be that the necessity of our desire is just as fixed as the fact of God's everlasting, unchangeable decree?

But the fact is, the man that wants does not discuss metaphysics; he prays. There is something in our hearts that tell us, like an echo of what God has uttered in heaven, "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened; ask, and ye shall obtain." The moment that a person begins to discuss the possibilities of prayer, the philosophy of prayer, the metaphysics of prayer, that moment, depend upon it, he does not feel his deep wants as he should, nor know what are the blessings that can supply them. You never find a hungry child begin first to discuss metaphysical difficulties with his mother when he wants bread; and you will not find a man, who really and in his inmost soul feels that he needs saving blessings, pause or arrest his petitions for a single moment in discussing how it is possible that God can answer prayer; or how, without disturbing His fixed arrangements, He can bow His ear and listen to my petition. The text that upsets all objections is that God will have man everywhere to pray. Make the experiment; "seek, and you shall find—pray without ceasing—knock, and it shall be opened—ask, and you shall obtain."

—*Cumming.*

(3752.) Some persons, setting themselves to speculate upon the subject, and not submitting their speculations to the guidance of the Bible, find themselves unable to see how prayer can be of any use. "It cannot change the purpose of God," they say. "It cannot alter that course of events which He has appointed." "He is too great to be moved,—too high to be reached,—too firm to be influenced by our poor petitions." And so they "restrain prayer" in themselves, and chill into prayerlessness all who give up their minds to the guidance of their philosophy.

It is perhaps a sufficient answer to such speculations, to ask their authors whether it is any more reasonable for us to expect that, on condition of our digging and mellowing the ground and putting seeds into it, the Creator will open those little seeds, and fetch an abundant harvest out of them; or that on condition of our putting certain kinds of food into our mouths, He will put forth His energy to change it into blood, and muscle, and bones, for the upbuilding of these bodies; or that on condition of our stretching a wire across the continent, and adjusting certain metals and fluids, according to an arrangement which He has appointed, we may write our message, and He will, in the twinkling of an eye, by an instantaneous, imperceptible thrill along that wire, cause the message to be faithfully written at the other end of it, on the other side of the continent;—whether it is any more reasonable to believe that God will put forth His almighty power for us, to do such things, on such conditions, than that He will put forth the same power to help us and to bless us, on condition of our asking Him to do so.

I say, this might be a sufficient answer to such speculations. Certainly it would show that there really is no less difficulty in harmonising the unchangeableness of God's purposes with the utility of man's labour, than with the efficacy of man's prayers.

It will generally be found that there is in the same minds really as much scepticism in the one respect as in the other. Those who think it absurd to pray to God do not really see His hand and His working in those wonders by which He seeks to make Himself known. They do not recognise the living God—but only a blind mechanical thing which they call nature—in those wonderful and mysterious processes to which I alluded. It is not far from Deism to Atheism. It is not much better to believe in a God who will not hear our prayers, than not to believe in any God at all. Not much

better in its effect upon us and not much more philosophical. —*Nelson.*

(3753.) We are told that prayer is unphilosophical, inasmuch as the success of prayer would involve a change of operation in Him who is immutable. "Has not God arranged all events from eternity? Is not everything foreknown, predetermined by Him, and can our feeble cries change His all-wise decrees?" But the same objection applies to our exertions as much as to your prayers. If it is absurd to suppose we can gain anything by asking the help of God, it is surely no less absurd to expect advantage from efforts of our own. Those who urge this plea contradict it in daily life. Let them act upon it and they will be at least consistent in their folly. Are you in business? Be not diligent—take no precautions—in special circumstances make no special efforts to secure success. God foreknows and has foreordained to the uttermost farthing how much you will gain or lose. Be not so presumptuous as to suppose that your efforts can disarrange His purposes. If you break a limb, ask no surgeon to set it. If you are in pain, adopt no methods to mitigate it. If a dangerous malady seize you, call in no physician to cure it. How can you presume to suppose you can alter the divine plan—or the irreversible decrees of necessity and fate? Fools and blind! If you *work* to bring about what you deem desirable, in spite of eternal purposes and irrevocable destiny, why not *pray?* If your own exertions may possibly benefit you, why may not God's exertions in answer to your prayer, when He Himself has commanded us to pray, and commanded it as a means of securing assistance from Him? We pretend not to explain the mystery of the divine purposes in connection with the efficacy of prayer. Neither can our opponents explain the equal mystery of those purposes in connection with the value of their own exertions. Yet, with the problem unsolved, they persist in working. So we persist in praying; but how will their efforts for their own well-being rise up at the last day to condemn those who neglected prayer under a pretext which their every action in daily life disowned! —*Newman Hall.*

4. In view of the experience and testimony of God's people, speculative objections against prayer are futile and absurd.

(3754.) You believe in the existence of lately discovered planets, and in other astronomical facts which you yourself have never observed, and you would think it absurd scepticism in any man to doubt them. Why? Because all who have used the proper glasses, and carefully made the proper observations, concur in affirming the truth. Now you will find no sincere Christian of long standing and observation but will tell you he has had many and decisive proofs in their number and coincidence that his prayer was heard, and practically answered in the occurrences of his life. However widely devout men disagree in other points, in this they are well agreed; and very many have declared that things have never gone well with them when their morning prayers have been distracted, cold, and languid. To suppose it is with all these witnesses the dream of superstition, is not less irrational than it would be to suppose that all the observers of the Georgium Sidus, of Pallas, and Ceres, have been deceived by meteors, or some defect in their glasses. To say that the majority of persons have no such evidence, who do not pray aright, and live right, in order to secure answers to their prayers, would be as idle an objection as that the planets just mentioned have not been seen by those who never looked for them in a proper direction, and by the aid of a proper telescope.

—*Hannah More's Life.*

(3755.) We cannot tell why it should be so, or how it is that our prayers are followed by divine performances. But we need not the less, on that account, joyfully accept the fact, as revealed to us by God. Some, indeed, have tried to discourage from all prayer on this ground. They have said, What possible effect can our prayers have on the Omnipotent? and hence they have concluded that it is vain for us to pray. Now, the meaning of this objection is simply that they cannot tell *how* our prayers can affect the divine actings; in other words, that they cannot *trace* the connection between our act in prayer and God's act in answering it. This is all that the objection to prayer implied in such a question can mean. Well, we would reply, What of that? This is not peculiar to prayer; it is true of everything that is the result of any other thing. People are apt to imagine that what they are familiar with as a phenomenon they understand as a speculation. But no man understands *causation.* In the commonest instances of cause and effect there is a mystery which none can penetrate; for no man can tell *how* it is that the cause produces the effect. If a match be applied to a quantity of gunpowder, for instance, there is an explosion, and we say the explosion has been caused by the application of the match. True; the one followed instantly on the other; but why it did so, or what is the connection between the two, we cannot tell. All we know in any such case is, that the fact which we call the effect follows invariably the fact which we call the cause. Now, we know as much as this in regard to the connection between prayer and its effect. We know, from God's Word, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." We know by experience that the utterance of prayer is followed by a divinely-produced result; and knowing this, we know as much about the connection between prayer and its answer, as we know of the connection between any cause and its effect. —*W. L. Alexander.*

VIII. *ITS RANGE.*

1. Nothing is too little to be made a subject of prayer.

(3756.) Many of our troubles, indeed, are in His sight no more than the breaking of a toy would be to a child; yet as the loving father, while knowing how small the thing is that has given his child its pain, does not therefore turn the child away,—does not say, "Silly child, it is but a toy," but soothes the distress of his little one, tenderly wiping its tears, and removing the sorrow by more than repairing the loss,—so and much more does God. The greatest loss of earthly things is in His eyes but as the breaking of a toy; yet does He no more stand aloof from His children's sorrow because He is God, than does the father because he is a grown man. He does not sit above the clouds, as the heathen thought that their gods sat, wrapped in the selfishness of His superiority, and despising the littleness of the creatures that crawl below. "He

knoweth our frame," for He made it. "He understandeth our thoughts," for the mind, from whence they rise, is His workmanship. And there is nothing which is a source of pain or uneasiness, of doubt or difficulty, of grief or anguish to His children, which He is not only willing to hear of but desirous that they should tell Him. —*Champneys.*

2. We may pray for secular blessings.

(3757.) *Question.* Is it proper to go to God with secular troubles, and make them subject-matter of prayer? Would you, for instance, encourage men who are in debt to pray that God would help them to means with which to discharge their indebtedness?

I would. Any trouble that a man would go to his earthly father about, he may go to his God about. People say, "Do you believe that, contrary to all the great laws of nature and political economy, God will provide a sum of money for a man in answer to his prayer? Do you believe that God contravenes natural laws to assist a man in paying his debts?" I do not. But when a man has used his means to the uttermost, and trusts in God, then God uses His means to control natural laws for that man's benefit. I know that, if I succeed, I must succeed, not by having my father's name, but by putting forth my own exertions. I know that I must make my own way in life, and I undertake to do it. But if I come to a point where I am shut up, held back, so that I cannot go forward, and I do not know what to do, I may go to my father for help. It is not for the sake of throwing off burdens, it is not with the expectation that he will contravene natural laws, that I go to him. I go to him because I have used up my stock of knowledge of natural laws; and I say to him, "You are older and larger than I am; cannot you use your knowledge of those laws so as to help me?" And he says, "Yes, I can." And he does. And nobody thinks there is anything strange in it. Everybody understands that a father can use his knowledge of natural laws for his child without violating those laws. But when you speak of God's helping men in their secular affairs, people are aghast, and say, "Do you suppose God is going to stop the laws of nature for the sake of enabling men to keep their bank account running?" I understand that God helps men, not by stopping natural laws, but by using them better for us than we can use them for ourselves. And if there is anything justified, it is prayer for help in secular matters by those that love God. And the oftener you go to God for help, the more welcome you are. When a man comes to you for counsel concerning things that are important as affecting his welfare, it not only does not impoverish you to give him the benefit of your knowledge and wisdom, but you are gratified at his consulting you, and you take pleasure in lending yourself to him to that extent. I cannot conceive of a man who, having a store of discreet knowledge, should be unwilling to use it for the succour of his fellow-men. If ducats were as plenty with me as thoughts, I should be most happy to lend to everybody!

Now, when we go to God, we ask Him to do things that please Him. It is more blessed for Him to give to you and to help you than not to do it. And when a man is in trouble, and goes to God, and says, "I have done all I can. I do not know what to do more. I am willing to suffer or to be relieved. Thy will be done,"—I believe that then God hears and answers prayer, even though the trouble be of a secular nature. And I do not believe that in doing it He violates natural laws. I believe, on the contrary, that He controls natural laws, and makes them perform errands of mercy. I should feel almost as though I were an orphan if that doctrine were taken out of the world.

I recollect hearing my father say that once, when he came home from a journey on a Saturday night in the dead of winter, mother met him at the door, and said, "We have just enough fuel for this evening, but none for to-morrow." Anybody that ever lived on Litchfield Hill in winter knows that a Sunday there and then would not suggest summer. Father used to be run very close for money in those days, and in this instance he had none, and did not know where to get any. And, in telling of it, he said, "I felt like a child, and I inwardly prayed God to help me." And he said he had hardly finished praying before an old farmer, who had never been particularly friendly, and who did not come to church very often, drove up to the door with a load of wood, which he said he "took it into his head he would like to give to the parson."

Do you ask me if that was an answer to prayer? Well, although I would not attempt a philosophical explanation of it, it is so pleasant to think it was an answer to prayer, and the circumstances point so strongly in that direction, that I prefer to think it was. I do not believe it will do anybody any hurt to believe that God loves us, that His ear is ever open to our cry, and that, while we use all lawful and known means in our own behalf, He stands ready to succour us in the day of trouble. I would not for anything have my mouth stopped so that I could not go to Him in my extremity, and say, "I am poor and wretched; oh, help, help!" —*Beecher.*

3. Yet there are limitations to its range, such as:—

(1.) *The real good of the suppliant.*

(3758.) Immense as is the power of prayer, it is a mistake to suppose that good men will get anything they choose to ask for. On the men of the world God may bestow those gratifications of their lusts for which they clamour to Him, as He showered quails on the gluttonous Israelites whom even "angels'" food did not satisfy, and in the same day smote them with a great plague (Numb. xi., Ps. cvi. 15); but no fervour or persistency in supplication will ever induce Him to give to His people what would be to their injury. Our Lord marks it as distinctive of a father, that, notwithstanding the evil that cleaves to our nature, he will not give his children what would be hurtful to them. "What man is there of you," He says, "whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Mark the argument that our Lord founds upon this fact. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things"—and only good things—"to them that ask Him!"

The promise is: "They that seek the Lord shall not want any *good* thing:"—not what they may *think* good, but what *is* good; and not everything that is good in itself, but what is good for them. Things that are good in themselves may be to

certain individuals bad and hurtful things. The physician says to one of his patients: "Be very careful not to touch animal food." "Why, doctor," the patient answers, "I did not know you were a vegetarian." "Nor am I," is the doctor's reply; "animal food is in itself a good thing, but to you, in your present condition, it is poison." In effect, the Heavenly Physician often says the same thing. To the suppliants at His throne He says, "The things you ask are in themselves good and desirable, but to you they would be hurtful, and therefore you shall not have them."

—*R. A. Bertram.*

(2.) *God's appointments respecting the future life.*

(3759.) Look but upon one that plays a game at bowls, how, no sooner than he hath delivered his bowl, what a screwing of his body this way and that way, what calling doth he make after it that it may be neither short nor over, nor wide on either side; but all in vain: the bowl keepeth on its course and reacheth to the place, not where the mind but the strength of the bowler sent it. Thus it is with those that pray for the dead: they pray and call unto God, and sing requiems and dirges for the souls of men departed, that they may be sent into purgatory, not hell—a course altogether unwarrantable, unavailable; for, as the body is laid down in the dust, so the soul is gone to God that gave it, there to receive according to the deeds done here in the flesh, whether it be to life or death eternal. —*Wincop*, 1627.

4. These limitations are wisely and mercifully ordained.

(3760.) Had God made prayer absolute in power, He would practically have resigned the government of the universe into the hands of men, and sank into the position of a mere servant of His creatures; and those who remember how wicked most men are, and how unwise often are the best men, will tremble at the very thought of the consequences of such a revolution. To have made prayer absolute would have involved most contradictory procedures. What strange contests of supplication would have occurred! The heir, for example, praying that the man from whom he has large expectations may be speedily removed to a better world, and the man himself praying that he may be permitted to continue in the world many years! And the prayers of each alike absolute in power! On such an arrangement as this, the world could not have gone on for a single day. Nay, it would have been a fearful curse had every prudent and right prayer been made all powerful. All men would then have been in danger of becoming atheists. The uniformity of the power of prayer would have operated in the same manner as the regularity of the processes of nature does now, but far more mightily. Now, because the forces of nature operate with undeviating regularity, many students of science maintain that the great machine of the universe moves on by its own momentum, and laugh at us who worship God as the great First Cause and Primal Force; and then, had every wise word of prayer been followed by blessing as surely and manifestly as every fall of the hammer of a well-loaded revolver is followed by an explosion, men would have lost all sense of their dependence on a Divine Being. *Prayers*, in fact, would cease to be offered; they would be *incantations*. For these reasons, in the greatness of His mercy, God has reserved to Himself the right of answering as well as of hearing prayer, and of dispensing the blessings of Providence, even as He does the "gifts of the Holy Ghost," "according to His own will." —*R. A. Bertram.*

5. These limitations should be reverently respected by us.

(3761.) When, by one way or another, from the Bible or from the world around us, we have discovered God's purpose and will, then we do not ask Him to change it, but to help us to bear or to fulfil it. "If we ask anything according to His will He heareth us." No one thinks of praying that the sun may rise in the west instead of the east. And why? Not because it is impossible with God, but that long-continued experience has clearly revealed His will. No one thinks of praying, that one who has just breathed his last may wake up to life once more. And why? Not because it is impossible with God, but that He has willed it otherwise. And so no one thinks it right to pray that those who have advanced to extreme old age should be granted a new lease of life, and blush again into youth, and the blooms of early promise. Whenever we clearly and decidedly recognise the will of God, we submit to it as inevitable and unalterable.

—*W. Page Roberts.*

IX. *IS A DUTY BINDING ON ALL MEN.*

(3762.) Though an unbeliever sin in praying, yet it is not a sin for him to pray. There is sin in the manner of his praying; but prayer, as to the act and substance of it, is his duty. He sins, not because he prays, that is required of him, but because he prays amiss, not in that manner that is required of him. There are abominations in the prayers of a wicked man, but for him to pray is not an abomination, it is the good and acceptable will of God, that which He commands. He commands him to pray, and he sins not in complying with the command, so far it is obedience; but he prays not as he ought to do, there is his sin. Now he should leave his sin, not his duty. He should pray better in another manner, that is all which can be inferred, not that he should not pray at all. For so he leaves not his sin, but his duty. A boy is learning to write; he scribbles at first untowardly, makes, it may be, more blots than letters. It is his fault that he blots, not that he writes, that is his duty; in this case you would have him leave blotting, not leave writing. So here, the act of prayer is a duty, but the manner of performing this act, therein is the fault; this should be corrected, but the act should not be omitted. —*Clarkson*, 1622-1687.

X. *IS A PRIVILEGE.*

(3763.) There is great evil in regarding prayer as mere duty. The moment we so regard it, as a duty we begin to perform it. Very justly, and not oftener than true, is it said—"Service was performed." Yes, it was performed; it was a performance from beginning to end; and so the consequence of regarding prayer as a duty is, that we go forth to perform our duty, and having expressed our wants in prayer, we conclude our duty has been done. But this is a great mistake; this is accepting the means as the end. You go to the throne of grace—to a fountain deeper than Jacob's well:

you draw water—living water, but, instead of drinking the water as you should, you are satisfied with having raised the bucket to the ground, and you retire, having done your duty. The end of drawing living water is to drink it; the meaning of praying is to reach something beyond it. Prayer is not a religious duty, but the means of attaining religious blessings. By its very nature it is the instrument of religious progress, comfort, and peace. —*Cumming.*

(3764.) Our hearts should open themselves in prayer to God for their many wants, as the infant openeth its hungry mouth, and lifteth up the cry into the ear of its mother; and as that infant, being filled and satisfied, smiles in the face of its mother, and spreads its little hands to embrace her in token of the gladness of its heart, so ought our spirits, being filled with the answers of their prayers, to feel an inward joy and thankfulness to the Father of spirits, and call upon the lips and hands, and every other obedient member, to express with songs and attitudes of praise the emotions with which they overflow. —*Irving*, 1792-1834.

XI. *KINDS OF PRAYER.*

1. Ejaculatory prayer.

(1.) *Its power.*

(3765.) Ejaculatory prayer is prayer darted up from the heart to God, not at stated intervals, but in the course of our daily occupations and amusements. The word "ejaculatory" is derived from the Latin word for a dart or arrow, and there is an idea in it which one would be loath indeed to forfeit.

Imagine an English archer, strolling through a forest in the old times of Crecy and Agincourt, when the yeomen of this island were trained to deliver their arrows with the same unfailing precision as "a left-handed Gibeonite" discharging a stone bullet from his sling. A bird rises in the brushwood under his feet, a bird of gorgeous plumage or savoury flesh. He takes an arrow from his quiver, draws his bow to its full stretch, and sends the shaft after the bird with the speed of lightning. Scarcely an instant elapses before his prey is at his feet. It has been struck with unerring aim in the critical part and drops on the instant.

Very similar in the spiritual world is the force of what is called ejaculatory prayer. The Christian catches suddenly a glimpse of some blessing, deliverance, relief, a longing after which is induced by the circumstances into which he is thrown. Presently it shall be his. As the archer first draws the bow in towards himself, so the Christian retires, by a momentary act of recollection, into his own mind, and there realises the presence of God. Then he launches one short, fervent petition into the ear of that Awful Presence, throwing his whole soul into the request. And, lo! it is done! The blessing descends, prosecuted, overtaken, pierced, fetched down from the vault of heaven by the winged arrow of prayer. —*Goulburn.*

(2.) *Is even more essential than stated prayer.*

(3766.) A Christian that is frequent in ejaculatory prayer, when he goes to pray more solemnly, does not go from the world to God, but from God to God. What you fill the vessel with, that you must expect to draw from it; if you put in water, you cannot bring out wine. What dost thou fill thy heart with all day? Is it the earth? Then how canst thou expect to find heaven there at night?

If you would have fire for your evening sacrifice, do not expect a new flame to be dropped from heaven, but keep what is already on thy altar from going out, which thou canst not better do than by feeding it with the fuel of ejaculatory prayer all the day. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3767.) Service and prayer are the web and woof of the Christian life, of which every part of it is composed. Both are in the groundwork of the stuff. Not even in point of time must they be too rigidly sundered from one another. Prayer at stated seasons is good and necessary; but a man aiming at sanctity in ever so low a degree, will find it impossible to confine his prayers to stated seasons. He will soon discover that prayer is literally, and not merely in a figure, "the Christian's breath of life;" and that to attempt to carry on the spiritual life without more prayer than the recital of a form on rising, and retiring to rest, is about the same absurdity as it would be for a man to open his casement morning and evening, and inhale the fresh air for a few minutes, and then say to himself on closing it, that that amount of breathing must suffice him for the rest of the day. The analogy suggested by this image is, I believe, a perfectly true one, and will hold good if examined. The air from the casement is very delicious, very healthful, very refreshing, very invigorating; it is a good thing to stand at the casement and inhale it; but there must be air in the shop, in the factory, in the office, as well as at the casement, if the man, as he works, is to survive. Under this view of it, ejaculatory prayer is seen to be even a more essential thing than stated prayer. Both are necessary to the well-being of Christian life; but the momentary lifting the heart to God,—the momentary realisation of His presence amidst business or under temptation,—is necessary to its very being. The life is no more when the work is suspended. For which reason probably it is that the great apostolic prayer-precept is given with a breadth which excludes all in limitations of time and place,—"Pray without ceasing." —*Goulburn.*

(3768.) The mind wants steadying and setting right many times a day. It resembles a compass placed on a rickety table; the least stir of the table makes the needle swing round and point untrue. Let it settle, then, till it points aright. Be perfectly silent for a few moments, thinking of Jesus; there is an almost divine force in silence. Drop the thing that worries, that excites, that interests, that thwarts you; let it fall, like a sediment, to the bottom, until the soul is no longer turbid; and say secretly, "Grant, I beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful servant pardon and peace; that I may be cleansed from all my sins, and serve Thee with a *quiet mind*." Yes! with a quiet mind. We cannot serve Him with a turbid one; it is a mere impossibility. Thus composing ourselves from time to time, thus praying and setting the mind's needle true, we shall little by little approximate towards that devout frame, which binds the soul to its true centre, even while it travels through worldly business, worldly excitements, worldly cares.

—*Goulburn.*

(3.) *Is always practicable.*

(3769.) Ejaculations take not up any room in the soul. They give liberty of callings, so that at the same instant one may follow his proper vocation. The husbandman may dart forth an ejaculation, and not make a balk the more. The seaman, nevertheless, steers his ship right in the darkest night. Yea, the soldier at the same time may shoot out his prayer to God, and aim his pistol at his enemy, the one better hitting the mark for the other.

The field wherein bees feed is no whit the barer for their biting; when they have taken their full repast on flower or grass, the ox may feed, the sheep fatten on their reversions. The reason is, because those little chemists distil only the refined part of the flower, leaving the grosser substance thereof. So ejaculations bind not men to any bodily observance, only busy the spiritual half, which makes them consistent with the prosecution of any other employment. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3770.) In hard havens, so choked up with the envious sands that great ships drawing many feet of water cannot come near, lighter and lesser pinnaces may freely and safely arrive. When we are time-bound, place-bound, so that we cannot compose ourselves to make a large solemn prayer, this is the right instant for ejaculations, whether orally uttered, or only poured forth inwardly in the heart. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3771.) Accustom thyself to secret ejaculations and converses with God. Lovers cast many a glance at each other, when they are at a distance and are deprived of set meetings. A little boat may do us some considerable service, when we have not time to make ready a great vessel.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3772.) "Pray that you enter not into temptation." Now when thou canst not draw out the long sword of a solemn prayer, then go to the short dagger of ejaculatory prayer; and with this, if in the hand of faith, thou mayest stab thy enemy to the heart. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3773.) Nehemiah, on the occasion of Artaxerxes' speech to him, interposeth a short prayer to God between the king's question and his answer to it. "Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed unto the God of heaven, and I said unto the king," &c. (Neh. ii. 4, 5). So soon was this holy man at heaven, and back again, without any breach of manners in making the king wait for his answer. "Pray always." —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

2. Secret prayer.

(3774.) As the tender dew that falls in the silent night makes the grass and herbs and flowers to flourish and grow more abundantly than great showers of rain that fall in the day, so secret prayer will more abundantly cause the sweet herbs of grace and holiness to grow and flourish in the soul, than all those more open, public and visible duties of religion, which too, too often are mingled and mixed with the sun and wind of pride and hypocrisy. —*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(3775.) A Christian should shut both the door of his closet and the door of his lips so close, that none should hear without what he says within. "Enter into thy closet," says Christ, "and when thou hast *shut thy door*, pray." But what need a man shut his closet door, if he may pray with a clamorous voice, if he make such a noise as all in the street or all in the house may hear him? The hen, when she lays her eggs, gets into a hole, a corner; but then she makes such a noise with her cackling, that she tells all in the house where she is. Such Christians that in their closets do imitate the hen, do rather pray to be seen, heard, and observed by men, than out of any noble design to glorify God, or to pour out their souls before Him that seeth in secret. Sometimes children, when they are vexed, or afraid of the rod, will run behind the door, or get into a dark hole, and there they will lie crying and sighing and sobbing, that all the house may know where they are. Oh, it is a childish thing so to cry and sigh and sob in our closets, as to tell all in the house where we are, and about what work we are.

—*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(3776.) We are more or less disposed for our respective duties according as our diligence, constancy, and seriousness in secret prayer is more or less. The root that produces the beautiful and flourishing tree, with all its spreading branches, verdant leaves, and refreshing fruit, that which gains for it sap, life, vigour, and fruitfulness, is all unseen; and the farther and deeper the roots spread beneath, the more the tree expands above. Christians! if you wish to prosper, if you long to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, strike your roots wide in private prayer. —*Salter*.

(3777.) A pious young lady, speaking one day of the preciousness of secret prayer, was asked by her pastor how, as a member of a large family of irreligious people, who were seemingly always about her, and with two room-mates to share her chamber, she managed to find either place or time for private devotion.

"As regards time," was the answer, "I secure that by rising an hour before the rest of the family; and the large drawing-room is my closet."

"The large drawing-room!" exclaimed the pastor in surprise. "I should have thought that such a theatre for worldly amusements, and sometimes of profanity as well as dissipation, would have been the last place to select as a sanctuary for prayer."

"It was selected at first," said the young lady, "with considerable reluctance, and not until I had failed in several other attempts to secure quiet and privacy for prayer and meditation; for I feared that the associations connected with that room would hinder my devotions. But I have not found it so. On the contrary, the fact of my having there erected an altar to the all-seeing and sin-hating God, has transformed that room into a very Bethel in my eyes; while the memory of the prayers I have offered there in the early morning, and the sweet seasons of communion enjoyed with my Saviour, furnish the best antidote to the temptations that beset my path. I no sooner enter that room than I feel conscious of the presence of Jesus; and knowing Him to be there, I dare not say or do anything to grieve or drive Him from me. If enticed by any of the gay company my aunt assembles in that room, to engage in sinful pastimes, I hear the pleading voice of my Saviour, saying, 'My daughter, consent thou not.' If for a moment

tempted to walk in the broad road of fashionable folly, there falls on my ear, in gentlest accents, the timely warning, 'Be not conformed to the world;' and redolent as is the very atmosphere with my Saviour's presence, I can have no fellowship with the works of darkness."

"A blessed experience is yours, my daughter," was the minister's response. It is even so. *Wherever* we seek our God He is found; and every place may become hallowed ground. Would that more of the fashionable parlours of our land were used as Bethels!

3. Intercessory prayer.

(3778.) Though the unconverted have not hearts to desire it at your hands; pray over their stupid souls before the Lord. When a friend is sick, and his senses are gone, you do not stay to send for the physician till he comes to himself, and is able to do it for him. You had need make the more haste to God for such as these, lest they go away in this apoplexy of conscience, and so be past praying for. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. Family prayer.

(3779.) Robert Hall, hearing that some worldly-minded persons objected to family prayer as taking up too much time, said that what might seem a loss will be more than compensated by the spirit of order and regularity which the stated observance of this duty tends to produce. It serves as an edge and border, to preserve the web of life from unravelling. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but He blesseth the habitation of the just."

(3780.) Now, one word as to prayer in the family. I mean, not simply the prayer of father or mother, as the case may be, but prayer where you are called, in the family, under any circumstances, to lead in prayer in behalf of others. Never refuse to take up your cross in this regard. I have known parents who, as they were about to come into the church, felt that they must "set up the family altar," as the phrase is; and they knelt down to pray, and, never having heard their own voice in prayer before, they trembled and broke down and could not go on. And then the devil said to them, "Pretty business you are making of it! I advise you to attend to something that you can do better than this." And they got up in disgust, and said, "I am making a fool of myself."

Now, a child that, when it commences walking, totters and falls, does not make a fool of itself. A boy in school that forgets his French, and cannot recite his lesson, does not make a fool of himself. And you do not make a fool of yourself, if, when you first attempt to pray in your family, you do not succeed. You rather excite gentle compassion in God. Do you suppose you have a scoffing God and sneering angels as listeners, when you make a halting, broken prayer? Suppose you do break down, that is only an argument for your trying again. What kind of a life have you been living, what sort of habits have you formed, that the first time you undertake to gratefully recognise in your household the providence and kindness of God, you should give up because you stumble and fall down? It ought to be an argument not of discouragement, but of persistence. You ought to say, "By the help of God, I will persevere, and do my duty."

—*Beecher.*

(3781.) A Scottish labourer went to work for a wealthy farmer. It was regarded as something of a favour to be employed by him, as he was a prompt and liberal paymaster, and was regarded by his neighbours as a very superior farmer. The Scotchman remained with him only a few days.

"I'm told you've left farmer R.," said a neighbour.

"Yes, I have," was the reply.

"Was the work too hard for you?"

"There was nothing to complain of on that score."

"What then? Were the wages too low?"

"No."

"Why did you leave?"

"*There was no roof on the house!*" And he went on his way, leaving his questioner to ponder on the strange answer he had given.

The Scotchman's meaning may be found in the saying of an old writer, who affirms that a dwelling in which prayer is not offered up to God daily is like a house without a roof, in which there cannot be either peace, safety, or comfort.

XII. *MODES OF PRAYER.*

1. Mechanical prayers.

(3782.) The Thibetan puts his written prayers in a cylinder, which revolves on a handle, and which he twirls by the aid of a ball and chain, each revolution of the instrument counting for an offering of the enclosed petition. Sometimes he encloses these in a great drum or cylinder, which he attaches to running water as he constructs his rude flour-mills, thus "praying without ceasing" by water-power; or, in other instances, constructs great prayer windmills.

In Burmah, the Buddhist punches his prayers in long, pennant-like slips of gilt paper, which he ties to a slight bamboo stick and waves before his idol-god, each oscillation being a repetition of the prayer, of which he keeps count by a rosary numbering one hundred and eight balls.

In Timbuctoo (Africa), the priest, or wizard, or medicine-man, writes prayers on a piece of board, washes it off, and, catching the water in a calabash, gives sick people to drink of it for their recovery, or sells it that it may be sprinkled over objects to improve or protect them.

Mohammedans wear Koran prayers about their persons as amulets or charms, though some of the African Mohammedans think they are ineffectual against firearms, which have been invented since Mohammed's day. Ward saw a Mohammedan woman dropping slips of paper on which prayers were written into a river, to obtain from the river-goddess immunity from sickness.

In China, the Taoist, in case of sickness, after performance of certain ceremonies, writes a statement of the fact and a prayer for assistance on a piece of paper, which is burned by the officiating priest, who determines whether it will be answered favourably. And in another process, a message is "sent to heaven" by writing it on paper and performing a ceremony, which enables the soul of the petitioner to leave the body, and "carry the message to heaven and bring back an answer."

In India, Mohammedans sometimes pray by proxy, wealthy persons hiring a sufficient number of men to alternate and ceaselessly read Koran prayers in the Imānebārā in their stead, the merit accruing to the employer. The Mohammedan also uses a rosary, as does the Hindoo ascetic. That of the Mohammedan contains thirty-three beads, that being the number of the times which certain parts of his formula, such as "God is most great: there is no God but He," &c., must be repeated.

—*Gracey.*

2. Extempore prayers.

(3783.) Some lay it to the charge of extemporary prayers, as if it were a diminution to God's majesty to offer them unto Him, because (alluding to David's expression to Ornan the Jebusite) they cost nothing, but come without any pains or industry to provide them (2 Sam. xxiv. 24). A most false aspersion.

Surely preparation of the heart (though not premeditation of every word) is required thereunto. And grant the party, praying at that very instant, forestudies not every expression, yet surely he has formerly laboured with his heart and tongue too, before he attained that dexterity of utterance, properly and readily to express himself. Many hours in the night no doubt he is waking, and was, by himself, practising Scripture phrase and the language of Canaan, whilst such as censure him for his laziness were fast asleep in their beds.

Suppose one should make an entertainment for strangers with flesh, fish, fowl, venison, and fruit, all out of his own fold, field, ponds, park, and orchard, will any say that this feast cost him nothing who makes it? Surely, although all grew on the same, and for the present he bought nothing by the penny, yet he, or his ancestors for him, did at first dearly purchase home accommodations from whence this entertainment did arise.

So the party who has attained the faculty and facility of extemporary prayer (the easy act of a laborious habit), though at the instant not appearing to take pains, has been formerly industrious with himself, or his parents with him, in giving pious education, or else he had never acquired so great perfection, seeing only long practice makes the pen of a ready writer.

—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3784.) Let them that yet deride this as uncertain and inconsiderate praying, but mark themselves, whether they cannot if they be hungry beg for bread, or ask help of their physician or lawyer, or landlord, or any other, as well without a learned or studied form, as with it.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. Written prayers.

(1.) *Are lawful.*

(3785.) Set prayers are prescript forms of our own or others' composing; such are lawful for any, and needful for some, to use.

Lawful for any. Otherwise God would not have appointed the priests (presumed of themselves best able to pray) a form of blessing the people. Nor would the Saviour have set His prayer, which (as the town-bushel is the standard both to measure corn and other bushels by) is both a prayer in itself and a pattern or platform of prayer. Such as accuse set forms to be pinioning the wings of the dove, will by the next return affirm that girdles and garters, made to strengthen and adorn, are so many shackles and fetters which hurt and hinder men's free motion.

Needful for some. Namely, for such who as yet have not attained (what all should endeavour) to pray extempore by the spirit. But as little children (to whom the plainest and evenest room at first is a labyrinth) are so ambitious of going alone, that they scorn to take the guidance of a form or bench to direct them, but will adventure by themselves, though often to the cost of a knock and a fall; so many confess their weakness, in denying to confess it, who, refusing to be beholden to a set form of prayer, prefer to say nonsense, rather than nothing, in their extempore expressions. More modesty, and no less piety, it had been for such men to have prayed longer with set forms that they might pray better without them. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(3786.) "Is it lawful to pray in a set form of words?" Nothing but very great ignorance can make you really doubt of it. Hath God anywhere forbid it? You will say that it is enough that He hath not commanded it. I answer, That in general He hath commanded it to all whose edification it tendeth to, when He commandeth you that all be done to edification; but He hath given to you no particular command or prohibition. No more hath He commanded you to pray in English, French, or Latin; nor to sing psalms in this tune or that; nor after this or that version or translation; nor to preach in this method particularly or that; nor always to preach upon a text; nor to use written notes; nor to compose a form of words, and learn them, and preach them after they are composed, with a hundred suchlike, which are undoubtedly lawful; yea, and needful to some, though not to others. If you make up all your prayer of Scripture sentences, this is to pray in a form of prescribed words, and yet as lawful and fit as any of your own. The psalms are most of them forms of prayer or praise, which the Spirit of God indited for the use of the Church, and of particular persons.

But are those forms lawful which are prescribed by others and not by God?

Yea; or else it would be unlawful for a child or scholar to use a form prescribed by his parents or master. And to think that a thing lawful doth presently become unlawful, because a parent, master, pastor, or prince doth prescribe it, is a conceit that I will not wrong my reader so far as to suppose him guilty of. Indeed if a usurper, that hath no authority over us in such matters, do prescribe it, we are not bound to formal obedience, that is, to do it therefore because he commandeth it; but yet I may be bound to it on some other accounts; and though his command do not bind me, yet it maketh not the thing itself unlawful.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2.) *To many are necessary.*

(3787.) One man is so unused to prayer (being ignorantly bred), or of such unready memory or expression, that he cannot remember the tenth part so much of his particular wants, without the help of a form as with it; nor can he express it so affectingly for himself or others; nay, perhaps not in tolerable words; and a form to such a man may be a duty; as to a dim-sighted man to read

by spectacles, or to an unready preacher to use prepared words and notes.
—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(3788.) In the family many cannot do without a form. True Christians who truly pray, cannot pray with two or three without a form. If so, let them use it. If a man cannot walk without a crutch, let him use a crutch. If you cannot pray without a form, then by all means adopt the form. Many a spiritual prayer is breathed from a form; many a formal prayer has been uttered extemporaneously. But the essence of prayer does not lie in these things. We may say prayers all day, and yet we may never pray at all; and the heart often prays most fervently when the lips are dumb or wholly inaudible. It is not the eloquent tongue that we want, but the humble and anxious heart. We do not care about a praying place, nor do we care much about a praying book. If we have deep wants felt within, the heart will speak should the lips be dumb. And God hears heart-prayer; He is not dependent upon its outward and eloquent expression. In His ear the Publican's first cry, the Magdalene's first tear, the Thief's word, rose with infinite and perfect acceptance, and brought down an answer exceeding abundant above all that they could ask or think. —*Cumming.*

(3.) *Efforts should be made to outgrow the need of them.*

(3789.) Men may, by sloth, and other vicious distempers of mind, especially by a negligence in getting their hearts and consciences duly affected with the matter and object of prayer, keep themselves under a real or supposed disability in this matter; but whereas prayer in this sort of persons is an effect of common illumination and grace, which are also from the Spirit of God, if persons do really and sincerely endeavour a due sense of what they pray for and about, He will not be wanting to help them to express themselves so far as is necessary for them, either privately or in their families. But those who will never enter the water but with flags or bladders under them will scarce ever learn to swim; and it cannot be denied but that the constant and unvaried use of set forms of prayer may become a great occasion of quenching the Spirit, and hindering all progress or growth in gifts or graces. —*Owen*, 1616-1683.

(4.) *Are often felt to be inadequate.*

(3790.) At certain times of strong emotion our religious feelings outrun any form of words. In such cases, not only is there no need of forms of prayer, but it is perhaps impossible to write forms of prayer for Christians agitated by such feelings. For each man feels in his own way,—perhaps no two men exactly alike;—and we can no more write down how men ought to pray at such times than we can give rules how they should weep or be merry. The better men they are, of course the better they will pray in such a trying time; but you cannot make them better; they must be left to themselves. And, though good men have before now set down in writing forms of prayer for persons so circumstanced, these were doubtless meant rather as patterns and helps, or as admonitions and (if so be) quietings of the agitated mind, than as prayers which it was expected would be used literally and entirely in their detail.
—*Newman.*

(3791.) No written prayer, unaided by devotional exercises drawn from the heart, can suit the ever-varying circumstances in the divine life. Its plans and designs against its spiritual enemies must be formed, like the plans of a general upon the field of battle, from an actual observation; he regulates his movements from actual inspection, and makes his arrangements on the spot according to the existing circumstances in which he is placed; for there are dangers which cannot be foreseen, and positions taken up by the enemy, as well as calamities of war to be met and encountered with on the spot. Such is the actual state of every soul which is actively fighting the good fight of faith—the soul is a little world where nothing is at rest, but all its powers and faculties are continually exercised in the war between the flesh and the spirit. The soul which really lives to God is engaged in a perpetual warfare. Look at a general. His plans and designs cannot be fixed and stationary, but are ever varying. As he regulates his movements, so must the believer. His plans and designs as to his spiritual enemies can only arise from the actual circumstances in which he is placed. To mortify sins, and keep down the risings of corruption—to resist the encroachments of a worldly spirit, and the temptations of Satan—to be making fresh advances in faith, love, and hope, is the daily business in hand; but our losses, trials, temptations, enemies to be resisted, are always presenting new and various aspects, and prayer must be suited to the special wants and temptations of the day. —*Goulburn.*

(3792.) Life is not usually a procession of emergencies. Men ought always to pray. And they ought to pray, not only in the language which will be found extremely precious in an emergency, but they ought to pray during the healthful monotony of an industrious life.

Here is where venerable manuals of prayer usually fail us. No doubt he that is familiar with all their pages can find something in them specially suited to each and every day of still life; but as there is very little to characterise or distinguish one day from another, so there is very little by which to judge and select the prayers that are fit. A well-phrased prayer covers an average day, as a snow-fall hides the little ruts and hoof-marks of a common road. It makes all days and all roads seem alike. And while each day, however insignificant, is made up of details which, one by one, absorb the attention, tax the industry, fill the life, and mould the character, the prayer for that day articulates no detail, but blankets the whole. Thus it comes to pass that daily duty means something definite, while daily prayer has little or no articulation of detail. Under such conditions prayer must necessarily become uninteresting, powerless.
—*T. K. Beecher.*

4. The mode is non-essential, the spirit all in all.

(3793.) Over-value not therefore the manner of your own worship, and over-vilify not other men's of a different mode. And make not men believe that God is of your childish humour, and valueth or vilifieth words, and orders, and forms, and ceremonies, as much as self-conceited people do.

If one man hear another pray only from the habits of his mind, and present desires, he reproacheth him as a rash, presumptuous speaker, that talketh that to God which he never foreconsidered. As if a beggar did rashly ask an alms, or a corrected child or a malefactor did inconsiderately ask for pardon, unless they learn first the words by rote; or, as if all men's converse, or the words of judges on the bench were all rash; or, the counsel of a physician to his patient, because they use not books and forms, or set not down their words long before.

And if another man hear a form of prayer, especially if it be read out of a book; and especially if it have any disorder or defect, he sticketh not to revile it, and call it false worship, and man's inventions and perhaps idolatry, and to fly from it, and make the world believe that it is an odious thing which God disalloweth. And why so? Are your words so much more excellent than the words of others? Or, are all words bad which are resolved on beforehand? Are the Lord's Prayer and Psalms all odious because they are book-forms? Or, doth the commandment of other men make God hate them? Let parents take heed then of commanding their children prescribed words. (Nay, rather let them take heed lest they neglect such prescripts.) Or, is it the disorder or defects that makes them odious? Such are not to be justified indeed wherever we find them; but woe to us all, if God will not pardon disorders and defects, and accept the prayers that are guilty of them.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

XIII. *HINTS AS TO THE CONDUCT OF PRAYER.*

1. Close the eyes.

(3794.) If you would keep your mind fixed in prayer, keep your eye fixed. "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens." Much vanity comes in at the eye. When the eyes wander in prayer, the heart wanders. To think to keep the heart fixed in prayer, and yet let the eyes gaze, is as if one should think to keep his house safe, yet let the windows be open.

—*Watson*, 1696.

2. Calm the mind.

(3795.) When kneeling down to pray, if for a few minutes you would be still and not attempt either to pray or think, but yield up your mind to God, it prepares the soul for the Holy Spirit to move upon its waters, and I find that words are poured into my mind without effort of my own, and real prayer is more the result. —*Maria Hare.*

3. Be more careful about the spirit than the order of prayer.

(3796.) Several books have been written to assist in the exercise of prayer, and many useful hints may be borrowed from them; but a too close attention to the method and transitions therein recommended, gives an air of study and formality, and offends against that simplicity which is so essentially necessary to a good prayer, that no degree of acquired abilities can compensate for the want of it. It is possible to learn to pray by rule; but it is hardly possible to do so with benefit to others. When the several parts of invocation, adoration, confession, petition, &c., follow each other in a stated order, the hearer's mind generally goes before the speaker's voice, and we can form a tolerable conjecture what is to come next. On this account we often find that unlettered people, who have had little or no help from books, or rather have not been fettered by them, can pray with an unction and savour in an unpremeditated way, while the prayers of persons of much superior abilities, perhaps even of ministers themselves, are, though accurate and regular, so dry and starched, that they afford little either of pleasure or profit to a spiritual mind. The spirit of prayer is the truth and token of the spirit of adoption. The studied addresses with which some approach the throne of grace remind us of a stranger's coming to a great man's door; he knocks and waits, sends in his name, and goes through a course of ceremony before he gains admittance; while a child of the family uses no ceremony at all, but enters freely when he pleases, because he knows he is at home. It is true we ought always to draw near the Lord with great humiliation of spirit, and a sense of our unworthiness; but this spirit is not always best expressed or promoted by a pompous enumeration of the names and titles of the God with whom we have to do, or by fixing in our minds beforehand the exact order in which we propose to arrange the several parts of our prayer.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

4. Be natural.

(3797.) There may be many reasons why you do not like to pray. One may be that you really are not a Christian, and cannot speak the language of Canaan. Another reason may be that you have not learned to pray in a manner that is adapted to you. It may be that you undertake to employ forms of speech which to you are unbefitting. You remember how David attempted to fight the battle with Goliath in Saul's armour, how he found it too large and too heavy for him, and how he went back and got his simple sling, with which he slew the giant. Many of you make a similar mistake in praying. You try to pray as the minister does, or as some elder or class-leader does, or as some fluent brother does, and you do not succeed. You try to walk in the prayer of another person who has had more experience than you have, and it rattles about you as Saul's armour did about David. It is a world too big for you. It does not fit you anywhere. I do not wonder that you do not want to pray under such circumstances. If, imitating David, who went back to the sling, the simplest of all weapons, you would be content to pray as a little child, if you would go back to lisping monosyllabic prayers, you would have less difficulty and would like prayer better.

If a man is in trouble, and he says, "Oh, help me!" that is a prayer. One single sentence is a prayer from a burdened heart. Even interjections are prayers. Sighing may be praying. If you are in distress, if you are tempted, if you have a special grief, if you are in any way carrying a yoke or a burden, just put your prayer on that spot; and do not try to make a good prayer, but be willing to make a poor one, as you consider it, and you will experience much more comfort in your devotions. Never mind how your prayer begins, or how it ends. Most of our prayers would be a great deal better if we were not so particular about the beginning and ending. Let your prayer be the upspringing and

bursting forth of your real feelings. Prayer, at the beginning of the Christian life, and all the way through, is more or less interjectional. And such prayer is more apt to be sincere, and to strike at the centre of real want, and to be free from sham, than almost any other. —*Beecher.*

5. Be reverent.

(3798.) No man shakes his prince by the hand, or accosts him with an "Hail fellow, well met!" And if the laws and customs of nations will by no means endure such boldness to sovereign princes, for fear of debasing majesty, and so by degrees diminishing the commanding force of government, surely there ought to be more care used in managing our deportment toward God; since the impressions we have of things not seen by us are more easily worn off than those that are continually renewed upon the mind by a converse with visible objects. And that which will bring us into a contempt of our earthly prince whom we see, is much more likely to bring us into a light esteem of our heavenly King whom we have not seen. We are to use such words as may not only manifest, but also increase our reverence; we are (as I may so say) to keep our distance from God, in our very approaches to Him. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(3799.) Still more offensive is a custom that some have of talking to the Lord in prayer. It is their natural voice, indeed, but it is that expression of it which they use upon the most familiar and trivial occasions. The human voice is capable of so many inflexions and variations, that it can adapt itself to the different sensations of our mind, as joy, sorrow, fear, desire, &c. If a man was pleading for his life, or expressing his thanks to the king for a pardon, common sense and decency would teach him a suitableness of manner; and any one who could not understand his language, might know, by the sound of his words, that he was not making a bargain, or telling a story. How much more, when we speak to the King of kings, should the consideration of His glory, and our own vileness, and of the important concerns we are engaged in before Him, impress us with an air of seriousness and reverence, and prevent us from speaking to Him as if He was altogether such an one as ourselves. The liberty to which we are called by the gospel, does not at all encourage such a pertness and familiarity as would be unbecoming to use towards a fellow-worm who was a little advanced above us in worldly dignity. —*Newton*, 1725-1807.

6. Be simple.

(3800.) As prayer is not to be made, to be seen of men, neither is it meant to inform God. Very beautifully it is said, "He knoweth what we have need of before we ask." And hence long prayers, that tell God in most eloquent language what He is, and in very picturesque language what we are, seem altogether inappropriate, and in fact are miscalled prayer. True prayer is the deep expression of our deepest wants in the simplest and the tersest Saxon, and in the hearing of Him who knows all our deepest wants before we tell Him the uppermost of all. Of all things truly shocking, grandiloquent language in prayer is not the least so. Watch a person who loses his temper in the streets; when he speaks we hear no fine phrases, no beautifully rounded sentences; he takes the nearest, shortest, tersest words; and he makes them the vehicle of his deep feeling. Read the greatest of dramatists, and you will find the very same thing. Study our Lord's Prayer—how simple! "Our Father which art in heaven." Or, take the nearest to it, some parts of that magnificent composition, the English Liturgy—how beautiful its opening confession! all monosyllables, no fine language. "We—have—done—those—things—we—ought—not—to—have—done." How very simple, and yet how expressive of deep want, how appropriate as the vehicle of it! Would that such a model were universally followed; it is the nearest approximation to the beautiful and perfect model set by Him that spake, and prayed, and lived, and died, as man never did. —*Cumming.*

7. Be thoughtful and deliberate.

(3801.) It was said of John Bradford that he had a peculiar art in prayer, and when asked his secret he said, "When I know what I want I always stop on that prayer until I feel that I have pleaded it with God, and until God and I have had dealings with each other upon it. I never go on to another petition till I have gone through the first." Alas! for some men who begin, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name," and before they have realised the adoring thought—"hallowed be Thy name"—they have begun to repeat the next words, "Thy kingdom come;" then perhaps something strikes their mind, "Do I really wish His kingdom to come? If it were to come now, where should I be?" And while they are thinking of that, their voice is going on with, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" so they jumble up their prayers, and run the sentences together. Oh! stop at each one till you have really prayed it. Do not try to put two arrows on the string at once—they will both miss. He that would load his gun with two charges cannot expect to be successful. Discharge one shot first, and then load again. Plead once with God and prevail, and then plead again. Get the first mercy, and then go again for the second. Do not be satisfied with running the colours of your prayers into one another, till there is no picture to look at but just a huge daub, a smear of colours badly laid on. Look at the Lord's Prayer itself. What sharp, clear outlines there are in it. There are certain definite mercies, and they do not run into one another. There it stands; as you look at the whole it is a magnificent picture; not confusion, but beautiful order. Be it so with your prayers. —*Spurgeon.*

8. Be specific.

(3802.) Life is made up of single particulars, both of doing and suffering, both of sin and duty; and the prayer which has respect to it must be not vague and general, but particular and even minute. The great enemy will assail me to-day, not in some grand sweeping charge, which every energy of my soul will be forewarned and forearmed to encounter—but in detail; in a multitude of light skirmishings and small ambushes, the very meaning of which will be often doubtful, and their result apparently indecisive. Yet is it in these things that the course of the life shapes itself, and the destiny of the life is at last determined. A succession of little defeatings makes up at last a rout and a ruin. If I wait to defend myself, till the Imperial Foe, in person and presence, places himself at the head of his

guards and stakes all upon one last effort—the battle is decided before it is waged, and the soul which would not arm must pay the price in discomfiture. So then, prayer, which is the arming of the soul, must have respect to the items of the conflict even more than to the sum. A vague petition for grace—a general entreaty for God's strength and protection through the day that is dawning—a summary view of duty and temptation, and an indiscriminating invocation of the enabling and preserving Spirit—will not be found to have brought God (so to speak) into the very heart and body of the day's life: superficial prayer can look only for a superficial answer; and the intentions and resolutions of the slight asker are but *as tow when it toucheth the fire*, in face of the wily stratagems or fiery onslaughts of *spiritual wickedness in high places*. The Prayer which would affect Action must be minute and detailed as well as earnest.

—*C. J. Vaughan.*

9. Be importunate.

(3803.) How often have I seen a little child throw its arms around its father's neck, and win, by kisses, and importunities, and tears, what had been refused? Who has not yielded to importunity, even when a dumb animal looked up with suppliant eyes in our face for food? Is God less pitiful than we? —*Guthrie.*

10. Be short.

(3804.) Pray often rather than very long at a time. It is hard to be very long in prayer, and not slacken in our affections. Those watches which are made to go longer than ordinary at one winding, do commonly lose towards the end. The flesh is weak, and if the spirits of the body tire, the soul that rideth on this beast must needs be cast behind. Our Saviour when He prayed for His life, we find Him praying rather often than long at once. He who in a long journey lights often to let his beast take breath, and then mounts upon him again, will get to his journey's end may be sooner than he that puts him beyond his strength. Especially observe this in social prayers, for when we pray in company, we must consider them that travail with us in the duty; as Jacob said, "I will lead on softly as the children are able to endure."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1619.

(3805.) The third argument for brevity, or contractedness of speech in prayer, shall be taken from the very nature and condition of the person who prays, which makes it impossible for him to keep up the same fervour and attention in a long prayer that he may in a short. For as I first observed, that the mind of man cannot with the same force and vigour attend to several objects at the same time, so neither can it with the same force and earnestness exert itself upon one and the same object for any long time; great intension of mind spending the spirits too fast to continue its first freshness and agility long. For while the soul is a retainer to the elements, and a sojourner in the body, it must be content to submit its own quickness and spirituality to the dulness of its vehicle, and to comply with a pace of its inferior companion; just like a man shut up in a coach, who, while he is so, must be willing to go no faster than the motion of the coach will carry him. He who does all by the help of those subtile refined parts of matter, called spirits, must not think to preserve at the same pitch of acting while those principles of activity flag. No man begins and ends a long journey at the same pace.

But now, when prayer has lost its due fervour and attention (which indeed are the very vitals of it), it is but the carcass of a prayer, and consequently must needs be loathsome and offensive to God; nay, though the greatest part of it should be enlivened and carried on with an actual attention, yet if that attention fails to enliven any one part of it, the whole is but a joining of the living and the dead together, for which conjunction the dead is not at all the better, but the living very much the worse. It is not length, nor copiousness of language that is devotion, any more than bulk and bigness is valour, or flesh the measure of the spirit. A short sentence may be oftentimes a large and a mighty prayer—devotion so managed being like water in a well, where you have fulness in a little compass, which surely is much nobler than the same carried out into many petit, creeping rivulets, with length and shallowness together. Let him who prays bestow all that strength, fervour, and attention upon shortness and significance, that would otherwise run out and lose itself in length and luxuriancy of speech to no purpose. Let not his tongue outstrip his heart, nor presume to carry a message to the throne of grace while that stays behind. Let him not think to support so hard and weighty a duty with a tried, languishing, and bejaded devotion; to avoid which, let a man contract his expression where he cannot enlarge his affection, still remembering that nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor more unacceptable to God, than for one engaged in the great work of prayer to hold on speaking after he has left off praying, and to keep the lips at work when the spirit can do no more. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(3806.) Suppose a man should reason in the physiology of the body, as many persons reason in spiritual physiology. Suppose a man should attempt fidelity to his physical constitution in the same way that many attempt fidelity to their souls? Suppose a man should say to himself, "Life is the duty of the body, and eating is an indispensable condition of growth;" and should eat, and, having satisfied his hunger, should say, "I have eaten for nearly an hour, and I no longer crave food, but I feel it to be my duty to go on eating, that I may build up the body. I do not see how I can eat any more: and yet, it seems to me that it would be a delinquency to cease eating?" Stop one moment. What is eating, but a process of taking in materials for the building of the body? As far, therefore, as the body can use these materials, it is right to eat; but further than that it is not right. What is thinking? It is eating. Then, as long as you can think with good results, think, but no longer. What is prayer? It is soul-eating. As long as the food of prayer does you good, pray; but when it ceases to do you good, stop praying. It is no more a sin to stop praying under such circumstances than it is to stop eating when you cease to be hungry. But men seem to have a superstitious notion that they must keep their religious nature eating all the time. —*Beecher.*

(3807.) Some people attempt to bring down blessings by much praying. They go to the throne of grace, as it were, without any definite object in

their mind. They pray without knowing exactly what they are praying for. This is not wise. In my own experience I have found that, when my thoughts have been withdrawn to other things, and being brought back to God, my mind is not eager to hold converse with Him, it is not well to plead with Him in measured prayers, as though I were bound to say so much to Him every day, and as though He would not be satisfied with anything less. My father and mother and friends never required me to talk with them a given amount. If I came where they were, and did not feel inclined to talk, they bore with my silence. And when we go to God, He will not blame us for talking only a little. So that, when I go to God, if I do not try to make long prayers, I make short ones. I do it, first, because I have not much to say, and it is not truthful to go on praying when you have nothing to say; and, secondly, because short prayers, under such circumstances, are positively more beneficial than long ones. —*Beecher.*

(3808.) *Short prayers are long enough.* There were but three words in the petition which Peter gasped out (Matt. xiv. 30), but they were sufficient for his purpose. Not length, but strength, is desirable. A sense of need is a mighty teacher of brevity. If our prayers had less of the tail-feathers of pride and more wing, they would be all the better. Verbiage is to devotion as chaff to the wheat. Precious things lie in small compass, and all that is real prayer in many a long address might have been uttered in a petition as short as that of Peter. —*Spurgeon.*

(3809.) The worth of prayer is not gauged by its dimensions. Long supplications may be possibly formal and heartless. A mere cry, if prompted by earnest desire, is more to God than the most elaborate petition. Have you noticed the figure used in respect of prayer by St. John? He tells us in the book of the Revelation of "golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." Mark the phrase. A vial is not a large vessel. Usually urns and pitchers are larger. But a vial made of gold is more precious than a brazen urn or an earthenware pitcher. In like manner, a brief but energetic prayer possesses higher worth in the sight of God than protracted but lukewarm ones. What quantity of electric fluid is requisite in order to send a telegraphic message from England to the United States? Very little: less than a silver thimbleful. Even so, a limited yet fervent entreaty will reach heaven and secure an answer. The Pharisee in the temple had plenty to say: words flowed apace: he stood and delivered quite an elaborate address. Meanwhile, all the poor Publican could do was to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Albeit, we know which of the two "went down to his house justified rather than the other."

—*T. R. Stevenson.*

11. Let it begin, continue, and end in humble dependence on the merits of Christ.

(3810.) We are to pray to God not only as a Father, but also evermore in the name, and through the merits, and relying on the intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The name of Christ is not, as some seem to regard it, a musical close to a beautiful collect; nor, as others view it, the signal of the congregation that the prayer is done. That is not the meaning of praying in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is no decent peroration; it is no accustomed finale to our prayer. His name is the very ground on which we kneel, it is the very right of our approach, it is the very channel through which we address God, and by which God can send down blessings upon us.

—*Cumming.*

XIV. *CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.*

1. It is spontaneous.

(3811.) A little girl went out to play one day in the fresh new snow, and when she came in she said: "Mamma, I couldn't help praying when I was out at play." "What did you pray, my dear?" "I prayed the snow-prayer, mamma, that I learned once in Sunday-school: 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'" What a beautiful prayer! And here is a sweet promise to go with it! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." And what can wash them white—clean from every stain of sin? The Bible answers: "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

2. It is simple and sincere.

(3812.) As a father is more delighted with the imperfect talk of his own little child when it first begins to speak, than with the exactest eloquence of the most famous orator upon earth: so assuredly our Heavenly Father is infinitely better pleased with the broken, interrupted passages and periods of prayer in thee, an upright heart, heartily grieved that thou canst do no better, than with the excellently composed, fine-phrased, and most methodical petitions of the most learned pharisee. Nay, His soul extremely loathes the one, and graciously accepts the other in Jesus Christ.

—*Bolton*, 1572–1631.

(3813.) Our prayers are our bills of exchange, and they are allowed in heaven, when they come from pious and humble hearts; but if we be broken in our religion, and bankrupts of grace, God will protest our bills; He will not be won with our prayers.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3814.) When thou prayest before others, observe on what thou bestowest thy chief care and zeal, whether in the externals or internals of prayer, that which is exposed to the eye and ear of men, or that which should be prepared for the eye and ear of God; the devout posture of thy body, or the inward devotion of thy soul; the pomp of thy words, or the power of thy faith; the agitation of thy bodily spirits in the vehemency of thy voice, or the fervency of thy spirit in heart-breaking affections. These inward workings of the soul in prayer, are the very soul of prayer, and all the care about the other without this, is like the trimming bestowed upon a dead body, that will not make the carcase sweet, nor these thy prayer to God's nostrils.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3815.) Prayer must be sincere. Sincerity is the silver thread which must run through the whole duties of religion. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3816.) "I can't make a very smooth prayer, but Jesus hears me," were among the dying words of a dear friend of mine.

Two or three days before his death some one

was talking to him about prayer—the expression, "gifted in prayer," being used. F —— looked up and said the words with which I have begun, "I can't make a very smooth prayer, but Jesus hears me!" They are suggestive. The child, coming to his father for bread, asks in the simplest way, "My father, I am hungry; please feed me!" The blind beggar by the wayside went with no set petition to the Healer when the noise of tramping feet and the sound of many voices told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. The publican said only, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is not the prayer of sonorous length, or of the most melodious phrase, that soonest reaches the throne; it is the heart-cry for peace and pardon that, sent up in faith, reaches the ear of Jesus.

3. It is joyful.

(3817.) Many prayers may be put up by persons in necessity without any spiritual delight in them: as infirm persons take more physic than those that are healthful, yet they delight not in that physic.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3818.) There must be delight on our parts. Joy is the tuning the soul. The command to rejoice precedes the command to pray: "Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing." Delight makes the melody; prayer else will be but a harsh sound. God accepts the heart only when it is a gift given, not forced. Delight is the marrow of religion.

Dulness is not suitable to the great things we are chiefly to beg for. Gospel discoveries are "a feast." Dulness becomes not such a solemnity. Manna must not be sought for with a dumpish heart. With joy we are to draw water out of the wells of salvation. Faith is the bucket, but joy and love are the hands that move it. They are the Huz and Aaron that hold up the hands of this Moses. God does not value that man's service who accounts not His service a privilege and a pleasure. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

4. It is adoring.

(3819. Not what is told a child profits him, but what the child tells the teacher. Not that which entereth into a man defiles or sanctifies, but that which cometh forth out of the heart. Hence, a department of prayer sometimes derided, and oftentimes neglected, namely, the contemplation of God Himself, ascriptions of praise, or statements as to His purposes. It is often said, as if the mere saying revealed the absurdity of it, men make theological statements to God, describe Him to Himself, and make polite speeches. Such an objector shows himself little versed in the spiritual necessities and laws of his own education.

The multiplication table is stated a thousand times to teachers, who knew it before *ad nauseam*. Yet, every statement is a profit to the children, who are to learn the facts stated.

Is a child upon its mother's lap, stroking her hair, or patting her cheek, and saying, "Pretty mamma!" unprofited by that act of filial love? If, taught by some unwise teacher, he comes home loaded to the muzzle, and climbing up to the same resting-place, says, "Oh, most accomplished among women! Provider of all my necessities, and satisfier of my wants! My heart's best affection I lay at your feet!" I doubt whether child or parent would be profited.

If God deals with us as with children, let us deal with God as with a father. —*T. K. Beecher.*

5. It is thankful.

(3820.) "Let your requests be made known with thanksgiving." As God hath an open hand to give, so He hath an open eye to see who comes to His door, and to discern between the thankful beggar and the unthankful.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

6. It is thoughtful.

(3821.) The speech of the mouth must not go before, but always follow after the conception of the mind. Many times as a musician's fingers will run over a song which he has been used to play, although his mind is otherwise occupied; so many in prayer will run over that form of words they have been used to utter, though their minds are roving about other matters. Oh, let the absurdity of the fault breed in us a loathing of it!
—*Ambrose*, 1664.

(3822.) There is a story, how that one offered to give his horse to his fellow, upon condition he would but say the Lord's Prayer, and think upon nothing but God. The proffer was accepted, and he began: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. But I must have the bridle too," said he. "No, nor the horse neither," said the other; "for thou hast lost both already." And thus it is that too, too many in their both private and public addresses unto God by prayer are, by the suggestions of Satan, walking with St. Jerome in the galleries of Rome, having their hearts roving after pleasures of sin, their thoughts taken up with the things of this world, and their whole man set upon vanity; whereas they should rather mind that which they are about, keep close to God and be so watchful over their souls, that their hearts and tongues may go comfortably together; for the outward work only is but like the loathsome smoke of Sodom, whereas the inward devotion of the heart is not unfitly compared to the pleasant perfume of the sweetest frankincense. —*Spencer*, 1658.

7. It is submissive.

(3823.) Many times Jesus and His people pull against one another in prayer. You bend your knee in prayer and say, "Father, I will that Thy saints be with me where *I* am;" Christ says, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where *I* am." Thus the disciple is at cross-purposes with his Lord. The soul cannot be in both places; the beloved one cannot be with Christ and with you too. Now, which pleader shall win the day? If you had your choice, if the King should step from His throne, and say, "Here are two supplicants praying in opposition to one another; which shall be answered?" Oh, I am sure, though it were agony, you would start from your feet, and say, "Jesus, not my will, but Thine, be done." You would give up your prayer for your loved one's life, if you could realise the thought that Christ is praying in the opposite direction, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." Lord, Thou shalt have them. By faith we let them go.
—*Spurgeon.*

8. It is trustful.

(3824.) We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." It is the boldness of the little child that, unbanished by one's presence, climbs his father's knee, and throws his arms around his neck—or bursting into his room, breaks in on his busiest hours, to have a bleeding bound, or some childish tears kissed away, that says if any threaten to hurt him, "I will tell my father," and, however he might tremble to sleep alone, fears neither ghosts, nor man, nor darkness, nor devils, if he lies couched at his father's side. Such confidence, bold as it seems, springs from trust in a father's love; and pleases rather than offends us.

—*Guthrie.*

(3825.) Prayer is the expression of our wants to God, as our Father. Too many pray as criminals deprecating the wrath of a judge, instead of praying as children asking the blessing of our Father who is in heaven. When we draw near to God in prayer, we are not to feel as criminals in the dock, but as children around our Father's knee; and the saddest sinner laden with the greatest sin exhibits the truest grace when he draws near to God, and in the name of Jesus says, My Father! "If any man sin, we have an advocate with"—the judge? No. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Our creed begins, "I believe in God the Father." The first model prayer taught us is, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and the less of criminal deprecation, and the more filial confidence in our prayers, the more we exhibit the characteristic spirit of the gospel of Christ. But when all is deep and earnest deprecation of wrath, without one single expression of filial trust, such a litany or prayer sounds more like the wild wail of despair, than the hopeful cry of the still beloved, though long a prodigal son, seeking bread from his father's stores, and a shelter under his father's roof-tree. For what did the prodigal say, at his greatest distance from home, in the depth and bitterness of his worst estrangement? "I will arise and go to my father." That was the last lingering tie or link within him, and that thought thrilled, in blessed vibrations, through his soul, awakened in his lonely heart all the music of the blessed, and made him arise, and with delighted hopes go to his father, and seek—what he found there—a blessing, and bread, and a joyous welcome.

—*Cumming.*

(3826.) The pleading prayers of many Christians—the whole tone of them is that of a suppliant beggar. Many prayers have what is called "the holy tone." I call it *the whining tone of mendicancy*. A man speaks in a manly way to his fellowmen, to his companions; but the moment he comes to address God his manner is all changed, and he goes from the depths of doleful solemnity to the heights of deliquescent piety in a tone of abject pleading, pleading, pleading. I do not think God ever enjoys seeing an unmanly humility.

I have a hound on my place which I think well of except when he comes to me, and lies down on his back, and rolls over, and querls up his legs in most distressing humility and obsequiousness. I certainly do not like this in a dog; and if I had a child that came to me so, I would send him off with a different thought very quick.

Now do you suppose it is agreeable to the grandeur, the honour, the sensibility or the love of the All-Father, that men should come creeping up to His feet, and plead in such an abject state of mind as implies that He needs to be placated; that He needs to be coaxed, that He needs to be persuaded? —*Beecher.*

9. It is believing.

(3827.) Prayer is the key of heaven, and faith is the hand that turns it. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3828.) Prayer is the gun we shoot with, fervency is the fire that dischargeth it, and faith is the bullet which pierceth the throne of grace.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(3829.) Faith is to prayer as the feather is to the arrow; faith feathers the arrow of prayer, and makes it fly swifter, and pierce the throne of grace. Prayer that is faithless is fruitless.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(3830.) Some prayers are not heard because men do not believe that God will grant them. Were one writing a note to a friend, and saying, "I would be much the better for such a thing,"—naming it. "You can easily spare it; but I have little expectation that you will do me such a favour;" would this be a likely way to compass his object? Though he had wished to fail, could he have worded his application otherwise? And so, when a man kneels down and prays for pardon of his sins, or for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or for assurance of salvation, but prays for them as if the Lord would grudge to give them, can he wonder that he is not heard? Whatsoever the Lord has promised, that He is willing to bestow, and, "whatsoever things we ask in prayer, believing that we have them, we receive them."

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

10. It is fervent.

(3831.) Pray fervently, or thou dost nothing. Cold prayer is no more prayer than painted fire is fire. The promise is only to fervent prayer. A still-born child is no heir, neither is a prayer that wants life heir to any promise. Fervency is to prayer what fire was to the spices in the censer, without this it cannot ascend as incense before God. Some have attempted a shorter cut to the Indies by the North, but were ever frozen up in their way; and so will all sluggish prayers be served.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3832.) Observe whether thy fervency in prayer be uniform; a false heart may seem very hot in praying against one sin, but he can skip over another, and either leave it out of his confession, or handles it very gently, as a partial witness, that would fain save the prisoner's life he comes against, will not speak all he knows, but minceth his evidence; thus doth the hypocrite deal with his darling lust. He is like one that mows grass with a gapped scythe, some he cuts down, and others he leaves standing; vehement against this, and favourable to that lust; whereas sincerity makes clear work as it goes. "Order my steps in Thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3833.) Cold prayers bespeak a denial, but fervent prayers offer a sacred violence both to heaven and

earth. As a body without a spirit, much wood without a fire, a bullet in a gun without powder; so are all prayers without fervency of spirit.
—*Brooks*, 1680.

(3834.) "Effectual fervent prayer prevails much." Cold prayers, like cold suitors, never speed. Prayer, without fervency, is like a sacrifice without fire. Fervency is to prayer as fire to the incense; it makes it ascend to heaven as a sweet perfume. Prayer without fervency is no prayer; it is speaking, not praying: lifeless prayer is no more prayer than the picture of a man is a man. Christ prayed with strong cries (Heb. v. 7) *Clamor iste penetrat nubes* (Luther.) Fervent prayer, like a petard set against heaven's gates, makes them fly open. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3835.) The arrow which is shot from a loose cord drops powerless to the ground; but from the tightly drawn bow string it springs forward, soars upward, and reaches the object to which it is directed. So, it is not the loose utterance of attempted prayer that is effectual, but the strong earnestness of the heart sending its pointed petitions to heaven, that reaches the Divine ear and obtains the desired blessing. —*Bowden.*

(3836.) When the spirit pleads at the throne of God, when guilt, flying from justice, is knocking loud and long at the door of mercy, one not in earnest himself may wonder at the language which earnestness ventures to employ. Why should they wonder? Her loyal subjects, standing at respectful distance, address their sovereign in respectful terms; using courtly language to a courtly ear. But let a royal cortege pass the procession that conducts a felon to the scaffold, as a drowning man who sees a plank float by grasps at life, he, bursting from his guards, springs to her side; clings to her robe, to cry, Oh, pardon, save me! and when to her order, Unhand me, let me pass—he answers, No; I will not let thee go—who so hardhearted as to beat the wretch away; or so blind as not to see that this is not insolence, but earnestness? —*Guthrie.*

(3837.) Earnestness does not express itself in long, inflated, pompous sentences. It is brief; it is simple. The moment has arrived when victory, long doubtful as the tide of success ebbed and flowed, may be won by one splendid, dashing, daring attack—the order is given in one brief word, Charge! On the distant waves a flag is seen now sinking in the trough and again rising on the crest of the foaming billows; and beneath that signal, clinging to the fragment of a vessel that lies many fathoms down in the depths of ocean, are two human forms—and all the cry that sounds from stem to stern is, A wreck, a wreck! and all the order, Lower the boat! — words hardly uttered when she drops on the water, and pulled by stout rowers, is leaping over the waves to the rescue. One late in the deserted streets sees the smoke creep, and the flames begin to flash and flicker from a house whose tenants are buried in sleep; he bounds to the door and thunders on it—all his cry, Fire, fire! Peter sinks amid the boisterous waves of Galilee, and all the prayer of lips the cold water kisses is, as he stretches out his hand to Jesus, Save me, I perish! And with the brief, urgent earnestness of one who seeing his danger knows that there is no time, and believing in God's great mercy, feels that there is no need for long prayers, the publican, like a man who in falling over a crag catches the arm of a friendly tree, throws his whole soul into this cry, these few, blessed, accepted words, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" —*Guthrie.*

(3838.) Prayer pulls the rope below and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give but an occasional pluck at the rope; but he who wins with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously, with all his might. —*Spurgeon.*

11. It is persevering.

(3839.) I saw the other day a man attempting to split a rock with a sledge-hammer. Down came the sledge upon the stone as if it would crush it, but it merely rebounded, leaving the rock as sound as before. Again the ponderous hammer was swung, and again it came down, but with the same result. Nothing was accomplished. The rock was still without a crack. I might have asked (as so many are disposed to ask concerning prayer) what good could result from such a waste of time and strength. But that man had faith. He believed in the power of that sledge. He believed that repeated blows had a tendency to split that rock. And so he kept at it. Blow after blow came down all apparently in vain. But still he kept on without a thought of discouragement. He believed that a vigorously swung sledge "has great power." And at last came one more blow and the work was done.

That is the way in which we ought to use prayer. God has told us that "the earnest prayer of the righteous man has great power." We ought to *believe it*, just as that man believed that his sledge had power. And believing it, we ought to *use* prayer for the attainment of spiritual results with just such confidence of success as that man used his sledge. We may not secure our answer at once. That rock was not split at the first blow or the second. But that man believed that if he continued his blows, he was more likely to succeed every blow he struck. So we are to believe that there is a spiritual power in prayer, just as there was a physical power in that sledge. And that the more perseveringly and earnestly we use it, the more certain are we to accomplish something by it.

XV. *PRE-REQUISITES TO ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.*

1. Meditation.

(3840.) Before the tradesman goes to the fair, he looks over his shop, that he may know what commodity he most lacks. Thou goest to this duty to furnish thyself with the graces and mercies thou needest; is it not necessary, then, to see what thy present store is? what thy personal and what thy relational needs are? not forgetting the public, in whose peace and happiness thou art so much concerned; for if this ship sink, thou canst not be safe in thy private cabin. To leave all these to occur and overtake thee, without charging thy thoughts with them by previous meditation, is too high a presumption for a sober Christian to take up.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3841.) Meditation before prayer matures our

conceptions and quickens our desires. Our heart is like a watch that is soon run down, and needs constant winding up. It is an instrument that is easily put out of tune. And meditation is like the tuning of an instrument, and setting it for the harmony of prayer. What is the reason that in prayer there is such an easy discurrency in our thoughts—that our thoughts are like dust in the wind, carried to and fro; but only for want of meditation? What is the reason that our desires, like an arrow shot from a weak bow, do not reach the mark, but only this, we do not meditate before prayer? He that would but consider, before he comes to pray to the pure majesty of God, the thing that he is to pray for, pardon of sin, and the life of glory, how would this cause his prayers to ascend like incense towards God! The great reason why our prayers are ineffectual is, because we do not meditate before them. David expresseth prayer by meditation: "*Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation.*" —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3842.) The Spirit measures out His assistance to men in the use of the means proper for the effecting of any work, but suspends and denies that assistance where the use of those means is neglected; for He co-operates with men according to the established courses of working proper to their natures: and no man prays and preaches more by the Spirit than he that bestows time and study in the orderly disposing of what he is to say, and so employs and exerts those faculties of mind which the Spirit of God endowed him with, for the better and more exact management of those holy services that he stands engaged in. Were a man to petition his prince, or to plead at the bar for his life, I believe none could persuade him to venture the issue of so great an action upon his extempore gift. But admit that a man be never so well furnished with an ability of speaking suddenly and without premeditation, yet, certainly premeditation and care would improve and heighten that ability, and give it a greater force and lustre in all performances. And if so, we are to remember that God calls for our best and our utmost; we are to bring the fairest and the choicest of our flock for an offering, and not to sacrifice a lame, unconcocted, wandering discourse to God, when our time and our parts are able to furnish us with one much more accurate and exact. When a Roman gentleman invited Augustus Cæsar to supper, and provided him but a mean entertainment, Cæsar very properly took him up with an, "Friend, pray how come you and I to be so familiar?" Great persons think themselves entertained with respect when they are entertained with splendour; and they think wisely and rightly. In like manner, God will reject such sons of presumption and impertinence with disdain; and though they took no time for the making of their prayers, yet He will take time enough before He will grant them. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(3843.) To make prayer of any value, there should be definite objects for which to plead. We often ramble in our prayers after this, that, and the other, and we get nothing, because in each we do not really desire anything. We chatter about many subjects, but the soul does not concentrate itself upon any object. Do you not sometimes fall on your knees without thinking beforehand what you mean to ask God for? you do, as a matter of habit, without any motion of your heart. You are like a man who would go to a shop and not know what articles he would procure. He may, perhaps, make a happy purchase when he is there, but certainly it is not a wise plan to adopt. And so the Christian in prayer may afterwards attain to a real desire, and get his end; but how much better would he speed if, having prepared his soul by consideration and self-examination, he came to God for an object at which he was about to aim with a real request. Did we ask an audience at Her Majesty's court, we should not be expected to go into the presence of royalty, and then to think of some petition after we came there. Even so with the child of God. He would be able to answer the great question: "What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be done unto thee?" Imagine an archer shooting with his bow, and not knowing where the mark is! would he be likely to have success? Conceive a ship, on a voyage of discovery, putting to sea without the captain having any idea of what he was looking for! would you expect that he would come back heavily laden either with the discoveries of science or with treasures of gold? In everything else you have a plan. You do not go to work without knowing that there is something that you designed to make; how is it that you go to God without knowing what blessing you design to have. —*Spurgeon.*

2. Familiarity with the promises.

(3844.) Furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers, and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith, when strengthened, will make thee fervent, and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." Words in prayer are but as powder, the promise is the bullet that doth the execution, faith the grace that chargeth the soul with it, and fervency that gives fire and dischargeth it into God's bosom with such a force, that the Almighty cannot deny its entrance, because, indeed, He will not. Now, as he is an imprudent soldier that leaves his bullets to be cast, or fitted to the bore of his pieces, till he comes into the field; so he is an unwise Christian that doth not provide and sort promises suitable to his condition and request, before he engageth in so solemn a service. Daniel first searched out the promise, what God had engaged Himself to do for His people, as also when the date of this promise expired; and when, by meditation and study upon it he had raised his heart to a firm belief thereof, then he sets upon God with a holy violence in prayer, and presseth Him close, not only as a merciful God, but righteous also, to remember them now the bond of His promise was coming out, "O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem," &c. (Dan. ix. 16). The mightier any is in the Word, the more mighty he will be in prayer. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3845.) The scope and spirit of our prayers should be limited by the promises of God. This is to make prayer a matter of serious premeditation. And, to keep it progressive with an understanding of the Scriptures, a knowledge of the purposes of God must precede it; and without that knowledge

it is an empty form, or rather a sinful liberty taken with the ear of God. As if you would go to a judge and ask him to favour your case, or to a friend and ask him to do you a wrong; or it is as if, having received intelligence from a distant correspondent, you should presume to write back to him upon the subject without being at the pains to peruse what he had said. It is most lamentable to hear very often how this necessary rule of prayer is broken through, and with what rude, unprepared language the ear of God is vexed.

—*Irving*, 1792–1834.

3. Penitence.

(3846.) Take heed of carrying purposes of going on in sin with thee to the throne of grace; this were a horrible wickedness indeed. As if a traitor should put on the livery which the prince's servants wear, for no other end but to gain more easy access to his person that he might stab him with a dagger he hath under that cloak. Is it not enough to sin, but wouldst thou make God accessary to His own dishonour also?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. Divine assistance.

(3847.) There must be life in the soul before there can be life in the duty. All the rugs in the upholsterer's shop will not fetch a dead man to warmth, nor any arguments, though taken from the most moving topics in the Scripture, will make thee pray fervently while thy soul lies in a dead state. Go first to Christ that thou mayest have life, and having life, then there is hope to chafe thee into some heat. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3848.) Implore the help of God's Spirit to fix our minds, and make them intent and serious in prayer. The ship without a pilot rather floats than sails; that our thoughts do not float up and down in prayer, we need the Blessed Spirit to be our pilot to steer us: only God's Spirit can bound the thoughts. A shaking hand may as well write a line steadily, as we can keep our hearts fixed in prayer without the Spirit of God. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3849.) As the sails of a ship carry it into the harbour, so prayer carries us to the throne and bosom of God. But as the sails cannot of themselves speed the progress of a vessel unless filled with a favourable breeze, so the Holy Spirit must breathe upon our hearts, or our prayers will be motionless and lifeless. —*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

XVI. *PROPER SEQUENCES TO PRAYER.*

1. Effort.

(3850.) Be vigorous in the use of all appointed means to mortify the lust thou prayest against. Resolutions in the time of prayer are good, when backed with strenuous endeavours, else but a blind for a false heart to cover itself with. Samson did not only pray he might be avenged on his enemies, but set his hands to the pillars of the house.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3851.) The Christian's prayer may miscarry, when with his prayer he joins not a diligent use of the means. We must not think to lie upon God, as some lazy people do on their rich kindred; to be always begging of Him, but not put forth our hand to work in the use of means. God hath appointed prayer as a help to our diligence, not as a cloak for our sloth. Idle beggars are welcome neither to God's door nor man's.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3852.) We must join our endeavour in the use of all means with our prayers, whether they be put up for spiritual or temporal blessings. Lazy beggars are not to be relieved at our door. "This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." And certainly God will not bid them welcome to His door, whom He would have us deny at ours. We must pray with our hand at the pump, or the ship will sink in sight of our prayers. Is it temporal subsistence thou prayest for? pray and work, or pray and starve. Dost thou think to set God at work, while thou sittest with thy hand in thy bosom?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3853.) Let no man think that he has prayed heartily against sin, who does not use his utmost diligence to undermine and weaken his inclination to that sin. To water an ill plant every day, and to pray against the power of it, would be preposterous. St. Paul, we know, complained of "a body of death," and of "a thorn in the flesh," and he prayed heartily against it. But was that all? No, he also "kept under his body, and brought it into subjection," being well assured, that unless the soul keeps under the body, the body will quickly get above the soul. If you would destroy a well intrenched enemy, cut off his provisions; and if you starve him in his strongholds, you conquer him as effectually as if you beat him in the field. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(3854.) In securing answers to our requests, we must co-operate with the Lord. Some people ask Him to do their work. "Father," said a little boy, after he had heard him pray fervently for *the poor* at family worship—"Father, I wish I had your corn-crib." "Why, my son?" "Because then I would answer your prayer." I have heard professing Christians pray for the conversion of their children, while they were taking them night after night into scenes of frolic and dissipation. We may make fools of ourselves, but the Almighty will never let us make a fool of Him. God is not mocked; whatsoever we sow we shall also reap. *Neither does God ever mock us.* —*Cuyler.*

2. Self-examination.

(3855.) Do not only observe thy thoughts in duty, but call them to a review after duty. Many go from prayer too much like boys from school, that think no more of their lesson till they return again—leave praying, and all thoughts how they have behaved themselves in prayer together: for shame do not thus. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

3. Watchfulness.

(3856.) He that prays and watcheth not, is like him that sows a field with precious seed, but leaves the gate open for hogs to come and root it up; or him that takes great pains to get money, but no care to lay it up safely when he hath it.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3857.) When a man prays against any sin or temptation, and yet ventures upon those occasions which usually induce men to it, he must not expect to find any success in his prayers. For would any

man in his wits, who dreaded a catching distemper, converse freely with such as had it? that is, would he fly from the disease, and yet run into the infection? In like manner, do not occasions of sin generally end in the commission of sin? And if they generally end in it, must they not naturally tend to it? And if so, can men think that God ever designed prayer as an engine to counterwork or control nature, to reverse its laws, and alter the course of the universe, by suspending the natural efficiency of things, in compliance with some men's senseless and irrational petitions?

None trifle with God and make a sport of sin so much as those whose way of living interferes with their prayers; who pray for such or such a virtue, and then put themselves under circumstances which render the practice of it next to impossible: who pray perhaps for the grace of sobriety, and then wait daily for an answer to that prayer at a merry-meeting or the tavern. But the spirit of prayer is a spirit of prudence, a spirit of caution and conduct, and never pursues the thing it prays for in a way contrary to the nature of the thing itself.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

XVII. *HINDRANCES TO PRAYER.*

1. Indulgence in sin.

(3858.) A man that is wounded may call upon the surgeon to have some ease of his pain, but if he will not endure to have the splinter or the arrow-head pulled out that sticketh fast in the flesh and causeth the grief, he may cry long enough, but all in vain; and if people should pray to God to stay the fury of the burning, when a house is on fire, and themselves in the meantime pour on oil or throw on fuel, there will be but small hope of quenching the same. So there can be no comfortable return of our prayers unto God till sin be removed; it is but folly to seek unto God by prayer till the partition wall of sin that is betwixt us and Him be broken down. It is sin that crosseth and hindereth the effect and fruit of prayer: like those heathens of whom the cynic made this observation, that they prayed indeed to their gods for health, but at the very same time, when they prayed, they used such excess as could not but greatly impair their health, and so wilfully deprived themselves of that they prayed for. —*Spencer*, 1658.

2. Guilt on the conscience.

(3859.) Guilt on the conscience is one great hindrance to prayer. When sin is recent—when, like Adam skulking among the trees, the bitter sweet of the forbidden fruit is still present to his taste, and his newly-opened eyes are aghast at his own deformity—it is not natural for the self-condemned transgressor to draw near to God. And it is not till the Spirit of God directs his view to the unnoticed sacrifice, and encourages him to put on the robe of God's providing, that the abashed and trembling criminal can venture back into God's presence. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

3. Dimness of spiritual perception.

(3860.) When a man of taste or science climbs a mountain on a bright, transparent day, he rejoices in its goodly prospect or curious spoils; but his dog feels no interest in them. He sees the philosopher peering through his telescope, or exploring for the little plants that grow near the summit, or splintering the rocks and putting fragments in the bag; but it never occurs to the spaniel so much as to marvel what his master is finding there. He sits yawning and panting on a sunny knoll, or snaps at the mountain-bee as it comes sailing past him, or chases the conies back into their holes, and scampers down, with noisy glee, as soon as the hungry sojourn is ended. The disparity between the philosopher and his irrational friend is hardly greater than it is between the believer and the worldling when you bring them together into the domain of faith. "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and on the Pisgah of the same revelation, whence the believer describes a goodly land, and where he is making the most interesting discoveries, the other sees nothing to arrest his attention. The Word of God and its promises, the throne of grace and its privileges, the things of faith in all their varieties, have no existence to worldly men; and when constrained to bear others company in outward ordinances, they are thankful when the prayer concluded, or the sanctuary closing, sends them back to the world again. But just as the same lover of nature might ascend his favourite eminence on a subsequent day, and find all his godly prospects intercepted by a baffling mist, so dense that, except a pebble here and there, he can alight on none of its rare productions, and without any opening vista by which he can catch a glimpse of the fair regions around; so the believer may ascend the hill of God—he may open his Bible or enter his closet—and find, alas! that it is a foggy day, the beauteous panorama blotted out, and himself left to grope chilling in the cold and perplexing gloom. But like a gale of summer wind, upspringing and lifting all the fog from the mountain-top, the breath of the Omnipotent Spirit can scatter every cloud, and leave the soul on a pinnacle of widest survey, rejoicing in the purest light of God. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

4. Inordinate cares and affections.

(3861.) As the sea that the wind hath lain sore upon is yet tossed and troubled after the wind is laid and the tempest gone: even so a man's mind, lately come out of the business and cares of the world, still casteth and studieth the same things, and panteth after them, and cannot after this come straight to itself, and so meditate on and exercise in spiritual matters. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(3862.) Oh, 'tis hard to converse with the world all day, and shake it off at night, so as to be free to enjoy privacy with God. The world does by the Christian, as the little child by the mother; if it cannot keep the mother from going out, then it will cry after her to go with her; if the world cannot keep us from going to religious duties, then it will cry to be taken along with us, and much ado to part it and the affections.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3863.) The smoke and sparks that rise from a furnace are carried that way where the wind lies; so if thy heart be to the world thou canst not prevent thy thoughts and meditations from driving thither. Then, and not till then, will prayer ascend like a pillar of incense from the altar, when there is a holy calmness on thy spirit, and boisterous winds of inordinate cares and affections to the world are laid. —*Salter*.

5. Wandering thoughts.

(3864.) Many vain intruders tease me most at such seasons as I most desire to be freed from them; they follow me into the pulpit, and meet me at the Lord's table. I hope I do not love them, or wish to lodge them! Often in my prayers some idle fancy buzzes about me, and makes me forget where I am, and what I am doing. I compare myself to a man upon his knees before the king, pleading for his life, or returning thanks for some great favour; in the midst of his speech he sees a butterfly; he immediately breaks off, leaves his speech unfinished, and runs away to catch the butterfly. Such a man would be thought mad; and my vile thoughts prove that I am not free from spiritual insanity.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(3865.) When I first amused myself with going out to sea, when the winds arose and the waves became a little rough, I found a difficulty to keep my legs on the deck, but I tumbled and tossed about like a porpoise on the water: at last I caught hold of a rope that was floating about, and then I was enabled to stand upright. So when in prayer a multitude of troublous thoughts invade your peace, or when the winds and waves of temptations arise, look out for the rope, lay hold of it, and stay yourself on the faithfulness of God in His covenant with His people and in His promises. Hold fast by that rope, and you shall stand.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

XVIII. *IS TO BE CONTINUALLY MAINTAINED.*

1. Even when a devotional spirit is lacking.

(3866.) If your hearts be cold, prayer is a more likely means to warm them than the omission of it. To ask whether you may pray while your hearts are cold and backward, is to ask whether you may labour or come to the fire before you are warm. God's Spirit is more likely to help you in duty than in the neglect of it.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

2. Because continual prayer keeps us in the love of God.

(3867.) It is frequency of devotion also which maintaineth that friendship with God, which is the soul of piety. As familiar conversation (wherein men do express their minds and affections mutually) breedeth acquaintance, and cherisheth good-will of men to one another; but long forbearance thereof dissolveth or slackeneth the bonds of amity, breaking their intimacy, and cooling their kindness; so is it in respect to God; it is frequent converse with Him which begetteth a particular acquaintance with Him, a mindful regard of Him, a hearty liking to Him, a delightful taste of His goodness, and consequently a sincere and solid good-will toward Him; but intermission thereof produceth estrangement or enmity toward Him. If we seldom come at God, we shall little know Him, not much care for Him, scarce remember Him, rest insensible of His love and regardless of His favour; a coldness, a shyness, a distaste, an antipathy toward Him will by degrees creep upon us. Abstinence from His company and presence will cast us into conversations destructive or prejudicial to our friendship with Him; wherein soon we shall contract familiarity and friendship with His enemies (the world and the flesh), which are inconsistent with love to Him, which will dispose us to forget Him, or to dislike and loathe Him. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

3. Because continual prayer is necessary to our stability.

(3868.) Prayers are the bulwarks of piety and good conscience, the which ought to be placed so as to flank and relieve one another, together with the interjacent spaces of our life; that the enemy (*the sin which doth so easily beset us*) may not come in between, or at any time assault us, without a force sufficiently near to reach and repel him.

—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(3869.) When you have given over the practice of stated prayer, you gradually become weaker without knowing it. Samson did not know he had lost his strength till the Philistines came upon him; you will think yourselves the men you used to be, till suddenly your adversary will come furiously upon you, and you will as suddenly fall.

—*Newman.*

4. Because it promotes our growth in grace.

(3870.) The Christian is compared to a tree (Ps. i.). And those trees flourish most and bear sweetest fruit which stand most in the sun. The praying Christian stands nigh to God, and hath God nigh to him in all that he calls upon Him for. And therefore you may expect his fruit to be sweet and ripe, when another that stands as it were in the shade, and at a distance from God (through neglect of, or infrequency in this duty) will have little fruit found on his branches, and that but green and sour. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God: they shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3871.) In their steadfastness in prayer (Acts ii. 42), they set us an example that we should follow their steps. Who does not know that to grow the same fruit as others—crops as fine in quality and abundant in quantity,—we must apply the same culture to ground or tree? I have seen, for example, two plants growing under the glass of the same conservatory; and while the one showed a mass of flowers that dazzled the eye with their beauty, and filled the whole house with their perfume, the other, fruitless and flowerless, hung its drooping leaves, and seemed pining into death, under a deep decline. Both stood in the same soil; enjoyed an equal temperature; and had been taken from one common parent stem. Whence the difference? The cause of that was neither obscure nor remote—this had been often, but that, neglected, had been seldom watered. Now, what water is to thirsty plants, prayer is to the graces of a man or a church. Do we admire, wonder, and sometimes, indeed, stand astonished at the love which animated, and the fruitfulness which distinguished, these first Christians? The riddle is read, the mystery solved, in these words: "They continued steadfast in prayer." —*Guthrie.*

5. The fitness and importance of daily prayer.

(3872.) Do not any day, upon any pretence, omit to offer up thy morning and evening sacrifices. Remember, so often as thou neglectest morning prayer, so often thou art all the day naked, desti-

tute of thy spiritual guard, and exposed to all manner of evils and enemies, and dost forespeak thyself an evil day; and so often as thou omittest evening prayer thou presumest upon sleep, and rest, and safety, without God's leave, and forespeakest thyself an evil night. What did Thomas lose by one omission! Jesus appeared the first day of the week to His disciples, "but Thomas," saith the text, "was not there." But what is the issue of this omission? Truly, by his neglecting this opportunity of confirming his faith, he falls into a desperate fit of unbelief. When the apostles told him that they had seen the Lord, he presently answers, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Ah, what had become of Thomas if Infinite Majesty had not stooped to recover him? —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3873.) He that closeth his eyes at night without prayer, lies down before his bed is made. He is like a foolish captain in a garrison, who betakes himself to his rest, before he hath set the *watch* for the city's safeguard. God is His people's keeper: but can he expect to be kept by Him that chargeth not the Divine Providence with his keeping? The angels, at His command, pitch their tents about His saints' dwellings. But as the drum calls the watch together, so God looks that by humble prayer, we should beg of Him their ministry and attendance about us. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3874.) It is related of a hero in Scottish history, that, when an overwhelming force was in full pursuit, and all his followers were urging him to more rapid flight, he coolly dismounted, in order to repair a flaw in his horse's harness. Whilst busied with the broken buckle, the distant cloud swept down in nearer thunder, but just as the prancing hoofs and eager spears were ready to dash down on him, the flaw was mended, the clasp was fastened, the steed was mounted, and like a sweeping falcon, he vanished from their view. The broken buckle would have left him in the field an inglorious prisoner, the timely delay sent him in safety to his huzzaing comrades. There is in daily life the same luckless precipitancy, and the same profitable delay. The man who, from his prayerless waking, bounces off into the business of the day, however good his talents and great his diligence, is only galloping on a steed harnessed with a broken buckle, and must not be astonished if, in his hottest haste, his most hazardous leap, he be left inglorious in the dust.
—*Hamilton*, 1814-1867.

(3875.) It is as impossible for the soul to live and thrive without daily prayer, as for the body to live and thrive without daily food. Our graces are like plants that need daily watering; watches that need daily winding; lamps that need daily filling; bodies that need daily feeding. It is as necessary for the graces of the inner, as for the strength, and health, and life of the outward man that we should wait on God to say, "Give me day by day my daily bread." —*Guthrie.*

(3876.) A good day begins with God. A wise merchant would no more think of going to business without communion with Christ, than of going to the store without coat, or hat, or shoes. I used to have a very poor watch, and I had to set it every morning in order that I might make from it a guess about the time of day. Our souls are poor time-pieces, utterly disordered; and every morning we need to set them by the Sun of Righteousness. Before we start off to the store we need to pray for patience. We will be harassed and perplexed. Men will wrong us, and impose upon us, and cheat us; and before the day is past, if you have not laid in a large supply of patience, you will half swear with your lips, and perhaps make a whole swear with your hearts. —*Talmage.*

6. Because of the baseness of seeking God in adversity only.

(3877.) Pray in prosperity, that thou mayest speed when thou prayest in adversity; own God now, that He may acknowledge thee then. Shall that friend be welcome to us, that never gives us a visit, but when he comes to borrow? This is a right beggar's trick, but not a friend's part.
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3878.) The shark is said to have been the god that the Sandwich Islanders, in their savage state, chiefly worshipped, or sought to propitiate. In their present semi-civilised, semi-Christianised condition, it is said, they pray, and sing, and moralise, in fair weather; but when they get into trouble they call upon the shark-god of their fathers for help or deliverance. —*A. P. Russell.*

(3879.) There are others who pray only in emergency; who pray only in circumstances of great affliction or peril; who first become prayerful in sickness or sorrow; who learn the way of prayer when under persecutions; who, when they find that there is no more help to be received from men, fall back upon God. It is very sad that men should pray only on such rare occasions as these. It is very blessed that they should be willing to pray then; that is better than nothing; but ah! how poor is prayer where men are driven to it by the whip, and where they resort to it only when they feel the lash of trouble and affliction on their back. What would you think of a son that never went home to his father except when he was in debt, and had the sheriff at his heels, and wanted help; and that, the moment he obtained the relief which he sought, forgot that father again, and cared nothing for him? It is better to go to God in prayer when troubles assail us than not to go to Him at all, yet, if we only go to Him then, our prayer comes far short of that which we owe, as children, to our Heavenly Father. —*Beecher.*

XIX. *ENCOURAGEMENT FOR DESPONDING SUPPLIANTS.*

(3880.) Suppose the dearest son of the most loving father to lie grievously sick, and out of the extremity of anguish to cry out and complain to him that he is so full of pain in every part that he knows not which way to turn himself, or what to do; and thereupon entreats him by the love he bears him to touch him tenderly, to lay him softly, to mollify all he may his painful misery, and give him ease. How ready, think you, would such a father be with all tenderness and care to give his helping hand in such a rueful case! But yet if he should grow sicker and weaker, so that he could not speak at all, but only look his father in the face with watery eyes, and moan himself unto him, with sighs and groans, and other dumb expressions

of his increased pain and desire to speak, would not this strike yet deeper into the father's tender heart, pierce and melt with more feeling pangs of compassion, and make his bowels yearn within him with an addition of extraordinary solicitude to do him good? Even just so will thy Heavenly Father be affected and deal with thee, in hearing, helping, and showing mercy, when all thy strength of prayer is gone, but only groans and sighs. Nay, with incomparably more affectionateness: for, look how far God is higher than man in majesty and greatness, which is by an infinite distance and disproportion, so far does He pass him in tenderheartedness and love. (See Isa. lv. 8, 9.)

—*Bolton*, 1572–1631.

(3881.) Haply thou shalt never have an ability with a flow of words to express thyself as some others; but let not that discourage thee. God looks not at the pomp of words and variety of expressions, but sincerity and devotion of the heart. The key opens not the door because gilt, but because fitted to the wards of the lock. Let but the matter of thy prayer be according to God's mind, holy and warrantable, and the temper of thy heart humble and fervent, and no fear but thou shalt speed. Yea, let the prayer be old, pray to-day what thou didst yesterday, be but sure to bring new affections with thy old prayer, and thou shalt be friendly received into God's presence, though thou canst not on a sudden put thy requests into a new shape. God will not shut His child out of doors, because he comes not every day in a new-fashioned suit.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3882.) "I fear," saith the poor soul, "I am an hypocrite, because I have such a divided heart in the duties I perform. I cannot for my life enjoy any privacy with God in duty, but some base lust will be crowding into my thoughts when I am at prayer, hearing of the Word, or meditating; now I am lift up with a self-applauding thought, anon cast down to the earth with a worldly thought; what with one and another, little respite have I from such company."

Answer. Woe were it to the best of saints, if the mere rising and stirring of such thoughts as these (or worse than these) did prove the heart unsound. Take heed thou concludest not thy state therefore from the presence of these in thee, but from the comportment and behaviour of thy heart towards them. Answer, therefore, to these few interrogatories, and possibly thou mayest see thy sincerity through the mist these have raised in the soul.

First, what friendly welcome have such thoughts with thee, when they present themselves to thee in duty? Are these the guests thou hast expected, and trimmed thy room for? Didst go to duty to meet those friends, or do they unmannerly break in upon thee, and forcibly carry thee (as Christ foretold of Peter in another case) whither thou wouldst not? If so, why shouldst thou bring thy sincerity into dispute? Dost thou not know the devil is a bold intruder, and dares come where he knows there is none will bid him sit down, and that soul alone he can call his own house, where he finds rest? (Luke xii. 24). Suppose in your family, as you are kneeling down to prayer, a company of roysters should stand under your window, and all the while you are praying, they would be roaring and hollowing, this could not but much disturb you; but would you, from the disturbance they make, fall to question your sincerity in the duty? Truly 'tis all one, whether the disturbance be in the room or in the bosom, so the soul likes the one no more than he doth the other.

Secondly, Dost thou sit contented with this company, or use all the means thou canst to get rid of them, as soon as may be? Sincerity cannot sit still to see such doings in the soul, but as a faithful servant, when thieves break into his master's house, though overpowered with their strength and multitude that he cannot with his own hands thrust them out of doors, yet he will send out secretly for help, and raise the town upon them; prayer is the sincere soul's messenger, it posts to heaven with full speed in this case, counting itself to be no other than in the belly of hell with Jonah, while it is yoked with such thoughts, and as glad when aid comes to rescue him out of their hands, as Lot was when Abraham recovered him from the kings that had carried him away prisoner.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

XX. *ANSWERS TO PRAYER.*

1. How numerous they are.

(3883.) Answered prayers cover the field of providential history as flowers cover Western prairies. —*Cuyler.*

2. Every true prayer is certain to be answered.

(3884.) When the season has been cold and backward, when rains fell and prices rose, and farmers desponded and the poor despaired, I have heard old people, whose hopes, resting on God's promise, did not rise and fall with the barometer, nor shifting winds, say, We shall have harvest after all; and this you can safely say of the labours and fruits of prayer. The answer may be long in coming—years may elapse before the bread we have cast on the waters comes back; but if the vision tarry, wait for it! Why not? We know that some seeds spring as soon almost as they are committed to the ground; but others lie buried for months; nor, in some cases, is it till years elapse that they germinate and rise, to teach us that what is dormant is not dead. Such it may be with our prayers. Ere that immortal seed has sprung, the hand that planted it may be mouldering in the dust—the seal of death on the lips that prayed. But though you are not spared to reap the harvest, your prayers are not lost. They bide their time, God's "set time." For in one form or another, in this world or in the next, who sows in tears shall reap in joy. The God who puts His people's tears into His bottle will certainly never forget their prayers. —*Guthrie.*

(3885.) I can stand in the rooms of my office in New York, and communicate with the men in the fifth story. If I want to speak to the foreman of the printing-office, I go and blow the whistle, and talk through the tube. And I know that the message has got up there, and that he heard it. I do not see him, and he does not answer me back; but I have no doubt that, having received the message, he will attend to my wants. I say, for instance, "Send me down the proof of such and such an article," and by and by he sends it down to me. So, it seems to me that sometimes we speak to God in heaven, as it were through an invisible

medium. He does not answer immediately; but, nevertheless, we know that He is there, and that even if we do not conceive of Him, He conceives of us; and we send our thought or prayer up, and let it alone, and do not fret or worry about it.

—*Beecher.*

(3886.) Answering does not always stand next door to petition. Prayers, however, are never forgotten when they go up before the faithful One. Why, long after we have forgotten them, God remembers them. For prayers are seeds, many of them; and as air-plants root themselves up in trees, and then grow by reaching down toward the earth, so prayers, methinks, root themselves up in heaven, and then grow down toward us. They sometimes have a long growth before they reach us and blossom, but they do it sooner or later.

—*Beecher.*

3. Should be diligently looked for.

(3887.) To pray and not watch what becomes of our prayer is a great folly, and no little sin; like children that throw stones into a river, which they never look to see more. What is this but to take the name of God in vain, and play with an ordinance that is holy and sacred? Yet thus, alas, do many knock at God's door (as idle children at ours), and then run away to the world (as they to their play) and think no more of their prayers.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3888.) If, when thou hast sent up thy prayer, thou canst cast off the care and thoughts of the business, as if praying were only like children scribbling over pieces of paper, which, when they have done, they lay aside and think no more of them; if thou canst take denials at God's hands for such things as these, and blank no more than a cold suitor doth, when he hears not from her whom he never really loved,—if it breaks not thy rest, imbitters not thy joy, a false heart set thee on work.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3889.) When thou hast been with God, expect good from God. "I will direct my prayer to Thee, and will look up." For want of this, many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe, why do you pray? And if you believe, why do you not expect? By praying you seem to depend on God; by not expecting, you again renounce your confidence, and ravel out your prayer. What is this, but to take His name in vain, and to play bo-peep with God? As if one that knocks at your door should, before you can come to open it to him, go away, and not stay to be spoken with. Oh Christians, stand to your prayer in a holy expectation of what you have begged, upon the credit of the promise, and you cannot miss of the ruin of your lusts.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3890.) People say "What a wonderful thing it is that God hears George Müller's prayers!" But is it not a sad thing that we should think it wonderful for God to hear prayer? We are come to a pretty pass certainly when we think it wonderful that God is true! Much better faith was that of a little boy in one of the schools at Edinburgh, who had attended the prayer meetings, and at last said to his teacher who conducted the prayer meeting, "Teacher, I wish my sister could be got to read the Bible; she never reads it." "Why, Johnny, should your sister read the Bible?" "Because if she should once read it, I am sure it would do her good, and she would be converted and be saved." "Do you think so, Johnny?" "Yes, I do, sir, and I wish the next time there's a prayer meeting you would ask the people to pray for my sister, that she may begin to read the Bible." "Well, well, it shall be done, John." So the teacher gave out that a little boy was very anxious that prayers should be offered that his sister might begin to read the Bible. John was observed to get up and go out. The teacher thought it very unkind of the boy to disturb the people in a crowded room and go out like that, and so the next day when the lad came, he said, "John, I thought that was very rude of you to get up in the prayer meeting and go out. You ought not to have done it." "Oh! sir," said the boy, "I did not mean to be rude, but I thought I should just like to go home and see my sister reading her Bible for the first time." That is how we ought to believe, and wait with expectation to see the answer to prayer. The girl was reading the Bible when the boy went home. God had been pleased to hear the prayer; and if we could but trust God after that fashion we should often see similar things accomplished. —*Spurgeon.*

(3891.) In a time of great drought in Scotland, Dr. Guthrie had in his Sabbath morning service prayed for rain. As they went to church in the afternoon, little Mary, his daughter, said: "Here is the umbrella, papa," "What do we need it for?" he asked. "You prayed for rain this morning, and don't you expect God will send it?" They carried the umbrella, and when they came home they were glad to take shelter under it from the drenching storm.

(3892.) A poor widow had four little children, the eldest about eight years old. One evening, in the midst of winter, her children were hungry, and she had no food to give them. But she kneeled down to tell God of their wants, and ask Him to supply them. At the close of her prayer, the eldest said to her: "Mother, doesn't the Bible say that God once sent some ravens with bread to a man who was hungry? Don't you think God can send us some ravens with bread now, just as well as He did then? I'm going to open the door, or they can't get in." A few minutes after, the village magistrate passed, and glancing through the open door said: "My good friend, how does it happen that your door is standing open this cold winter's night?" "It is my little boy who opened the door a moment ago, in order, as he said, 'that the ravens might come in and bring us some bread.'" Now, it so happened that this gentleman was actually dressed in black from head to foot.

"Ah! indeed," said he, laughing; "Richard is right. The raven is come, and he is a pretty big one, too. Come with me, my little man, and I will show you where the bread is."

4. Should be perseveringly sought.

(3893.) When we pray, but receive no answer, and putting our ear to the door where we have been knocking, as if the house were untenanted, we catch no approaching footstep, nor sound, nor sign of any one being within, what are we to do? To cease praying? Cease praying! By no means. No more than I would cease swimming for dear life when the cruel wave had plucked my hands

from the rock, or, after my feet had touched the blessed sands, bore me back again and out to sea. I am to knock and listen; to stand and wait; and, importunate as the widow, take no rest and give God none, till the door is opened. Do this, for what His word teaches you is agreeable to His will, and if the answer does not come when you are living, you shall get it when you are dead. In prayers, or curses, men sow what afterward grows above their graves. It is eighteen hundred years since Jesus prayed, "I will that those whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am," and that prayer is answered in every chamber from which a dying saint takes his flight to glory. It is eighteen hundred years since they cried, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and God is answering that curse now in a people scattered, and peeled; a hissing; a byword; and a proverb in all the earth.

Let faith and hope hold up the arms of prayer, till, paralysed by death, they drop powerless at your side. Many a pious parent has wrestled with God for an ungodly son; nor got his answer till he had left the earth and been years in heaven. One day its door is thrown open. He looks round to see who comes in—there is his son! The father leaves his throne to rush into his arms; they embrace; and Jesus, seeing of the travail of His soul, and rejoicing over this trophy of His cross, hears in heaven that outburst of paternal joy, "My son that was dead is alive again, that was lost is found." —*Guthrie.*

5. Are to be patiently waited for.

(3894.) Yea, but we have waited a long time. Well, but yet know that you are at the right door. Suppose a man to be knocking at a door, and he has knocked a great while and nobody comes, he begins to think it is not the right door, but somebody tells him that it is, and thereon he stays: so we may assure our hearts thus much, we are at the right door certainly, and let us not think to go away, we shall find somebody within, God will appear at length. What! shall we lose all for want of waiting a little while longer?

—*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

6. Are frequently delayed.

(3895.) He hath engaged to answer the prayers of His people, and "fulfil the desires of those that fear Him." But it proves a long voyage sometimes before the praying saint hath the return of his adventure. There comes oft a long and sharp winter between the sowing-time of prayer, and the reaping. He hears us indeed as soon as we pray, but we oft do not hear of Him so soon. Prayers are not long on their journey to heaven, but long a coming thence in a full answer. Christ at this day in heaven hath not a full answer to some of those prayers which He put up on earth: therefore He is said to expect till His enemies be made His footstool. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3896.) Learn to distinguish betwixt God's hearing and His answering the saint's prayer. Every faithful prayer is heard, and makes an acceptable report in God's ear as soon as it is shot; but God doth not always thus speedily answer it. The father at the reading of his son's letter (which comes haply on some begging errand) likes the motion, his heart closeth with it, and a grant is there passed; but takes his own time to send his despatch, and let his son know this. Princes have their books of remembrance, wherein they write the names of their favourites whom they intend to prefer, haply some years before their gracious purpose opens itself to them. Mordecai's name stood in Ahasuerus' book some while before his honour was conferred. Thus God records the name of His saints and their prayers. "The Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, of them that feared the Lord and thought upon His name." But they hear not of God in His providential answer haply a long time after. Abraham prays for a child, and is heard, but how many years interpose before he hath him in his arms? —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

7. Why God sometimes delays to answer prayer.

(3897.) When God is slow in giving He only sets off His own gifts to advantage, He does not withhold them. Blessings long desired are sweeter when they come; if soon given, they lose much of their value. God reserves for you that which He is slow to give you, that you may learn to entertain a supreme desire and longing after it.

—*Augustine*, 353-429.

(3898.) Prayers which are not answered at once, nor, perhaps, for a long time afterwards, may nevertheless be accepted. Were He to speak, Christ's reply to a mother, earnest and urgent for a son's conversion, might be such as He gave His own mother at the marriage at Cana, "Woman, Mine hour is not yet come!" Now, God's people are apt to forget this; and that it is with prayer, to borrow an illustration from commercial transactions, as with a bill, which, though accepted, is often not paid till months or years elapse. Our Heavenly Father knows best what to give; and also how, and where, and when to give. Were its answer always to follow prayer, as the peal roars upon the flash, I suspect that we would be as ready in spiritual as we are in earthly matters to look only to secondary causes, and forget God's hand—coming to look on our prayers as being the cause of the answer, as much as we are in the habit of regarding the flash of lightning, without any reference to God, as the cause of the peal of thunder.

—*Guthrie.*

8. Why some prayers are not answered.

(3899.) It is pure mercy that negatives a particular request. A miser would pray very earnestly for gold, if he believed prayer would gain it; whereas, if Christ had any favour to him, He would take his gold away. A child walks in the garden in spring, and sees cherries; he knows they are good fruit, and therefore asks for them. "No, my dear," says the father, "they are not yet ripe: stay till the season." —*Newton*, 1725-1807.

9. Recorded answers to prayer.

(3900.) A poor Christian woman in Buckinghamshire—I believe near Berkhampstead—was bereaved of her husband after a long illness, and left unprovided for, the only thing of value being a large chest of tools. The husband had only just been buried, when a neighbour, bearing no good character, called on the widow, and presented a bill for work done altogether beyond the widow's power to pay. The work, which had been done in the

husband's lifetime, was paid for by him, and the bill receipted, of which the widow had a distinct recollection. It availed not for her to assert the fact The payment of the bill was pressed again, and longing eyes cast at the chest of tools. In great distress, the widow retired upstairs to pray, for all effort to find the receipted bill was vain. While engaged in prayer, a butterfly flew in at the open window downstairs. The widow's little child chased it until it flew behind the chest of tools. Just then the mother came in, and the child begged her to remove the box, that he might get the butterfly. The neighbour offered at once to do so; and while he was removing it from the wall, a piece of paper fell down behind, which the widow, taking up, found to be the lost bill, receipted as she had said. She was overcome with praise and gratitude to God, who had answered her prayer by means of the butterfly; and even her enemy himself discovered the missing bill.

(3901.) On the coast of Scotland, one stormy night, a woman came to the house of her pastor, and said to the minister: "Rise, and pray for my husband, for he is on the sea in a storm." The Christian wife and her pastor knelt down and prayed for the salvation of the sea-captain. Sure enough, at that very hour the vessel was tossed upon the angry seas. The ship plunged in the wave, and it seemed as if it would never come up again; but it righted, and came to the top of the wave. It plunged again, and for a long while the captain thought it would never rise; but it began to shake itself again from the wave, and again bounded the sea. The third time it went down, and all hands on board gave up the last hope. But again it mounted. As it came out of the foaming billows, the captain said to his crew: "Lads, surely there was some God's soul on the land praying for us to-night, or we would never have come up out of that." —*Talmage.*

(3902.) My father was a man of prayer, and in our home the family altar was never permitted to fall down, nor its fires to expire or grow dim. Around that altar our dependence on God was constantly acknowledged, and the Divine blessing continually invoked. Nor was that blessing sought in vain, but mercies new and fresh, from day to day, were granted in answer to a father's prayers.

One bright morning in the spring of 1850, after commending us to the Divine protection, my father put two bushels of rye into his waggon and started for the grist-mill, a few miles distant from our home. When more than half-way there he had to cross a bridge, along the sides of which there were no railings, but only some logs laid upon the end of the planks.

When on the middle of this bridge the horse stopped and began to back. My father leaped from the waggon, and the horse continued backing till the hind wheels went over the logs and off the edge of the bridge, and the waggon seat and grain bag tumbled out and fell into the stream. At this moment the horse stopped, the forward wheels caught on the log, and the hinder part of the waggon hung over the edge of the bridge, being held by the horse and by the forward wheels.

Four or five men soon came to the rescue, the waggon was lifted back, the grist fished up from the water, and in half an hour my father was on his way back home to dry his grist and get it ready for grinding again.

There was a mystery about this whole transaction. We could not imagine what had made the horse back when upon the bridge. He showed no signs of fright, and had never acted so before. My father was troubled. He had earnestly prayed that morning that the angel of the Lord might encamp around about us that day, and now to be subjected to such an accident and so much inconvenience, was something of a trial to his faith, though it did not shake his confidence in God.

He returned home, and we went to work to dry our grain and prepare it for grinding; but when we spread out the rye upon a cloth in the sun to dry, we noticed, scattered all through it, fragments of a fine glittering substance, which, on examination proved to be *glass!* Thousands and thousands of little fragments and splinters of broken glass were mingled with those two bushels of rye—enough to have caused the death of all our family, and a hundred others, if the grain had been ground, and baked and eaten.

We were amazed at this revelation; and with what grateful hearts we knelt around the family altar and thanked God for His wonderful providence which had so strangely preserved our lives!

But how came the glass thus mingled with the grain? It was all explained very soon. The rye had been kept in an open barrel, and over this barrel our neighbours had smoothed axe-handles, using pieces of glass to scrape and polish them. These pieces of glass were thus broken and splintered, and the fragments dropped unnoticed into the grain, and were measured up and placed in the bag to be carried to the mill.

No one suspected the danger, and if that grist had been ground no human power could have averted the calamity, or saved our family from the terrible influence of a poison so deadly as powdered glass. God, in His providence, interposed and preserved our lives—truly it is but right that they should be consecrated to His service.

PROFESSION.

I. *IS A DUTY ABSOLUTELY BINDING ON ALL BELIEVERS.*

1. Because of their past relations to God.

(3903.) In the Bible God has made faith indispensable, and has attached an unspeakable importance to it. Two or three remarks will show why God has selected this, and has made its exercise the indispensable condition of salvation.

One is, that the true source of all evil to man is want of confidence in his Creator—a want of confidence in His promise, His law, His claims, His threatenings, His qualifications for universal empire. This want of confidence in God has produced the same evils in His administration which it does anywhere. A want of confidence between a husband and wife annihilates their happiness, and turns their once peaceful dwelling into a hell; a want of confidence between parent and children is the end of order and government; a want of confidence in a friend, a physician, a lawyer, or a pastor, is the parent of distress and woe; a want of confidence in a commercial community is an end of prosperity.

And so it is in the government of God. Man is wretched only because he has no confidence in his Creator. He does not worship Him as God; he does not believe that He is wise; he does not go to Him in trouble, he does not rely on His promises; he does not seek Him in time of distress; he does not trust Him in death. Now the only thing needful to make this a happy world, with all its sickness and sadness, is to restore confidence in God. This would meet all the evils of the apostacy, and would compose the agitated human bosom to peace—like oil on troubled waves. It will have just the effect under the divine government which it will have in a family, if you restore confidence to the alienated affections of husband and wife; and in a community, if you restore universal confidence between man and man.

Another reason why this is required is, that God could require no less of man. In a plan of salvation intended to be adapted to all the race, that was the lowest possible demand, as it is the simplest and most easy. Could God admit alienated creatures to Himself on any other condition than that they should have confidence in Him? Could He admit those to heaven—to dwell with Him, to range the fields of glory, to encompass His throne—who had no reliance in His qualifications for universal empire? Can you admit the man who has been your professed friend, but who has slandered and injured you, again to your friendship, without evidence of returning confidence and regard? Can a parent admit a rebellious and ungrateful child again to the fulness of his affection and to his family, if he has no evidence of returning confidence? God, therefore, requires faith in Him, because He could require no less. It is the lowest possible condition.

And for a similar reason, He requires that that faith should be avowed. "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The want of confidence has been open. The injury has been public. And wherever there is returning confidence, it should be avowed, and the restored sinner should be desirous that his return to God should be as widely known as his apostacy has been. When a man has calumniated you publicly, it will not do for him to come and confess it to you alone, and in the dark. He has done you public wrong, and the confession should be public too. The sinner should be willing, therefore, that all worlds shall be apprised of his return, and seek that throughout the universe it shall be proclaimed that he has confidence in the Creator. Thus he will not only believe in his heart on the Lord Jesus, but will confess Him with his mouth, and desire that the universe shall be acquainted with his repentance and return. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

2. Because of their present relations to God.

(3904.) It is not sufficient to carry religion in our hearts as fire is carried in flint-stones; but we are outwardly, visibly, apparently, to serve and honour the living God. —*Hooker*, 1553–1600.

(3905.) What doth God require by a free profession of His truth, more than a master doth of his servant, when he bids him take his livery, and follow him in the streets? Or when a prince calls his subjects into the field, to declare their loyalty, by owning his quarrel against an invading enemy? And is it reasonable, what man requires of these, and only hard from God's hands?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3906.) "Religion," it is said, "is a secret principle of the soul. It shrinks back from the public gaze, and seeks concealment, and should not seek publicity." But why is this said? There is nothing of it in the Bible; but everything there is just the contrary. Hypocrisy, and mere profession, and ostentation, and sounding a trumpet, are rebuked. But I ask a man to point me to a single passage in the Bible where the manifestation of pure religion is rebuked. Religion, in the Bible, is supposed to be prominent and manifest, if it exists at all (Matt. v. 16; Luke ix. 26). It is to constitute the character; it is to distinguish the man. I point you to the example of Christ. Religion is everything in His life. I point you to the example of Paul. You see nothing else in his life but his religion. Among Greeks, and Jews, and Barbarians, it is alike developed. I point you to David, and Isaiah, and John, and the holy martyrs, and ask what were their principles? The men were modest men; but their religion was open and bold. It constituted their very character; and is that, and that alone, by which they are known. And thus it is in all the works and doings of God. Is the sun that rides these heavens ashamed to shine; and does he hide his noontide beams under the plea that pure light should not be ostentatious? Is the moon—that, like the Christian, shines by reflected light—ashamed to emit its rays, and to sleep on the bank and the silver lake? Are the stars—the wandering or the fixed—ashamed to send their rays on a darkened world? No. Light, pure, rich, varied, dazzling, shines forth from these heavens by day and by night, just as the light of the Christian's example is to be poured on the darkness of the world. It shines not indeed for display, but for use; not for its own glory, but like the light that should radiate from the Christian's life, to illustrate the glory of the great Creator. And thus it is in all God's works. The ocean that He has made is not ashamed to roll; the lightning of heaven to play; the oak to spread out its boughs; the flower to bloom. The humblest violet on which we tread is not ashamed to exhibit its beauty, and display its Maker's praise; nor will the obscurest light in the true Christian's soul seek to be hid. Light is kindled there to shine on the darkness of a lost world. And if Christian light does not shine forth in the life, we have the highest evidence that it has never been enkindled in the bosom. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

3. Because of their obligations to Christ.

(3907.) If people are loud in the praise of the physician who has cured them of some deadly malady—recommending others to trust and seek his skill, why should not Christ's people crown Him with equal honours, commend Him to a dying world, and proclaim what He has done for them? Let them say with David, "Come, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul;" and tread in the steps of the Samaritan who threw away her pitcher, and running to the city, brought them all out—crying, "Come, see a man who hath told me all things that I have ever done."

It is a bad thing ostentatiously to parade religion; but it is a base thing for a Christian man to

be ashamed of it: not to stand by his colours; by his silence, if not his speech, to deny his Master; to sneak away, like a coward, out of the fight.
—*Guthrie.*

4. Because of the needs of their fellow-men.

(3908.) Is it meet for him that hath found the way to heaven to hold his tongue, and let others quietly post to hell? Should a man that has narrowly escaped damnation himself, be silent when he seeth others go in the same way that he had liked to have perished in? Who will not call to another to take heed, that hath escaped a quicksand himself? or set up a bush, that those that follow may see the danger? —*Baxter*, 1617–1679.

(3909.) Love to Jesus Christ is the soul of true religion. And without their becoming loud talkers, or making a parade of piety, it will lead those that feel its power to "exhort one another daily;" to try to bring sinners to the Saviour; and—as many who have overcome a false modesty are now doing—to seize *all* opportunities of dealing faithfully with other men about their souls. Why should not we tell others the way to heaven if we ourselves have found it? Why should not we warn a man who, unconscious of his danger, is approaching the brink of ruin? Why should not we snatch the poisoned chalice from a brother's lips? Why should not we reach a hand down to the drowning, and pluck him from the jaws of death, and set him beside us on the rock where there is room for both? —*Guthrie.*

5. No personal considerations should be allowed to deter them from it.

(3910.) I think I heard a conversation in the leaves this morning, as I came to church. The buds that had lain all winter in their wrappings, as under roofs and blankets, were beginning to say to each other, "Is it not March? Is it not time for us to unfold ourselves, and expand our leaves in fragrance to the air?"

But one tiny bud answered, "I can never unfold to the sun and the air these dear little leaves, that have lain so long in my bosom. I could not bear such publicity. I must keep their fragrance still." And the sun and the wind laughed; for they knew that when they should shine and blow upon the bud, and fill up and swell those tiny leaves it would open from the necessity of its nature, and that when they were swimming in a bath of solar light, they would give out their odour unconsciously to every breeze.

So many a heart says, "I could not bear to have my sweet buds of feeling exposed, through profession of Christianity, to the gaze of the world. I will keep them safely hid in my bosom, and be a Christian in secret." But when the winds of heaven blow upon them, and the sun of God's love shines, they will become vocal, and must needs give themselves expression. —*Beecher.*

(3911.) There are a great many persons that fain would become Christians if they thought they should hold out. Oh, dear fool! do you suppose that Christ called you into His kingdom saying, "I will help you in; but when you are once in you must take care of yourself?" Why, you are not going to be consistent Christians. I do not care who you are, you are going to sin as long as you live. It is not a question of whether you will be consistent or not. If any man comes to me, and says, "Now, I am willing to be called a Christian, for I think I am in a state in which I can live a perfectly Christian life," I say to him, "Go away. We do not want you. We have no arrangement for such folks." God sent us to conduct an institution and economy which has in view the healing of people. If there is anybody that needs healing we have the means with which to heal him. I am, we will suppose, a physician, that has charge of an hospital. Here comes one man who has been struck by a bullet, and whose breast is terribly lacerated. I say, "Pass him into ward No. 6," and away he goes. Here comes another man, bandaged and limping. His arm is broken, and he has received a severe wound in the leg. I give directions for him to be taken to ward No. 7. Presently there comes up a brisk, fine-looking fellow, who says, "I wish you would let me go in here." "What is the matter with you?" I ask. "Oh, nothing," he says; "I am fit to go in: I am all right in every respect." "Then you cannot go in," I say: "this is not the place for people with whom there is nothing the matter. It is not a tavern; it is an hospital." —*Beecher.*

II. *HOW IT IS TO BE MADE.*

1. Humbly.

(3912.) The language of a man entering the Church is not, "I have become so good, that I will now join myself to the members of Christ, and henceforth be a pattern to all who know me, and an honour to God." It is, "I have discovered my lost and wretched condition, and that I am too weak to stand alone. I have cast my soul upon Christ's mercy, and I beseech His children, if there is any strength or safety in the Church, to take me in and watch over and help me."
—*Beecher.*

2. Seriously.

(3913.) Awful, indeed, are the responsibilities of making a high religious profession; and he who by such a profession lifts himself above the crowd, resembles Nelson, when appearing with all his orders at Trafalgar;—he is only too likely to make himself a mark for the fiery darts of the great enemy. —*Goulburn.*

3. Resolutely.

(3914.) Suppose a geometrician should be drawing of lines and figures, and there should come in some silly, ignorant fellow, who, seeing him, should laugh at him, would the artist, think you, leave off his employment because of his derision? Surely no; for he knows that he laughs at him out of his ignorance, as not knowing his art and the grounds thereof. Thus, let no man be ashamed of his godly profession, because wicked men speak evil of it; and why do they so but because they understand it not, it is strange to them. They see the actions of godly men, but the rules and principles that they go by they know not; and hence is it that they throw dirt in the face of religious profession, but a wise man will soon wipe it off again.
—*Preston*, 1587–1628.

(3915.) Begin with resolution; forecast the worst, and prepare for it. Both hope for the most even, and prepare thyself for the most uneven. Some

professors are but like those that go to sea upon pleasure: they purpose to sail no further than they see the way clear before them: if the sea begin to work, or they to be sick, back again with all haste to the shore. But the right Christian is bound for heaven, as the merchant is for his port: storms and tempests cannot affright them: on they go, through fair or foul, till they arrive at the desire of their own hearts. Resolve to continue, or never begin.
—*Adams*, 1653.

(3916.) We must keep up our savour in a corrupt age, as Noah did: "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." Lot lived more upright in Sodom, where he was besieged with temptations, that made him constantly to stand upon his watch, than he did in the cave, where he neglected it, and so grew secure. As fire burns hottest in the coldest weather, so a Christian's zeal, by a holy antiperistasis, should flame most in a corrupted, debauched age.
—*Manton*, 1620-1667.

(3917.) All have a desire to be happy, but few have courage and resolution to grapple with the difficulties that meet them in their way to happiness. All Israel came joyfully out of Egypt under Moses's conduct; yea, and a mixed multitude with them; but when their bellies were a little pinched with hunger, and their greedy desires of a present Canaan deferred; yea, instead of peace and plenty, war and penury; they (like white-livered soldiers) are ready to fly from their colours, and make a dishonourable retreat into Egypt. Thus the greatest part of those who profess the gospel, when they come to push of pike, to be tried what they will do, deny, endure for Christ, grow sick of their enterprise; alas! their hearts fail them. They like the waters of Bethlehem; but if they must dispute their passage with so many enemies, they will even content themselves with their own cistern, and leave heaven to others that will venture more for it. Oh! how many part with Christ at this cross-way! like Orpah, that go a furlong or two with Christ, till He goes to take them off from their worldly hopes, and bids them prepare for hardship, and then they fairly kiss and leave Him; loth indeed to lose heaven, but more loth to buy it at so dear a rate. Like some green heads, that childishly make choice of some sweet trade (such as is the confectioner's) from a liquorish tooth they have to the junkets it affords; but meeting with sour sauce of labour and toil that goes with them, they give in, and are weary of their service: the sweet bait of religion hath drawn many to nibble at it, who are offended with the hard service it calls to. It requires another spirit than the world can give or receive, to follow Christ fully. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3918.) Run from thy work, and thou engagest God's strength against thee. He'll send some storm or other after thee to bring home His runaway servant. How oft hath the coward been killed in a ditch, or under some hedge, when the valiant soldier that stood his ground and kept his place, got off with safety and honour? Art thou called to suffer? Flinch not because thou art afraid thou shalt never be able to bear the cross; God can lay it so even, thou shalt not feel it. Though thou shouldst find no succour till thou comest to the prison door, yea, till thou hast one foot on the ladder, or thy neck on the block, despair not. "In the Mount will the Lord be seen." And in that hour He can give thee such a look of His sweet face, as shall make the blood come in the ghastly face of a cruel death, and appear lovely in thy eye for His sake. He can give thee so much comfort in hand, as thou shalt acknowledge God is aforehand with thee, for all the shame and pain thou canst endure for Him. And if it should not amount to this, yet so much as will bear all thy charges thou canst be put to in the way, lies ready told in that promise (1 Cor. x. 13). Thou shalt have it at sight, and this may satisfy a Christian, especially if he considers, though he doth not carry so much of heaven's joy about him to heaven as others, yet he shall meet it as soon as he comes to his Father's house where it is "reserved" for him.
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3919.) Many like religion for a summer-house, when all is fair abroad in the world; but when winter comes, the doors are shut up, and there is no one to be seen in or about it.
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(3920.) The light of religion ought not to be carried in a dark lantern, and to be shown only when thy own interest will permit, and at other times hid (Matt. x. 33).

I wish that I may confess Christ, whatever it may cost me, and though not thrust myself into danger, yet never betray my cause, or break through any command, to avoid the cruelest death. It is common with the hypocrite, as with the snail, to look what weather is abroad, and if that be stormy, to pull in his horns and hide his head. The hedgehog alters his hole according to the wind; the swallow changes his nest according to the season. The flies will abound in a sunshiny day, but if once it be cloudy, they vanish. When Christ rides to Jerusalem in triumph, many cry, "Hosanna!" who, when He is taken and tried for His life, cry, "Crucify! crucify!" The upright soul is constant in His profession, and changes not his behaviour according to his companions. Oh, that I might never through shame or fear disown Him who has already acknowledged me! —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3921.) I have no notion of a timid, disingenuous profession of Christ. Such preachers and professors are like a rat playing at hide-and-seek behind a wainscot, who puts his head through a hole to see if the coast is clear, and ventures out if nobody is in the way; but slinks back again when danger appears. We cannot be honest to Christ except we are bold for Him. He is either worth *all* we can lose for Him, or He is worth *nothing*.
—*Salter*.

III. *WHAT IS DEMANDED IN THOSE WHO MAKE IT.*

1. Sincerity.

(3922.) A musician is commended *non tam multum, sed tam bene* (not that he played so long, but that he played so well). And thus it is not the days of our life, but the goodness of our life; not the length of our prayers, but the fervency of our prayers; not the measure of our profession, but the sincerity of our profession,—that is acceptable unto God Almighty. —*Shute*, 1623.

(3923.) God does not regard the rind of the lips, but the root of the heart. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3924.) He would be deemed a most vain man, that would boast that he had been at the East Indies, conquered a great part of the country, and brought away much treasure and rich commodities from thence, who had yet never crossed the seas, or set foot once on shipboard, or come near the seaside. And no less vain are they that would have them believe that they have made conquest of the spiritual Canaan, and possessed themselves with much of the treasure of it; when as they never yet once stirred out of the mystical Egypt, never so much as inquired the way to it, much less ever travelled towards it. He would be deemed most ridiculous, that would profess to have rare skill in the mathematics, or some other abstruse science, when he had never spent an hour in the study thereof. And no less ridiculous are they that will seem to have gotten much in this spiritual kingcraft (if I may so term it) and yet never busied their brains about it, never studied the gospel of the kingdom, the only book out of which it may be learned. Yea, in this regard is this spiritual treasure rather like learning than wealth; in that worldly wealth and honours may be had without labour or study by the donation of others, or by succession and descent; this, not so; each one must seek it for himself, and must seek and labour in it himself, or else the seeking of others, and their endeavours for him, will stand him in little stead. —*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

2. Christian practice.

(1.) *Without this we demonstrate that our profession is false.*

(3925.) Like a beautiful flower, full of colour, but without scent, are the fine but fruitless words of him who does not act accordingly. —*Buddha.*

(3926.) Like as they who have learned the art of sewing, of cordwainery, or drapery, and so forth, yet are not reputed tailors, cordwainers, or drapers, unless they do in act execute those sciences, which is indeed the purpose of their apprenticeship: even so let us never look to be true and sound Christians, or God's children, notwithstanding we have learned the Word of God and the manner thereof, unless we also perform the works of Christians and of the children of God. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(3927.) When we see the effigy or portraiture of any king stand still without motion, exquisitely graven in metal or painted out in lively colours, we know that, for all the eyes and mouth and nose that it hath, it hath no life in it. So, when we see professors of religion without the powerful practice of godliness, and supreme officers of state without the administration of justice, we can safely conclude, that the life of God is not in them; that they are not actuated by any divine principle within, but are mere idols and images of vanity. —*Leslie*, 1627.

(3928.) Many there are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians, but a naked profession, of whom we may say as they do of the cinnamon tree, that the bark is more worth than all they have besides. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3929.) When we see that men's lives do nullify their professions, and that while they look towards God, they row towards the world; and while they hope for heaven, their daily travel is towards hell; and while they plead for Christ, they work against Him; our hopes of them are turned to necessary lamentation. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(3930.) Those persons who practise devotion . . . and who fail to do works of faith and charity, are like trees in blossom. You think there will be as much fruit as flower, but there is a great difference. —*Vianney.*

(2.) *Without this we bring dishonour upon religion.*

(3931.) As at the bar truth is often wronged by an ill pleader, so religion is scandalised by an ill professor. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3932.) An eminently holy man puts life into a whole community; on the contrary, a loose professor endangers the entire body. A scab on the wolf's back is not so infectious to the sheep, because they will not be drawn away by such company; but when it gets into the flock that read, hear, and pray together, then there is fear it will spread. And oh, how Christians hang down their heads upon the scandal of any of their company! as all the patriarchs were troubled when the cup was found in one of their sacks. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3.) *Without this we nullify our testimony for Christ.*

(3933.) When we urge one whom we have been persuading to go to the physician who has benefited us, *he must see for himself that we have been benefited.* Though he may not have known us as we *were*, he must see what we *are*. It will be vain for us to tell him of a cure and of returning health, if the wasted form, and the pale cheek, and the hollow eye, and the bloodless lip, tell a different and a contradictory story. *Our* feelings will not weigh against the evidence of *his* senses and our own truth-telling looks. He must see for himself the proofs of at least *returning* health—the evidences of *recruited* strength—the witness of *repaired* energy. And if he does all this to confirm the witness of our lips, it gives a weight to our words and a power to our persuasions which nothing else can give, and which, while it makes *our* recommendation of the physician of double weight, makes *his* fault also double, and doubles his responsibility if he refuses to accept it and believe our word.

So must the Christian's character harmonise with his profession, if he would have his testimony to the power of Christ weighty and influential. The man who is known to have been sick, and to have been to the physician, speaks of the power of the physician without saying a word, simply by being seen to be in health. He is a living, walking witness, and cannot but testify to all who see him. So is the recovered sinner—the Christian convalescent. When the lame man was healed, who held Peter and John as if he would not let them go, watched their prison, and followed them into court, his very presence, the very sight of him, was evidence that no one could impugn. The persecuting judges, "beholding the man that was healed, standing with them, could say nothing against it." There was the man. Every one knew what he *once had been* —every one saw what he *now was*; and though he

said nothing, the very sight of him spoke loudly and powerfully. And every recovered Christian, by his life, ought to speak as loudly.

—*Champneys.*

(4.) *Without this we turn our very profession into a means of evil.*

(3934.) Friend, beware how thou behavest thyself in the world. The snow makes a fair show to the eye, but being melted it makes a dangerous flood. They who "make a fair show in the flesh," by walking offensively may cause such a deluge as may drown the souls of others.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3935.) My pattern may with some be very prevalent. If I shine with a virtuous life, I am as a lighthouse set by the seaside, whereby mariners sail aright and avoid dangers, but if I pretend high and walk loosely, as a false lantern I shipwreck those that trust me. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3936.) Oh, professors, look to your steps—the devil desires to make use of you for evil purposes! The sins of others, who make no profession of godliness, will never so fit his purpose for the blinding of men's eyes, as the least slip or failing of yours will do. It is the living bird that makes the best snare to draw others into the net. The grossest wickedness of profane sinners passes away in silence, but all the neighbourhood shall ring with your miscarriages. "A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring" (Prov. xxv. 26). The scandalous falls of good men are like a bag of poison cast by Satan into the spring from whence the whole town is supplied with water. You little know what mischief you may do, and how many blind sinners may fall into hell by your occasion.

—*Flavel*, 1630–1691.

(3937.) You all know that there are businesses where it is not possible for a young man to be honest in the shop, where, if he spoke the downright truth, he would be discharged. Why is it, think you, that the system of ticketing goods in the window differently from what they are sold indoors, or exhibiting one thing and then giving another article, the system of telling white lies across the counter with the intention of getting a better price, is maintained? Why, it would not stand an hour if it were not for the professing Christians who practise it. They have not the moral courage to say once for all, "We will have nothing to do with these things." If they did, if the Church renounced these unholy customs, business would alter within the next twelve months. The props of felony, and the supports of roguery are these professing Christian men, who bend their backs to do as other men do; who, instead of stemming the torrent, give up, and swim along with it—the dead fish in our churches, that flow with the stream, unlike the living fish which always go against it, and swim upward to the river's source. —*Spurgeon.*

IV. *HOW ITS REALITY IS TO BE TESTED.*

1. Negative tests.

(1.) *Not by fluency of speech.*

(3938.) Saul was not a saint because he did once prophesy, nor is every one a believer that talks of faith. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3939.) Some professors are like the eagle whose prey is on earth, when she is towering in the skies. Such a generation there ever was and will be that mix with the saints of God, who pretend heaven, and have their outward garb *faced and fringed*, as it were, wtih heavenly speeches, while their hearts are lined with hypocrisy.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2.) *Not by outward show.*

(3940.) The profession of many is like the mountebank's trunk, which his host seeing fairly bound with a gaudy cover, and weighty in poise, had his trust deceived with the rubbish and stones within. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3941.) As a corpse may be clad in rich clothes, so a dead soul may be handsomely dressed in a religious profession. And the son of a beggar clad in the garments of a king's son, may as well hope to be heir of his kingdom, as thou, by a mere profession, to inherit the glory of God.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3942.) As the most florid people do not always enjoy the firmest state of health, so the most showy professors are not always the holiest and most substantial believers. —*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(3.) *Not by regularity of attendance at public worship.*

(3943.) If profession would serve the turn, and flocking after sermons, heaven would soon be full; but as you love your souls, do not bolt or try yourselves by this coarse sieve. "Strive to enter the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter, and not be able." *Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4.) *Not by the blossom, but by the fruit.*

(3944.) It is with professors of religion, especially such as become so in a time of an outpouring of the Spirit of God, as it is with the blossoms of the spring; there are vast numbers of blossoms upon the trees, which all look fair and promising; but yet very many of them never come to anything. Many, in a little time, wither, drop off, and rot under the trees. Indeed, for a while, they look as beautiful and gay as others; and not only so, but smell sweet, and send forth a pleasant odour; so that we cannot certainly distinguish those blossoms which have in them that secret virtue which will afterwards appear in the fruit. We cannot tell which of them have the inward solidity and strength which shall enable them to bear, and cause them to be perfected by the hot summer sun that will dry up the others. It is the mature fruit which comes afterwards, and not the bountiful colours and smell of the blossoms, that we must judge by. So new converts, professedly so, in their talk about religious things, may appear fair, and be very savoury, and the saints may think they talk feelingly. They may relish their talk, and imagine they perceive a divine savour in it; and yet all may come to nothing. It is strange how hardly men are brought to be contented with the rules and directions Christ has given them, but they must needs go by other rules of their own inventing that seem to them wiser and better. I know of no directions or counsels which Christ ever delivered more plainly, than the rules He has given to guide us in our judging of others' sincerity; viz., that we should judge of the tree chiefly by the fruit. —*Edwards*, 1637–1716.

2. Positive tests:—

(1.) *Spiritual life.*

(3945.) How like to a Christian a man may be and yet possess no vital godliness! Walk through the British Museum, and you will see all the orders of animals standing in their various places, and exhibiting themselves with the utmost possible propriety. The rhinoceros demurely retains the position in which he was set at first, the eagle soars not through the window, the wolf howls not at night; every creature, whether bird, beast, or fish, remains in the particular glass case allotted to it; but we all know that these are not the creatures, but only the outward semblances of them. Yet in what do they differ? Certainly in nothing which you could readily see, for the well-stuffed animal is precisely like what the living animal would have been; and that eye of glass even appears to have more of brightness in it than the natural eye of the creature itself; there is a secret inward something lacking, which, when it has once departed, you cannot restore. So in the churches of Christ, many professors are not living believers, but stuffed Christians. They possess all the externals of religion, and every outward morality that you could desire; they behave with great propriety, they keep their places, and there is no outward difference between them and the true believer, except upon the vital point, the life which no power on earth can possibly confer. There is this essential distinction, spiritual life is absent. —*Spurgeon.*

(3946.) "Do you not admire us?" said the artificial flower under the glass shade, to the bright ray of sunshine which chanced just then to come into the room.

"I love whatever is true and beautiful," answered the sunshine; "but you are not really what you seem; you have colour without fragrance, and form without life; and though you appear of the same family with the flowers of nature, which I love to look on and so often visit, you are but imitations of the true, and therefore only a show and sham, however beautiful you appear unto the eye."

Artificial piety of a very beautiful form may sometimes present itself to view, and of so perfect resemblance to the true grace of God as to deceive all mankind.

But profession without spiritual life cannot but be detected by God; and, while passing by the beautiful representations which please and attract the natural mind, His eye observes and His love visits the sincere, saying: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word" (Isa. lxvi. 2).

—*Bowden.*

(2.) *Love to God.*

(3947.) Many a professor, who dwells where the full-orbed splendour of the Sun of Righteousness shines around him, and in a genial climate, yet more resembles a native of Iceland or Lapland. You would suppose that for more than half his time he was not permitted to see the sun. A moral winter appears to rest upon his soul. What is the state of their hearts towards God? Are they not cold and barren as the winter season? What fruits do we see adorning their profession? Or rather it may be asked, are they not like so many bare and leafless branches of the snow-clad forest, through which the gusts of pride and passion sweep with relentless fury, and upon which the dews and showers of gospel grace produce but the cold icicles of vanity, sin, and death? Are there not others whose profession is little better than a mantle of snow, beautiful and dazzling to the eye for a short time, but soon melting and vanishing into its native element?

—*Salter.*

(3.) *Longings after holiness.*

(3948.) Many men that make a profession are like kites, which ascend high, but look low. But those that look high as they ascend high are risen with Christ. For a Christian being once in the estate of grace, he forgets what is behind, and looks upon ascending higher and higher, till he be in his place of happiness. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(4.) *Real conflict with evil.*

(3949.) As at Christ's rising there was an earthquake, so such as are risen with Him do find a commotion and division between the flesh and the spirit. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(3950.) As it is with the fighting of two fencers on the stage, you would think at first they were in earnest; but, observing how wary they are where they hit one another, you may soon know they do not intend to kill one another, and that which puts all out of doubt, when the prize is done you shall see them merry together, sharing what they got from their deluded spectators, which was all they sought for. Thus you shall have a carnal man, a man in the state of unregeneracy, make a great bustle against sin, by complaining of it or praying against it, so that there seems to be a great scuffle betwixt Satan and such a soul; but if you follow him off the stage of duty (where he has gained the reputation of a saint, the prize he sought for), you shall see the devil and him sit as friendly in a corner as ever.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3951.) If Job had let Satan carry away his good conscience, he would soon have unbound him, and let him have his estate and children again. It is not a form of religion, but its power, that the devil maligns. The profession of Judas, Satan knew, did not put him a step out of his way to hell. The devil can live very peaceably, as a quiet neighbour, by the door of such as will content themselves with an empty profession; this alters not his property, nor touches his copyhold. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5.) *Purity of heart.*

(3952.) When the earth is broken up, and a filthy stench comes out, argues it not that there was some dead corpse there? So when men rend out cursings, swearings, railings, and such like that a man should not be able to endure, from whence issue these, but from a dead and rotten soul? These carry about them then the grave and sepulchre of the soul. Now, that which is said of the words may be applied to the works. As a man, therefore, coming to a tomb, though never so costly, and curiously, or so royally decked, yet if at some vent he apprehend a filthy savour issuing out of it, he knows well there is not only a dead, but a rotten carcass within; so when a man feels a filthy and unwholesome scent, either of profane speech or of dissolute life, issuing from the heart, which is the fountain of both, he must needs conclude, neither is it against charity to censure it, that there is a soul not only dead and buried, but even rotten in sin and corruption.

Therefore let no man delude himself while he would deceive others, to bear men in hand that he is sound at heart, when he is unsound and corrupt in his life, as if a man might be persuaded that it is a vine or fig-tree which he sees hanging full of crabs and wildings. —*Stock*, 1568–1626.

(3953.) People who profess to believe the doctrines of the Gospel, and yet do not experience the power of those doctrines unto sanctification, resemble a man who looks over a hedge into a garden without going into it. —*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(6.) *Consistency of conduct.*

(3954.) As the sails of a ship, when they are spread and swollen, and the way that the ship makes, shows me the wind, where it is, though the wind itself be an invisible thing, so thy actions tomorrow, and the life thou leadest all the year, will show me with what mind thou camest to the sacrament to-day, though only God, and not I, can see thy mind. —*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(3955.) His religion is in vain, whose profession brings not letters testimonial from a holy life. Sacrifice without obedience is sacrilege.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3956.) Thou callest thyself Christian; but we question whether thou hast a right to the title; thy conduct is too contrary to that sacred name, which is too holy to be written on a rotten post.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(7.) *Patience under provocation.*

(3957.) Some professors pass for very meek, good-natured people, until you displease them. They resemble a pool or pond, which, while you let it alone, looks clear and limpid; but, if you put in a stick and stir the bottom, the rising sediment soon discovers the impurity that lurks beneath.
—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(8.) *Steadfastness under persecution.*

(3958.) Some fresh-water sailor, standing upon the shore in a fair day, and beholding the ship's top and top-gallant sail in all their bravery, riding safely at anchor, thinks it a brave thing to go to sea, and will by all means aboard; but being out a league or two from the harbour, and feeling by the rocking of the ship his stomach begin to work, and his soul even to abhor all manner of meat—or otherwise a storm to arise, the wind and the sea, as it were, conspiring the sinking of the vessel—forthwith repents his folly, and makes vows that if he but once be set ashore again he will bid an eternal farewell to all such voyages. And thus there be many faint-hearted Christians to be found amongst us, who, in calm days of peace, when religion is not overclouded by the times, will needs join themselves to the number of the people of God; they will be as earnest and as forward as the best, and who but they? yet, let but a tempest begin to appear and the sea to grow rougher than at the first entry, the times alter, troubles raised, many cross minds of opposition and gainsaying begin to blow, they are weary of their course, and will to shore again, resolving never to thrust themselves into any more adventures: they would have *Christum*, but not *Christum crucifixum* (Christ they would have by all means, but Christ crucified by no means). If the way to heaven be by the gates of hell, let who will they will not go that way; they rather sit down and be quiet. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(3959.) [*On a glow-worm.*] What a cold candle is lighted up, in the body of this sorry worm! There needs no other disproof of those that say there is no light at all without some heat. Yet sure, an outward heat helps on this cool light: never did I see any of these bright worms, but in the hot months of summer: in cold seasons, either they are not, or appear not; when the nights are both darkest, and longest, and most uncomfortable.

Thus do false-hearted Christians: in the warm and lightsome times of free and encouraged profession, none shine more than they: in hard and gloomy seasons of restraint and persecution, all their formal light is either lost or hid. Whereas true professors, either, like the sun, shine ever alike; or, like the stars, shine fairest in the frostiest nights. The light of this worm is for some show, but for no use: any light that is attended with heat can impart itself to others, though with the expense of that subject wherein it is; this doth neither waste itself, nor help others. I would rather never to have light, than not to have it always; I would rather not to have light, than not to communicate it.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3960.) Many men owe their religion not to grace, but to the favour of the times; 'tis in fashion, they may profess it at a cheap rate, because none contradict it. Indeed it shows they are extremely bad that are bad when they may be good without any loss to themselves, but it does not show they are good that are only good in good times. Dead fish swim with the stream. They do not build upon the rock, but set up a shed leaning to another man's house, which costs them nothing; carried with a multitude, are not able to go alone in a good way; if they be religious, it is for others' sakes. Then is integrity discovered, when persons dare be good in bad times, as Noah was said to be an upright man, because he was perfect in his generation. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(9.) *Diligence in well-doing.*

(3961.) Our profession without practice is but hypocritical, making us to resemble the stony ground, which brought forth a green blade, but no fruit to due maturity; like the fig-tree, which, having leaves but no figs, was accursed; like the tree in the garden, which, cumbering the ground with its fruitless presence, was threatened to be cut down; like glowworms, which have some lustre but no heat,—seeing such professors shine with some light of knowledge, but without all warmth of Christian charity. Neither is that "pure religion and undefiled before God" which, like an empty barrel, makes a great sound in an outward profession, but that which exercises itself in duties of Christianity. —*Downame*, 1642.

(3962.) As one said of a poor apothecary's shop, that he could find no drugs for the pots and boxes, so it may be said of those that pretend to religion, and no further, we cannot perceive good deeds for words. Or as when Jacob looked for Joseph, he found nothing but his coat; so, while we look for honest men, we see nothing but their cloak: only

a cloak of a good nap, and a fair gloss of profession; that is all. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3963.) It is no good sign in a tree, when all the sap goes up into the leaves, and is spent that way; nor in a Christian, when all his grace shoots up into words: a verbal goodness; no reality at all. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3964.) When the Interpreter had done, he takes them out into his garden again, and led them to a tree, whose inside was all rotten and gone, and yet it grew and had leaves. Then said Mercy, "What means this?" "This tree," said he, "whose outside is fair, and whose inside is rotten, is it to which many may be compared that are in the garden of God; who with their mouths speak high in behalf of God, but in deed will do nothing for Him; whose leaves are fair, but their heart good for nothing, but to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box." —*Bunyan*, 1628–1688.

(10.) *Growth in grace.*

(3965.) If we be true Christians, we must grow from strength to strength: herein grace is contrary to nature, strongest at last. We must change till then, but *in meluis*, till we come to our best; and then, we must be like Him in whom is no shadow of turning.

But, where we should be like the sun till noon, ever rising, there be many like Hezekiah's sun, that go back many degrees in the dial; whose beginnings are like Nero's first five years, full of hope and peace; or, like the first month of a new servant; or, like unto the four ages, whose first was gold, the last iron; or, to Nebuchadnezzar's image, which had a precious head but base feet. Look to yourselves: this is a fearful sign, a fearful condition. Can he ever be rich that grows every day poorer? Can he ever reach the goal that goes every day a step back from it? Alas! then, how shall he ever reach the goal of glory that goes every day a step backward in grace? —*Hall.*

(11.) *Perseverance.*

(3966.) Men that have not depth of grace, they are like comets. They blaze for a time. But fixed stars are always in the firmament; they never vary. So a true Christian is as a fixed star —he is fixed in the firmament, in his desire. "One thing have I desired, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(3967.) Some dyes cannot bear the weather, but alter colour presently; but there are others that, having something that gives a deeper tincture, will hold. The graces of a true Christian hold out in all sorts of weathers, in winter and summer, prosperity and adversity, when superficial counterfeit holiness will give out. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(3968.) The leopard doth not run after his prey like other beasts, but pursues it by leaping; and if at three or four jumps he cannot seize it, for very indignation he gives over the chase. There be some, that if they cannot leap into heaven by a few good works, they will even let it alone; as if it were to be ascended by leaping, not by climbing. But they are more unwise, that having got up many rounds of Jacob's ladder, and finding difficulties in some of the uppermost; whether wrestling with assaults and troubles, or looking down upon their old allurements; even fairly descend with Demas, and allow others to take heaven. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3969.) [*On the sight of a gliding star.*] How easily is our sight deceived! how easily doth our sight deceive us! We saw no difference betwixt this star and the rest; the light seemed alike, both while it stood and while it fell. Had it been a star, it had still and ever shined: now, the very fall argues it a false and elementary apparition.

Thus our charity doth and must mislead us in our spiritual judgments. If we see men exalted in their Christian profession, fixed in the upper region of the Church, shining with appearances of grace, we may not think them other than stars in this lower firmament; but, if they fall from their holy station, and embrace the present world, whether in judgment or practice renouncing the truth and power of godliness, now we may boldly say they had never any true light in them, and were no other than a glittering composition of pride and hypocrisy. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3970.) Constancy is a mark of the true Christian. The seeming graces of hypocrites may be as forward and impetuous for the time as the true graces of believers: as in the stony ground (Matt. xiii. 5, 6), the seed sprung up so much the sooner by how much it had the less depth of earth. But the very same cause that made it put up so soon, made it wither again as soon, even because it wanted deepness of earth. So the hypocrite, when the fit takes him, he is all on the spur; there is no way with him, but a new man he will become out of hand; yea, that he will: *momento turbinis.* But he sets on too violently to hold out long; this reformation ripens too fast to be right spiritual fruit. As an horse that is good at hand, but nought at length, so is the hypocrite; free and fiery for a spurt, but he jades and tires in a journey. But true grace is all to the contrary; as it ripens for the most part by leisure, so it ever lasts longer: as philosophers say of habits, that as they are gotten hardly, so they are not lost easily. The faith, repentance, reformation, obedience, joy, sorrow, zeal, and other the graces and affections of hypocrites have their first motion and issue from false and erroneous grounds, as shame, fear, hope, and such respects. And it thence comes to pass that, where these respects cease to give them motion, the graces themselves can no more stand than a house can stand when the foundation is taken from under it. The boy that goes to his book no longer than the master holds the rod over him; the master's back once turned, away goes the book, and he to play; and right so is it with the hypocrite. Take away the rod from Pharaoh, and he will be old Pharaoh still. Now, then, here is a wide difference between the hypocrite and the godly man: the one does all by fits and by starts, and by sudden motions and flashes; whereas the other goes on fairly and soberly in a settled, constant, regular course of humiliation and obedience. —*Sanderson*, 1587–1662.

(3971.) It is not one or two good actions, but a good conversation, which will speak a man to be a right Christian. A true believer, like the heavenly orbs, is constant and unwearied in his motion and actings. Enoch "*walked* with God;" it is out

taking a step or two in a way which denominates a man a *walker*, but a continued motion. No man is judged healthy by a flushing colour in his face, but by a good complexion. God esteems none holy for a particular carriage, but for a general course. A sinner in some few acts may be very good: Judas repents, Cain sacrifices, the Scribes pray and fast; and yet all were very false. In the most deadly diseases, there may be some intermissions, and some good prognostics. A saint in some few acts may be very bad: Noah is drunk, David defiles his neighbour's wife, and Peter denies his best friend; yet these persons were Heaven's favourites. The best gold must have some grains of allowance. Sheep may fall into the mire, but swine love day and night to wallow in it. A Christian may stumble, nay, he may fall, but he gets up and walks on in the way of God's commandments; the bent of his heart is right, and the scope of his life is straight, and thence he is deemed sincere. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3972.) They are beautiful colours that are drawn on some professors, but, alas! not laid on oil, and so are soon washed off again. How forward soever they are to promise they shall reach heaven, they will find it too long a step for their short-winded souls. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3973.) Many are soon engaged in holy duties, easily persuaded to take up a profession of religion, and as easily persuaded to lay it down; like the new moon, which shines a little in the first part of the night, but is down before half the night be gone; lightsome professors in their youth, whose old age is wrapped up in thick darkness of sin and wickedness. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3974.) What congregation cannot show some that have outlived their profession? Not unlike the silk-worm, which, they say, after all her spinning, works herself out of her bottom, and becomes a common fly. As the disciples said of the literal temple, "See what manner of stones are here," so we once said of the spiritual temple; but now not one stone upon another. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3975.) Nay, sometime those motions in natural men under the Gospel may be more quick, and warm, and violent for a time than the natural motion of this habit; as the motion of a stone out of a sling is quicker than that of life, but faints by degrees, because it is from a force impressed, not implanted and inherent in the nature. They are just like water heated by the fire, which has a fit of warmth, and may heat other things; but though you should heat it a thousand times, the quality, not being natural, will vanish, and the water return to its former coldness. But the new heart being in the new creature causes him to walk in the statutes of God, not by fits and starts, but with an uniform and harmonical motion. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3976.) "This is something like!" observed the Hearth to the Chimney, as the Thorns flamed and crackled in the spacious fire-place of the farm-house; whilst the steam gushed out from under the lid of the pot hanging over the fire, and the water boiled and spluttered, owing to the sudden increase of flame. "Beautiful, beautiful!" exclaimed the Hearth, in admiration.

"I'm of opinion this won't last long; it seems to me to be too rapid to continue. Depend on it, friend Hearth, 'twill soon go down and be burnt out," sagely remarked the old Chimney.

"Do you think so?—well, 'twill be a great pity not to last; I love to see briskness in a fire; and this is so exciting and charming! I don't see why it should so quickly end, as you suppose."

"Well, I've had some experience in these matters," answered the Chimney; "I've made my observations, and am too well acquainted with the nature of fuel to be deceived by it; and, however sanguine you may feel about it, take my honest word, it will not last!"

Still, however, the fire flamed, and the water boiled, and the steam spurted, and the hot splashes fizzed, leaped about, and dropt down upon the crackling flame.

"I am delighted!" said the Hearth.

"And I shall rejoice if it continues," said the Chimney.

"And why it should not, I am unable to judge," observed the other.

"We shan't need to wait long, however," continued the old Chimney; "don't you perceive it is already going down?"—and before the Hearth could reply there was a marked change; and ebullition ceased; the steam subsided; the flame flickered; the fire only occasionally leaped; and then, it went lower, and went quite down; and then quite out altogether.

"Well, to be sure!" said the disappointed Hearth.

"No other than I expected," remarked the Chimney; "and for this reason, there was nothing substantial in the material, only thorns you see, which commonly make a great flame for the time, but quickly burn themselves out."

"'Tis a great pity!" sighed the Hearth; "who would have thought it!"

"As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity," writes Solomon. And so it is with a profession of religion in some instances; it is flaming, and bright, and beautiful for a while, and calling special attention; but it does not last: it is not of a nature to be lasting, only "the form of godliness," without the "power thereof;" and like the seed cast on the rocky soil, which sprang up quickly, but soon withered away, because it had no deepness of earth, so without Divine grace in the heart profession cannot be enduring. There may appear to be much of excitement, fervency, and zeal for a while, but it will eventually cool down and expire; because, like the thorns under the pot, having no substance (Mark iv. 17). —*Bowden.*

PROSPERITY.

1. Is not necessarily a proof of the Divine favour.

(3977.) As men cherish young plants at first, and fence them about to keep them from hurt, but when they are grown, they remove them, and then leave them to the wind and weather, so God besets His children first with props of inward comforts, but afterwards exposes them to storms and winds, because they are better able to bear it. Therefore let no man think himself the better because he is free from troubles. It is because God sees him not fit to bear greater. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(3978.) When the Lord hath set thee up as high as Haman in the court of Ahasuerus, or promoted thee to ride with Joseph in the second chariot of Egypt; were thy stock of cattle exceeding Job's (Job i. 3); did thy wardrobe put down Solomon's, and thy cupboard of plate Belshazzar's, when the vessels of God's temple were the ornature,—yet all these are but the gifts of Wisdom's left hand, and the possessors may be under the malediction of God, and go down to damnation.

—*Adams*, 1653.

(3979.) The eagles and lions seek their meat from God. But though all the sons of Jacob have good cheer from Joseph, yet Benjamin's mess exceeds. Esau shall have the prosperity of the earth, but Jacob goes away with the blessing. Ishmael may have outward favours, but the inheritance belongs to Isaac. —*Adams*, 1653.

(3980.) No man knows how the heart of God stands toward him by His hand. His hand of mercy may be toward a man when His heart may be against that man, as you see in the case of Saul and others. And the hand of God may be set against a man when the heart of God is dearly set upon him, as you may see in Job and Ephraim. No man knows either love or hatred by outward mercy or misery; for all things come alike to all, to the righteous and the unrighteous, to the good and to the bad, to the clean and to the unclean. The sun of prosperity shines as well upon brambles of the wilderness, as fruit-trees of the orchard; the snow and hail of adversity light upon the best garden, as well as upon the stinking dunghill or the wild waste. Ahab's and Josiah's ends concur in the very circumstances. Saul and Jonathan, though different in their natures, deserts, and deportments, yet in their deaths they were not divided. Health, wealth, honours, crosses, sicknesses, losses, are cast upon good men and bad men promiscuously. "The whole Turkish empire," says Luther, "is nothing else but a crust cast by heaven's great Housekeeper to His dogs." Moses dies in the wilderness as well as those that murmured. Nabal is rich as well as Abraham; Ahithophel wise as well as Solomon, and Doeg is honoured as well as Saul, as well as Joseph and Pharaoh.

—*Brooks*, 1680.

2. Renders it difficult for us to assure ourselves that we have the friendship of men.

(3981.) Prosperity assures us not of the favour of men. Yea, rather it makes us utterly uncertain who are our friends, and who are not. For they who flourish in the world have many friends in show, and few in truth, seeing they are friends to their prosperity, and not to themselves; they honour their places, and not their persons. It is the idol of wealth which the crowd adores, and not the ass that bears it. It is the honey of profit which these hungry flies haunt, and not the pot that keeps it; which being clean washed, and the honey put into another vessel, they straightway leave that, and as easily follow this. It is not the man, but the money that is affected; and so long as they banquet, feast, and sport together, they make great love and friendship one to another; but let the bond of pleasure be once broken by want or sickness, and these friends are straightway scattered.

—*Downame*, 1644.

3. Is a test of character.

(3982.) It is in the relaxation of security, it is in the expansion of prosperity, it is in the hour of dilatation of the heart, and of its softening into festivity and pleasure, that the real character of men is discerned. If there is any good in them, it appears then or never. Even wolves and tigers, when gorged with their prey, are safe and gentle. It is at such times that noble minds give all the reins to their good nature. They indulge their genius even to intemperance, in kindness to the afflicted, in generosity to the conquered,—forbearing insults, forgiving injuries, overpaying benefits. Full of dignity themselves, they respect dignity in all, but they feel it sacred to the unhappy. But it is then, and basking in the sunshine of unmerited fortune, that low, sordid, ungenerous, and reptile souls swell with their hoarded poisons; it is then that they display their odious splendour, and shine out in the full lustre of their native villany and baseness. —*Burke*, 1728–1797.

(3983.) Prosperity is a more refined and severe test of character than adversity, as one hour of summer sunshine produces greater corruption than the longest winter day. —*Eliza Cook.*

4. Is not a thing to be desired by every man.

(3984.) Great skill is required to the governing of a plentiful and prosperous estate, so as it may be safe and comfortable to the owner, and beneficial to others. Every corporal may know how to order some few files; but to marshal many troops in a regiment, many regiments in a whole body of an army, requires the skill of an experienced general. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3985.) As for prosperity, every man thinks himself wise and able enough to know how to govern it, and himself in it. A happy estate, we imagine, will easily manage itself, without too much care. Give me but sea-room, saith the confident mariner; and let me alone, whatever tempest arise.

Surely the great Doctor of the Gentiles had never made this holy boast of his divine skill, "I know how to abound," if it had been so easy a matter as the world conceives it. Mere ignorance, and want of self-experience, is guilty of this error.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3986.) How many can form any estimate as to whether it is best for them to be prosperous or not?

If I should consult the wheat that is growing in the spring in the field as to what was best for it, the wheat would say, "Let me alone. Let the rain feed me. Let the winds gently strengthen me. Let me grow to my full height and size." But ah! the land on which that wheat is sown is over rich; and if the wheat grows to its full height and size, it will be so fat and heavy that it will break and fall down, and be lost. So the farmer turns in his cattle, and they browse the wheat. They eat it down to the ground. And by and by, later, when it is allowed to grow, it has been so weakened by this cruel pasturage that it will not become so rank as to break down, but will stand erect, and carry its heads up, and ripen its grain.

Many men will bear browsing. They get too fat, and cannot carry themselves upright and firm, and they break and fall down; and the best part of

them lies in the dirt; and all that stands up is straw and stubble.

There is another field where the wheat, if I were to say to it, "What is the best for you?" perhaps, hearing my discourse on the other field, might say, from an amiable motive, "Let me alone." But ah! that happens to be a field where the soil is poor, and where it has been poorly tilled, and where, if the prayer of the wheat should be heeded, and it should be let alone, it would not have strength enough to grow, and would only have a starveling life, and would bear no harvest. So the farmer says, "Give it ample top-dressing. Bring in your guano." Here is a field that has need of strength to enable it to carry its crop on to ripeness and perfection. Here there is no danger of the crop growing rank, and falling down, and leaving nothing but straw.

And so it is with men. But who knows what is best for him? Some men can endure prosperity, and some cannot; but who can discriminate between them? —*Beecher.*

5. Is not the same thing as happiness.

(3987.) We must distinguish between felicity and prosperity; for prosperity leads often to ambition, and ambition to disappointment. —*Landor.*

(3988.) Show me the man made happy by worldly accumulation. Who are the men who have the most anxiety, and work the hardest? The millionaires. Men work harder after they get five hundred thousand dollars than before. They work less at a hundred thousand dollars; still less at fifty thousand; still less at forty; still less at thirty; still less at five thousand dollars; and least of all when they have a salary to live on. The men who have the greatest freedom from care are those who live on their day's wages. Prosperity is like salt water: the more you drink of it the thirstier you are.
—*Talmage.*

(3989.) A man is not prosperous because he makes money, because he is skilful, or because he has knowledge. That man who is happy; that man whose mind is like a well-chorded harp, and is responsive to enjoyment; that man who knows how to enjoy with his intellect, with his moral sentiments, with his taste; that man who knows how to reap joy from all his social affections; that man who knows how to stand strong without being debauched by his animal passions; that man who knows how to regulate his physical life; that man who has supreme use of himself all through; that man who is happy in the broadest way, and with the greatest number of fountains of enjoyment—that man is prosperous. On the other hand, a man may be a ripe scholar and a rich man, and not be prosperous. A man may be a millionaire, and yet be so miserable as to groan all day and curse all night. A man may have all the outside things which the world affords, and yet not be a happy man. One man may have a chest full of excellent tools, and be a bungling workman; while another man may have nothing but a jack-knife, and be a skilful workman. One man may have ever so many external means of enjoyment, and not be happy. You must not, therefore, argue that a man is prosperous because he has influence, or power, or money, or any of these things. If you want to know who are prosperous, find out who are happy. You would think to look at that bell up in the belfry, "Oh, such a bell, lifted up so high—it only needs that some one should pull the rope to make it sound gloriously through the air!" Well, pull the rope; it sounds for all the world like a tin pan! It is cracked. I see men in the old belfry of prosperity; and other men are looking up at them and say, "Oh, how happy they must be!" You will find them to be good for nothing the moment you subject them to that test. —*Beecher.*

6. How little it profits us.

(3990.) Let a man consider how little he is bettered by prosperity, as to those perfections which are chiefly valuable. All the wealth of both the Indies cannot add one cubit to the stature either of his body or his mind. It can neither better his health, advance his intellectuals, nor refine his morals. We see those languish and die who command the physic and physicians of a whole kingdom. And some are dunces in the midst of libraries, dull and sottish in the very bosom of Athens; and far from wisdom, though they lord it over the wise.

For does he, who was once both poor and ignorant, find his notions or his manners anything improved, because, perhaps, his friend or father died, and left him rich? Did his ignorance expire with the other's life? Or does he understand one proposition in philosophy, one mystery in his profession at all, the more for his keeping a bailiff or a steward? As great and as good a landlord as he is, may he not, for all this, have an empty room yet to let? and that such an one as is like to continue empty upon his hands (or rather head) for ever? If so, surely then none has cause to value himself upon that which is equally incident to the worst and weakest of men. —*South*, 1633–1716.

7. Its insecurity.

(3991.) The same person sometimes affords an example of the greatest prosperity and of greater misery in the space of a few hours. Henry the Fourth of France, in the midst of the triumphs of peace, was by a blow from a sacrilegious hand dispatched in his coach, and his bloody corpse forsaken by his servants, exposed to the view of all; so that, as the historian observes, there was but a moment between the adorations and oblivion of that great prince. "All flesh is grass, and the glory of it as the flower of the grass." Whatever disguises its imperfections, and gives it lustre, is but superficial, like the colour and ornament of a flower, whose matter is only a little dust and water, and is as weak and fading. —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

8. Exposes us to envy and hatred.

(3992.) Prosperity is an eye-sore to many. Such sheep as have most wool are soonest fleeced. The barren tree grows peaceably: no man meddles with the ash or willow; but the apple-tree and the damasin shall have many rude suitors. Oh, then, be contented to carry a lesser sail; he that hath less revenues hath less envy; such as bear the fairest frontispiece, and make the greatest show in the world, are the white for envy and malice to shoot at. —*Watson*, 1696.

(3993.) How do riches and honour, wit and beauty, strength and learning, shine and glister in the eyes of most men! and no doubt, but as all of them are the gifts, so are they also the blessings of

God to those who can make a wise and sanctified use of them. But such is our unhappiness in this vale of weakness and mortality, that, like Jonah's gourd, no sooner do these things shoot out and flourish about us, and we begin to delight and please ourselves under the shadow of them, but God quickly provides a worm, even that killing one of envy, to smite the root of them, and then presently they decline, wither, and die over our heads. Shadows do not more naturally attend shining bodies, than envy pursues worth and merit, always close at the very heels of them, and, like a sharp blighting east wind, still blasting and killing the noblest and most promising productions of virtue in their earliest bud, and, as Jacob did Esau, supplants them in their very birth. For what made Saul so implacably persecute David? Was it not the greatness of his valour and the glory of his actions, which drew after them the applause of the whole kingdom, and consequently the envy of the king himself? How comes history to tell us of so many assassinations of princes, downfalls of favourites, underminings and poisonings of great persons? Why, in all or most of these sad events, still only worth has been the crime, and envy the executioner. What drew the blood of Cæsar, banished Cicero, and put out the eyes of the brave and victorious Belisarius, but a merit too great for an emperor to reward, and for envy to endure? And what happiness, then, can there be in such things, as only make the owners of them fall a woful sacrifice to the base suspicions and cruelties of some wicked and ungrateful great ones; but always worse than they are or can be great? He, indeed, who is actually possessed of these glorious endowments, thinks them both his ornament and defence; and so does the man think the sword he wears, though the point of it may be sometimes turned upon his own breast; and it is not unheard of for a man to die by that very weapon which he reckoned he should defend and preserve his life by.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

9. Should cause us to be especially watchful.

(3994.) It is the bright day that brings forth the adder, and that craves wary walking.

—*Shakespeare.*

(3995.) The desire of prosperity is implanted in our bosoms by God, and is the great stimulus to diligence and to progress.

But we have need to guard against the abuse of it, just as the master of a vessel, when the ship has all her canvas set, and is going with full sails before the wind, has need to look out, especially in the night time, and take care that there be no collision, and that the ship does not run upon a sunken rock. —*Alexander Thomson.*

(3996.) Too long a period of fair weather in the Italian valleys creates such a superabundance of dust that the traveller sighs for a shower. He is smothered, his clothes are white, his eyes smart, the grit even grates between his teeth and finds its way down his throat; welcome are the rain clouds, as they promise to abate the nuisance. Prosperity long continued breeds a plague of dust even more injurious, for it almost blinds the spirit and insinuates itself into the soul; a shower or two of grief proves a mighty blessing, for it deprives the things of earth of somewhat of their smothering power. A Christian making money fast is just a man in a cloud of dust, it will fill his eyes if he be not careful. A Christian full of worldly care is in the same condition, and had need look to it lest he be choked with earth. Afflictions might almost be prayed for if we never had them, even as in long stretches of fair weather men beg for rain to lay the dust.

—*Spurgeon.*

10. Is spiritually perilous.

(1.) *It enfeebles the soul.*

(3997.) Generally speaking, the sunshine of too much worldly favour weakens and relaxes our spiritual nerves; as weather, too intensely hot, relaxes those of the body. A degree of seasonable opposition, like a fine dry frost, strengthens and invigorates and braces up.

—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(2.) *It draws off the soul from God.*

(3998.) The sun will put out the fire; and so will the love of the world the love of the Father; they cannot stand together in intense degrees, one cannot serve both these masters with such affection as both would have. Seldom seest thou a man make haste to be rich, and thrive in religion. Christ's message to John holds true; the poor are most forward in receiving and following the Gospel. As thou lovest thy zeal, beware of resolving to be rich, lest gain prove thy godliness; take heed of ambitious aspiring, lest courts and great places prove ill airs for zeal, whither it is as easy to go zealous as to return wise. Peter, while he warmed his hands, cooled his heart. Not that greatness and zeal cannot agree, but for that our weakness many times severs them. If thou art willing to die poor in estate, thou mayest the more easily live in grace. Smyrna, the poorest of the seven candlesticks, has the richest price upon it.

—*Ward*, 1577–1639.

(3999.) It is sad when men grasp so much business that they can have no leisure for a communion with God in a corner. The noise is such in a mill as hinders a private intercourse between man and man; and so a multitude of worldly businesses make such a noise, as it hinders all private intercourse between God and the soul. If a man of much business should now and then slide into his closet, yet his head and his heart will be so filled and distracted with the thoughts of his employments, that God shall have little of him but his bodily presence, or, at most, but bodily exercise, which profits little (1 Tim. iv. 8).

—*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(3.) *It causes men to forget God.*

(4000.) Prosperity most usually makes us proud, insolent, forgetful of God, and of all duties we owe unto Him. It chokes and extinguishes, or at least cools and abates, the heat and vigour of all virtue in us. And as the ivy, whilst it embraces the oak, sucks the sap from the root, and in time makes it rot and perish; so worldly prosperity kills us with kindness, whilst it sucks from us the sap of God's graces, and so makes our spiritual growth and strength to decay and languish. Neither do men ever almost suffer an eclipse of their virtues and good parts, but when they are in the full of worldly prosperity. —*Downame*, 1644.

(4001.) Prosperity is no friend to a sanctified memory, and therefore we are cautioned, when we are full, lest we forget God. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned in water, was no sooner safe on shore, and in the enjoyment of plenty, than he forgot God, and drowned himself in wine. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4.) *It makes men forgetful of death.*

(4002.) It is a hard thing for princes to remember death. They have no leisure to think of it, but drop into the earth before they be ware, like a man who walks over a field covered with snow, and sees not his way, but, when he thinks to run on, suddenly falls into a pit: even so they who have all things at will, and swim in pleasure, which like snow covers their way and dazzles their sight, while they think to live on, and rejoice still, suddenly rush upon death, and make shipwreck in the calm sea. —*Henry Smith*, 1593.

(5.) *It destroys watchfulness.*

(4003.) Prosperity in the beginning of a great action many times undoes a man in the end. Happiness is the cause of mischief. The fair chance of a treacherous die at first flatters an improvident gamester with his own hand to throw away his wealth to another: for while we expect all things laughing upon us, like those we have passed, we remit our care, and perish by neglecting. When a rich crown has newly kissed the temples of a gladded king, where he finds all things in a golden swim, and kneeling to him with auspicious reverence, he carelessly waves himself in the swelling plenty, lays his heart into pleasures, and forgets the future, till ruin seizes him before he can think of it. Felicity eats up circumspection: and when that guard is wanting, we lie spread to the shot of general danger. How many have lost the victory of a battle, with too much confidence in the good fortune which they found at the beginning! Surely it is not good to be happy too soon. —*Felltham*, 1668.

(6.) *It exposes us to temptation.*

(4004.) Prosperity is a secret traitor, which hides hatred under the vizard of friendship, and thereby makes us so reckless and secure, that instead of opposition we are ready to receive this serpent into our bosom: and when he encounters us with all his forces, so bewitched we are with the sight of this glorious enemy, that we clear all the passages, and set wide open the gates of our souls to give him entertainment; voluntarily offering ourselves to dig in his mines, and in a most slavish manner to row in his galleys, so as we may be assured to enjoy his company. He inflicts on us no grisly wounds, nor brings us to our end by a foul death; but as it were tickles us to death with inveighing pleasures, making us laugh when we are most tormented, and in a chariot of gold, strewed with roses, he swiftly carries us into hell. —*Downame*, 1644.

(4005.) The things of the world are so many purveyors for Satan. When Pharaoh had let the people go, he heard after a while that they were entangled in the wilderness, and supposes that he shall therefore now overtake them and destroy them. This stirs him up to pursue them. Satan, finding those whom he has been cast out from entangled in the things of the world, by which he is sure to find an easy access unto them, is encouraged to attempt upon them afresh, as the spider to come down upon the strongest fly that is entangled in his web; for he comes by his temptations only to impel them unto that whereunto by their own lusts they are inclined, by adding poison to their lusts, and painting to the objects of them. And oftentimes by this advantage he gets so in upon the souls of men, that they are never well free of him more whilst they live. And as men's diversions increase from the world, so do their entanglements from Satan. When they have more to do in the world than they can well manage, they shall have more to do from Satan than they can well withstand. When men are made spiritually faint, Satan sets on them as Amalek did on the faint and weak of the people that came out of Egypt. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(4006.) Where one thousand are destroyed by the world's frowns, ten thousand are destroyed by the world's smiles. The world, siren-like, sings us and sinks us; it kisses us and betrays us, like Judas; it kisses us and smites us under the fifth rib, like Joab. —*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(4007.) Prosperity, like smooth Jacob, will supplant and betray; a great estate, without much vigilancy, will be a thief to rob us of heaven; such as are upon the pinnacle of honour, are in most danger of falling.

A lower estate is less hazardous: the little pinnace rides safe by the shore, when the gallant ship advancing with its mast and top-sail is cast away. Adam in paradise was overcome, when Job on the dung-hill was a conqueror. —*Watson*, 1696.

(7.) *It fosters the passions.*

(4008.) Who seeth not that prosperity increaseth iniquity? and where is more want, there is less wantonness. The Church, like the moon, gives ever the clearest light, when the sun seems to be in most opposition to it. Drones gather honey only from the hive; a true believer will gather it even from thistles. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4009.) When the weather is fine, and undisturbed by showers, dust is easily raised, and falls plentifully. In like manner, it is when flesh and blood enjoy fair weather and sunshine, that sinful lusts are most apt to be excited, and drop most thickly in actual sins. —*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(4010.) Nothing shall more effectually betray the heart into a love of sin, and a loathing of holiness, than an ill-managed prosperity. It is like some meats, the more luscious, so much the more dangerous. Prosperity and ease upon an unsanctified, impure heart, is like the sunbeams upon a dunghill; it raises many filthy, noisome exhalations. The same soldiers, who, in hard service, and in the battle, are in perfect subjection to their leaders, in peace and luxury are apt to mutiny and rebel. That corrupt affection which has lain, as it were, dead and frozen in the midst of distracting businesses, or under adversity, when the sun of prosperity has shined upon it, then, like a snake, it presently recovers its former strength and venom. Vice must be caressed and smiled upon that it may thrive and sting. It is starved by poverty, it droops under the frowns of fortune, and pines away upon bread and water. But when the channels of plenty run high, and every appetite is plied with abun-

dance and variety—so that *satisfaction* is but a mean word to express its enjoyment—then the inbred corruption of the heart shows itself pampered and insolent, too unruly for discipline and too big for correction. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(8.) *It promotes pride.*

(4011.) Who almost is there whose heart does not swell with his bags? and whose thoughts do not follow the proportions of his condition? What difference has been seen in the same man poor and preferred? his mind, like a mushroom, has shot up in a night: his business is first to forget himself, and then his friends. When the sun shines, then the peacock displays his train.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

(4012.) When flowers are full of heaven-descended dews, they always hang their heads; but men hold theirs the higher the more they receive, getting proud as they get full. —*Beecher.*

(9.) *It increases selfishness.*

(4013.) It is one of the worst effects of prosperity to make a man a vortex instead of a fountain; so that, instead of throwing out, he learns only to draw in. —*Beecher.*

(10.) *It unfits men for trial.*

(4014.) Much prosperity utterly unfits such persons for the sharp trials of adversity; which yet God uses as the most proper means to correct a soul grown vain and extravagant by a long, uninterrupted felicity. But an unsanctified, unregenerate person, passing into so great an alteration of estate, is like a man in a sweat entering into a river, or throwing himself into the snow; he is presently struck to the heart; he languishes, and meets with certain death in the change.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

PROVIDENCE.

I. *IS ALL-EMBRACING.*

1. It regards the acts and governs the course of every individual.

(4015.) If thou be not a senseless atheist, but knowest that God is everywhere, how is it possible thou shouldst doubt of His care or observance, or particular providence about everything? No child is scarce so foolish that will think his father cares not what he saith or doth, when he stands before him. Wouldst thou doubt of God's particular providence, whether He regards thy heart, and talk, and practice, if thou didst see Him with thee? Sure it is scarce possible. Why then dost thou question it when thou knowest that He is with thee? —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4016.) Oh, blind atheists! you see the sun before your eyes, which enlighteneth all the upper part of the earth at once; even millions of millions see all by his light; and yet, do you doubt whether God beholds, and regards, and provides for all at once! Tell me, if God had never a creature to look to in all the world but thee, wouldst thou believe that He would regard thy heart, and words, and ways, or not? If He would, why not now as well as then! Is He not as sufficient for thee, and as really present with thee, as if He had no other creature else? If all men in the world were dead save one, would the sun any more illuminate that one than now it doth? Mayest thou not see as well by the light of it now, as if it had never another to enlighten? And dost thou see a creature do so much, and wilt thou not believe as much of the Creator? If thou think us worms too low for God so exactly to observe, thou mayest as well think that we are too low for Him to create, or preserve; and then who made us, and preserveth us? Doth not the sun enlighten the smallest bird, and crawling vermin, as well as the greatest prince on earth? Doth it withhold its light from any creature that can see, and say, "I will not shine on things so base"? And wilt thou more restrain the Infinite God who is the Maker, Light, and Life of all? It is He that "filleth all in all." "The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him;" and is He absent from thee? —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4017.) Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus, one of the sages of Greece, who in the night of paganism longed for light, spoke one day as he sat among his disciples of the over-ruling providence of the Deity, which being omnipresent, did hear and see everything, taking care of all creatures; and that we should always feel and recognise this more, the more we honoured and revered the Supreme Being.

In the emotion of his heart, the wise man alluded to a parable from the poems of the incomparable Homer, likening Divine Providence to a mother, who, with gentle and unseen hand, fans the flies from her sleeping child.

Among his disciples was Critias, the traitor, who afterwards condemned him to death. He laughed at the comparison, for he thought it ignoble and common. Therefore he laughed and mocked at it in his heart. However, Socrates observed it, and understood his thoughts. He turned to him, and said: "Dost thou not feel, my dear Critias, how nearly allied the human in its simplicity is to the divine, and how the former must raise us to the latter?" Thus he spoke. Critias departed with an angry heart; but Socrates continued to instruct the other disciples.

When Socrates was sentenced to death by the malice of Critias and condemned to drink the poisoned cup, the tyrant remembered the words and the parable of the sage, and he came to him, and said deridingly: "Well, Socrates, will the gods even now protect thee from the flies?" But Socrates smiled, and said: "The gods, Critias, now lead me to rest after my day's work is done. How could I still think of the flies!"

—*F. A. Krummacher.*

(4018.) A violet shed its modest beauties at the turfy foot of an old oak. It lived there many days during the kind summer in obscurity. The winds and the rains came and fell, but they did not hurt the violet. Storms often crashed among the boughs of the oak. And one day, said the oak, "Are you not ashamed of yourself when you look up at me, you little thing down there, when you see how large I am, and how small you are; when you see how small a space you fill, and how widely my branches are spread?" "No," said the violet, "*we are both what God made us, and we are where God has placed us*, and God has given us both something. He has given to you strength, to me sweetness; and I

offer Him back my fragrance, and I am thankful." "Sweetness is all nonsense," said the oak; "a few days, a month at most—where and what will you be? you'll die, and the place of your grave won't lift the ground higher by a blade of grass. I hope to stand sometime—ages perhaps—and then when I am cut down, I shall be a ship to bear men over the sea, or a coffin to hold the dust of a prince. What is your lot to mine?" "But," cheerfully breathed the violet back, "we are both what God made us, and we are both where He placed us. I suppose I shall die soon. I hope to die fragrantly, as I have lived fragrantly. You must be cut down at last; it does not matter that I see, a few days, or a few ages, my littleness or your largeness, it comes to the same thing at last. *We are what God made us. We are where God placed us.* God gave you strength; God gave me sweetness." What a common mistake—what a vulgar prejudice that is—that God loves and takes care of, and watches over, and uses, great things, great people, noisy people, rich people. We are the slaves of the senses in all this. Zion said, "My God hath forgotten me;" and God said, "Can a woman forget her child? Neither will I forget thee." Yet her child is but a poor, weak, little, helpless thing. Cannot God regard, and love, and watch over the weak, the feeble? All those thoughts which argue God's insensibility, from our insignificance, dishonour Him, and disregard His word.

I know of no attribute of the Divine nature more cheering to us than that of the infinite love and tenderness of God, amidst the minute things and beings of His creation. He gives His infinite regards to the least, to birds, and to flowers; to men, and to women, and to lowly villages. There is nothing small or insignificant with God. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, 'My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?' He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (Isa. xl. 29.)

—E. Paxton Hood.

2. It controls all the events of our everyday life.

(4019.) It may be remembered that some years ago a steamer going from New York to Liverpool was burned on the voyage. A boat-load of passengers succeeded in leaving the ship and were saved, among whom was a reverend gentleman, an evangelical of the Low-Church school, who belonged to Dublin. He returned thither from his ill-omened voyage, and, having a thrilling, interesting story to tell, was for a time the hero of all the tea-tables in Dublin, at which he used to moralise the occurrence after the fashion of persons of his school of theology. He knew himself to be unworthy of so signal a mercy, was lost in meditations on the wonder that the Almighty should have seen good to make *him* the example of so special a providence, was confounded at the thought that *he* had been picked out to be the recipient of so signal a mercy, &c. And all this told immensely, and was eagerly swallowed by the old ladies of the Dublin tea-fights. One day, on the occasion of one of the general receptions of the clergy, which often took place at the Archiepiscopal residence, our hero was holding forth in his usual strain to a little knot gathered around him in Whately's drawing-room, when the Archbishop, whose wont it was on such occasions to stroll about the room from one group to another, saying a few words here and a few words there to his guests, came up to the knot of which Mr. Thomson (we will give him that name for the nonce) was the centre. Whately listened with grave attention to the telling of his story and to the usual comments on it, and then spoke. "Wonderful occurrence! A great and signal mercy indeed, Mr. Thomson. But I think I can cap it," said he, using an expression which was very common with him, tossing up his white head in the old bull-like manner. "I think I can cap it with an incident from my own experience." Everybody pricked up his ears and listened for the passage in the Archbishop's life which should show a yet more marvellously merciful escape than that of Mr. Thomson's from the burning ship. Whately continued in the expressive manner for which he was celebrated: "Not three months ago I sailed in the packet from Holyhead to Kingston (the port for Dublin), and"——a pause while the Archbishop took a copious pinch of snuff, and his hearers were on the tenterhooks of expectation—"and by God's mercy the vessel never caught fire at all. Think of *that*, Mr. Thomson!"

(4020.) A man's child dies, and he says, "This is a mysterious providence." Well, was it not a mysterious providence when the child lived? It is said, "When a man was going along the street one day to his wedding, a brick fell off from a chimney, and struck him on the head; and he was laid dead." And the preacher will say, "It was a strange and mysterious providence." Well, there was another young man, on the same day, going through that same street to his wedding; and a brick did not fall and hit him; was not that event just as much a providence as the other? You think that exclamation-points are the whole of literature, and that only here and there an event which startles you is providential; whereas ten thousand events, and combinations of them, are all proceeding on precisely the same plan, namely, the working together of the soul and mind of God and the soul and mind of men. According to this plan, under the Divine guidance, myriads of results are worked out which you do not notice, but now and then one steps out more clearly and dramatically, and you call that a providence. It is a providence, and there is a providence all the time. Good and bad, light and shade, joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, things present and things to come, all alike are God's. *—Eggleston.*

(4021.) I would, with special earnestness, beg you to believe that God is in little things. It is the little troubles of life that annoy us the most. A man can put up with the loss of a dear friend sometimes better than he can with the burning of his fingers with a coal, or some little accident that may occur to him. The little stones in the sandal make the traveller limp; while great stones do him little hurt, for he soon leaps over them. Believe that God arranges the littles. Take the little troubles as they come; remember them to your God, because they come from God. *—Spurgeon.*

(4022.) People talk about special providences. I believe in the providences, but not in the speciality. I do not believe that God lets the thread of my affairs go for six days, and on the seventh evening

takes it up for a moment. The so-called providences are no exception to the rule—they are common to men at all moments. But it is a fact that God's care is more evident in some instances of it than in others, to the dim and often bewildered vision of humanity. Upon such instances men seize, and call them providences. It is well that they can; but it would be gloriously better if they could believe that the whole matter is one grand providence. —*George Macdonald.*

3. The comprehensiveness of providence is a natural and inevitable result of the omnipresence of God.

(4023.) The providence of God is *regina mundi*, the queen and governess of the world: it is the eye that sees, and the hand that turns all the wheels in the universe. God is not like an artificer that builds a house, and then leaves it, and is gone; but like a pilot that does with a great deal of care steer on the ship of the whole creation.

—*Watson*, 1696.

4. Results of the comprehensiveness of God's providence:—

(1.) *There are no disconnected events.*

(4024.) Nothing is or can be properly accidental to God; but accidents are so called in respect of the intention or expectation of second causes, when things fall out beside their knowledge or design. And there is nothing in which Providence so much triumphs over, and, as I may so say, laughs at the profoundest wisdom of men, as in the stable, certain knowledge and disposal of all casual events, in respect of which, the clearest mortal intellect is wholly in the dark. And upon this account, as loose as these events seem to hang upon one another, yet they are all knit and linked together in a firm chain, and the highest link of that chain, as the poets speak most truly and philosophically (though in a fable), is fastened to Jupiter's chair, that is, it is held and managed by an unerring Providence; the chain, indeed, may wave and shake this way and that way, but still the hand that holds it is steady, and the eye that guides it infallible.

Now, nothing has so powerful an influence upon the great turns of affairs, and the lives and fortunes of great persons, as the little, unobserved, unprotected events of things. For could anything be greater than the preservation of a great prince and his next heir to the crown, together with his nobles and the chief of his clergy, from certain imminent and prepared destruction? And was not all this effected by a pitiful small accident in the mistake of the superscription of a letter? Did not the oversight of one syllable preserve a church and a state too? And might it not be truly said of that contemptible paper, that it did *Cæsarem vehere et fortunam Cæsaris*, and that the fate of three kingdoms was wrapt and sealed up in it?

A little error of the eye, a misguidance of the hand, a slip of the foot, a starting of a horse, a sudden mist, or a great shower, or a word undesignedly cast forth in an army, has turned the stream of victory from one side to another, and thereby disposed of the fortunes of empires and whole nations. No prince ever returns safe out of a battle, but may remember how many blows and bullets have gone by him, that might as easily have gone through him, and by what little odd unforeseeable chances death has been turned aside, which seemed in a full, ready, and direct career to have been posting to him. All which passages, if we do not acknowledge to have been guided to their respective ends and effects by the conduct of a superior and a Divine hand, we do, by the same assertion, cashier all providence, strip the Almighty of His noblest prerogative, and make God, not the governor, but the mere spectator of the world.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4025.) The Christian often thinks, and schemes, and talks, like a practical atheist. His eye is so conversant with second causes, that the Great Mover is little regarded. And yet those sentiments and that conduct of others, by which his affairs are influenced, are not formed by chance and at random: they are attracted toward the system of his affairs, or repelled from them, by the highest power. We talk of attraction in the universe; but there is no such thing as we are accustomed to consider it. The natural and moral worlds are held together, in their respective operations, by an incessant administration. It is the mighty grasp of a controlling hand which keeps everything in its station. Were this control suspended, there is nothing adequate to the preservation of harmony and affection between my mind and that of my dearest friend for a single hour. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(2.) *Great revolutions are effected silently and with apparent suddenness.*

(4026.) In all Divine works, the smallest beginnings lead assuredly to some result; and the remark in spiritual matters, that "the kingdom of God cometh without observation," is also found to be true in every work of Divine providence; so that everything glides quietly on without confusion or noise, and the matter is achieved before men either think or perceive that it is commenced.

—*Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(3.) *The purposes of the wicked are frustrated.*

(4027.) As the potter's clay, when the potter hath spent some time and pains in tempering and forming it upon the wheel, and now the vessel is even almost brought to its shape, a man that stands by may, with the least push, put it clean out of shape, and mar all on a sudden that he hath been so long a-making: so is it that all the plots and contrivances of wicked men, all their turnings of things upside down, shall be but as the potter's clay; for when they think they have brought all to maturity, ripeness, and perfection, when they look upon their business as good as done, on a sudden all their labour is lost, for God, who stands by all the while and looks on, will, with one small touch, with the least breath of His mouth, blast and break all in pieces. —*Edlin*, 1656.

(4.) *All things are overruled for good to them that love God.*

(4028.) The promise is express, and literally true, that *all* things shall work together for good to them that love God. But they work together; the smallest as well as the greatest events have their place and use, like the several stones in the arch of a bridge, where no one would singly be useful, but every one in its place is necessary to the structure and support of the arch; or rather like

the movement of a watch, where though there is an evident subordination of parts, and some pieces have a greater comparative importance than others, yet the smallest pieces have their place and use, and are so far equally important, that the whole design of the machine would be obstructed for want of them. Some dispensations and turns of Divine providence may be compared to the mainspring or capital wheels which have a more visible, sensible, and determining influence upon the whole tenor of our lives: but the more ordinary occurrences of every day are at least pins and pivots, adjusted, timed, and suited with equal accuracy, by the hand of the same great artist who planned and executes the whole; and we are sometimes surprised to see how much more depends and turns upon them than we were aware of. Then we admire His skill, and say, He has done all things well. Indeed, with respect to His works of providence, as well as of creation, He well deserves the title of *Maximus in minimis.* —*Newton*, 1725-1807.

(5.) *Perfect order shall at length reign in the moral universe.*

(4029.) Throughout the natural world we see everything, however interesting or valuable in itself, serving some other purpose. We are refreshed with the fragrance, and delighted with the beauty of the vernal bloom; and most certainly this was the purpose of the great Benefactor, but evidently not the chief purpose: the bloom disappears, and other objects succeed still more valuable, because more intimately conducive to human comfort. Yet this greater benefit is really conferred but by the way: for, as the blossom contained the embryo of fruit, so the fruit contains the embryo of trees. Can we suppose that this plan of successive advancement does not hold as fully in providence as in nature, or that any event can terminate in itself in the one more than in the other? But if there be the same fruitfulness, and the same progression, what a view does it give one of the grandeur of final results, since our own observation tells us that there is no restriction within a narrow circle, in providential, as in natural causes and effects. In the latter the blossom produces fruit, the fruit seed, the seed a tree, and there it begins again; but in providence, every succeeding stage of the progress involves new combinations, and consequently teems with new powers; so that in this great sphere of divine action, there is illimitable improvement to be reckoned on.

—*Salter*, 1840.

(4030.) All things are for the best, by virtue of no inherent power in evil to develop good, for evil must ever gravitate towards an increase of itself; but by virtue of an overruling Wisdom bringing good out of evil, and converting the evil itself into the instrument of good. This is true of natural laws. The storm destructive of life and property fills the atmosphere with the seeds of larger and freer life. Pestilence is the providential stimulus of sanitary progress. Difficulties and conflicts are the school of all the heroic virtues. Fortitude, self-control, heroic force of will, unselfish generosity, a rational love of liberty, and liberality tolerant of other men's opinions, all grow out of this soil. They are not hothouse exotics, needing to be stimulated into artificial life, but vigorous evergreens, flourishing only in the free air of heaven, and striking their roots deep only in their native soil. The exercise of a Divine wisdom and power over-ordering evil for good is but the application of the same principle to the higher sphere of God's moral government, but another and a louder strain of the same harmonious music. The past history of the world is one long illustration of this truth. The experience of the past becomes prophetic, and catching its language from the glowing pages of the inspired Scriptures, sings its songs of triumphant hope for the future. Looking back to the past and forward to the future, faith recognises that all is best. From the height of the revealed promise peeping on tiptoe into the future, it catches a glimpse of a more glorious hereafter.

—*Garbett.*

II. *ITS MYSTERIES.*

1. Many so-called inscrutable providences are really scrutable.

(4031.) When, the other day, a juror in one of the Westfield suits refused to award damages against the Steamboat Company, on the ground that the disaster could have happened only by the direct will of God, and was simply an inscrutable providence—the community heard him with a suppressed titter, which, if it implied tolerance for his convictions, implied equal contempt for his understanding. For it was patent to every mind but his own that a worn-out boiler must explode at the very instant when all conditions favoured that catastrophe, and that the men who knew that that instant was imminent, yet hourly solicited travellers to a possible death, were morally guilty, not only of criminal neglect and deceit, but of murder.

But many candid men who saw clearly the accountability of the Westfield owners and managers, shake their heads just now over what seems to them a really mysterious visitation of God—the Persian famine. And because all great and inexplicable calamities pain loving hearts, and sadden, if they do not obscure, the faith of many souls, it seems worth while to look a moment at this subject of inscrutable providences.

Here is this case of the Persian famine. For unknown years the Persians have been cutting off their trees, and diminishing their rain-fall thereby. Nay, not only has the removal of the forests decreased the supply, but it has wasted whatever rain fell. For the roots of the trees, and of all the innumerable shrubs and bushes and vines and ferns that thrive in their shadow, kept the ground open and held the water in countless natural wells for the use of the soil in droughts. But all the undergrowth dying when its protecting forests were felled, the scanty showers percolated into the streams at once, causing rare floods and frequent droughts. The droughts yielded no harvests, and no harvests were followed by pestilence, famine, and death. Now, for three years no rain has fallen on the blistered fields, and a nation apparently is dying. The very first drought was the kindly warning of heaven against the violation of natural laws. Men were too heedless or too ignorant to accept it; and the sins of the fathers are to-day visited on the children, not in the vengeance of an awful Power, but in the discipline of relentless law. Is not this a providence so scrutable that he who runs may read?

When, in Chicago, a night's fire undid a generation's toil, spreading misery and death broadcast,

was that horror in the least degree inexplicable? Every man who, within thirty years, had put up a wooden house in a city whose familiar breezes were gales, and whose gales were hurricanes, solicited that rain of fire. They who, hasting to be rich, fell into the snare of cheap and dangerous building, digged, every man, a pit for his neighbour's feet as well as for his own. The inscrutable aspect of the calamity was that it had not come years before. And the providential lesson would seem to be that laws of matter are laws of God, and cannot be violated with impunity.

When the earthquake well-nigh swallowed up Peru five or six years ago, men stood aghast at the mysterious dispensation. But Heaven has not only always declared that tropical countries are liable to earthquakes, but had taught the Peruvians through hundreds of years to expect two earthquakes in a century, travelling in cycles from forty to sixty years apart. The citizens of Arica have not only this general instruction, but that special warning which nature always gives. A great light appeared to the south-east. Hollow sounds were heard. The dogs, the goats, even the swine foresaw the evil and hid themselves. But the simple men passed on and were punished.

Before the Alpine freshets come, the streams are coffee-coloured. Even the tornadoes of the tropics, which are instantaneous in their swoop, so plainly announce themselves to old sailors, that they reef sails and save ship and life, while only the heedless perish. The simoom gives such certain and invariable warnings that the caravan is safe if it be wary.

Herculaneum and Pompeii were built too far up the mountain. And that the builders knew quite as well as the excavators of the splendid ruins know it now. But they chose to take the risk. And to-day their cheerful compatriots gather their heedless vintage and sit beneath their perilous vines still nearer to the deadly crater. St. Petersburg has been three times inundated, and after each most fatal calamity processions filled the streets, and masses were said to propitiate the mysterious anger of God. Peter the Great, who built the city, was the successor of Canute. He ordered the Gulf of Cronstadt to retire, and then set down his capital in the swamps of the verge of the Neva. Whenever the river breaks up with the spring floods, the trembling citizens are at sea in a bowl. Only three times has the bowl broken, so much money and skill have been expended upon it. But when a March gale shall drive the tide back upon the river, swollen and terrible with drifting ice, drowned St. Petersburg will be the pendant for burned Chicago.

Modern science has brought the world a fifth gospel. In it we read that God commands us to give Him our whole heads as well as our whole hearts, for that we cannot know Him nor obey Him till we discern Him in every minutest fact, and every immutable law of the physical universe, as in every fact and law of the moral. It is barely two hundred years since the great Cotton Mather preached a famous sermon called "Burnings Bewailed," wherein he attributed a terrible conflagration to the wrath of God kindled against Sabbath-breaking and the accursed fashion of monstrous periwigs! For years after his time the Puritan colonies held fasts for mildew, for small-pox, for caterpillars, for grasshoppers, for loss of cattle by cold, and visitation of God. They saw an inscrutable providence in all these things. But when their children had learned a better husbandry and better sanitary conditions the "visitations" ceased.

In the perfect providence of God there are no surprises. If there seem to be, it is that we have suffered ourselves to be taken unawares. We must work out our own salvation. The book of natural phenomena is open wide before every man, and he is set to learn it for his own good. If he will not study it through reverence and love, he is taught it through pain. But the pain itself is the beneficence of a perfect law, and it is a constant testimony to the goodness and tenderness of God that calamity—not less than prosperity—is a scrutable providence.

2. They are never real.

(1.) *They are due to the medium through which we view God's proceedings.*

(4032.) Take a straight stick, and put it into the water; then it will seem crooked. Why? Because we look upon it through two mediums, air and water: there lies the *deceptio visus;* thence it is that we cannot discern aright. Thus the proceedings of God, in His justice, which in themselves are straight, without the least obliquity, seem unto us crooked: that wicked men should prosper, and good men be afflicted; that the Israelites should make the bricks, and the Egyptians dwell in the houses; that servants should ride on horseback, and princes go on foot: these are things that make the best Christians stagger in their judgments. And why? Because they look upon God's proceedings through a double medium of flesh and spirit, so that all things seem to go cross, though indeed they go right enough. And hence it is that God's proceedings, in His justice, are not so well discerned, the eyes of man alone being not competent judges thereof. —*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(2.) *They are due to the limitedness of our view.*

(4033.) God is the Lord of Hosts; He is the great commander of heaven and earth; He it is that directs the conflicts, neither are any put to try mastery, no field pitched, no battle fought, but by His special order and commission, and all for the accomplishment of His glory. But it befalleth us, as it doth with them which stand in the same level, wherein two large armies are ready to engage, they conceive them to be a disordered multitude, whom notwithstanding, if they behold from a high hill, they will see how every one serveth under his own colours. Even so men which behold the state of the world with the eyes of flesh and blood, dim by reason of the weakness of their judgments and weakness of their affections, think all things are out of order, that there is nothing but confusion and disorder; that the worse men are, the better they fare; and they fare the worse, the better they are. But if they did but once ascend into the sanctuary of God, and judge of occurrences by heavenly principles, then they would confess that no army on earth can be better marshalled than the great army of all the creatures of heaven and earth; and that, notwithstanding all appearance to the contrary, all is well, and will end well; that God, who is the God of order, will bring light out of darkness, and order out of the greatest confusion, could they have but patience, and let Him alone with His own work. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(4034.) The ways of God in His providence often appear truly mysterious to us. This arises, how-

ever, from our ignorance and incapacity to comprehend the grandeur of His designs. In this present probationary and disciplinary state, it pleases Him often to conceal from us the ends which He has in view in His procedure. He gradually unfolds it, by a concatenation of circumstances and events which, in the issue, fulfil His purpose. In this case, it behoves us patiently to wait until the whole mystery be unveiled, and not rashly censure or condemn what is too lofty for our feeble conception, or too profound for our investigation. . . . . Our situation may be compared to a traveller in an unknown land, who arrives at the banks of a spacious river, whose streams seem to flow gently, or more rapidly—to be clear as crystal, or dark and turbid, according to the position or the time on which he has fallen. He gazes around him, and strains the powers of his vision to the utmost stretch to follow its sinuous course on either hand; but he is utterly unable to trace it either to its source, or to follow it to the ocean into which its pours the fulness of its waters. So it is with us. It is only a small portion of the ways of God we can comprehend. —*Ewing.*

(3.) *They are due to the fact that the providences we criticise are incomplete.*

(4035.) The book of Providence is not so easily read as that of Nature; its wisdom in design and perfection in execution are by no means as plain. Here, God's way is often in the sea, His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known. But that is because the scheme of providence is not, like creation, a finished work. Take a man to a house when the architect is in the middle of his plan, and with walls half built, and arches half sprung, rooms without doors, and pillars without capitals, what appears perfect order to the architect who has the plan all in his eye, to the other will seem a scene of perfect confusion. And so stands man amid that vast scheme of providence which God began six thousand years ago, and may not finish for as many thousand years to come. Raised to the throne of Egypt, Joseph saw why God had permitted him to be cast into a pit, sold into slavery, and, though innocent of any crime, committed to prison. And raised to heaven, looking back on God's dealings with him in this world, and seeing how there was not a turn in the road nor a crook in his lot but was good, how his trials turned out blessings, and that, while others lost by their gains, he gained by every loss, the saint, now that God's works of providence stand before him in all their completeness, shall take his harp, and throwing his soul into the song, sing with the rest around the throne—"Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." —*Guthrie.*

(4.) *They are due to our ignorance and immaturity.*

(4036.) Revelation and Providence never stagger me. There may be a *tertium quid*, though we are not yet in possession of it, which would put an end to all our present doubts and questions. I was one day riding with a friend; we were discussing a subject, and I expressed myself surprised that such a measure was not adopted. "If I were to tell you one thing," said he, "it would make all clear." I gave him credit that there did exist something which would entirely dispel my objections. Now if this be the case, in many instances, between man and man, is it an unreasonable conclusion that all the unaccountable points which we may observe in the providence and government of God should be all perfection in the Divine Mind? Take the growth of a seed—I cannot possibly say what first produces the progress of growth in the grain. Take voluntary motion—I cannot possibly say where action begins and thought ends. The proportion between a fly's mind and a man's is no adequate illustration of the state of man with respect to God, because there is some proportion between the minds or faculties of two finite creatures, but there can be none between finite man and the Infinite God.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(4037) Must not the conduct of a parent seem very unaccountable to a child when its inclinations are thwarted; when it is put to learn letters; when it is obliged to swallow bitter physic; to part with what it likes, and to suffer, and do, and see many things done contrary to its own judgment? Will it not, therefore, follow from hence, by a parity of reason, that the little child-*man*, when it takes upon itself to judge of parental providence—a thing of yesterday to criticise the economy of the *Ancient of Days*—will it not follow, I say, that such a judge of such matters must be apt to make very erroneous judgments, esteeming those things in themselves unaccountable which he cannot account for; and concluding of some things, from an appearance of arbitrary carriage towards him, which is suited to his infancy and ignorance, that they are in themselves capricious or absurd, and cannot proceed from a wise, just, and benevolent God?

—*Bishop Berkeley*, 1684–1753.

3. Must be judged by us reverently.

(4038.) This is certain, that God is infinitely just, whether or no we apprehend He is so. It is impossible for God to do anything but what is right; but it is very possible for us, who are weak and fallible at the best, not always to discern it. When we think His ways are imperfect, we should remember, that the imperfection is only in our misunderstanding. It is not the ground or the trees that turn round; but the truth is we are giddy, and think so.

For us, in all God's dealings, to acknowledge the undoubted equity of His principles, and our ignorance of His methods, is not only humility, but philosophy; for it shows that we have arrived at the top of knowledge, even to understand both God and ourselves. Much to contemplate in God, frequently to consider Him and study His nature, though we do it but as philosophers in a sovereign way to be satisfied and resolved about the reason of all His actions. Because I cannot see the light, shall I say, that the sun does not shine? There may be many reasons that may hinder me. Something may cover the eye, or the clouds may cover the sun, or it may be in another horizon, as in the night; but it is impossible for the sun, as long as it is a sun, not to shine.

Now this tends to compose men's doubts, and to confute their murmurings, and to set God clear in their esteem, upon supposition of any of His dealings whatsoever. For although God's ways are intricate and unsearchable, yet we may undertake to give a reason of them so far, as to take off the cavil and the reprehension, though not the wonder.

Therefore, when such difficulties occur, we should

remember to cast one eye upon God's absolute power, and the other upon His essential righteousness; through the former of which He may do what He will, through the latter He cannot will anything but what is just.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4039.) Placed in an obscure corner of the universe, where only a small proportion of God's works passes under his review; fixed in a valley, whose surrounding hills intercept his prospects: a prisoner even there, looking only through grates and bars; his very dungeon enveloped in mists and fogs; his eyes almost dim by reason of weakness—such is man!—and this vain man would be wise;—this is the candidate who deems himself, by his proposal, capable of governing, and wishes to arrange things according to his mind.

My brethren, have you not often found yourselves mistaken, where you thought yourselves most sure? Have you not frequently erred in judging yourselves, and generally erred in judging others? Do you not blame those who condemn any of your proceedings before they understand them, especially when the objects on which they decide fall not within the sphere of their knowledge or observation? What would you think of a subject who, scarcely competent to guide the petty concerns of his own household, would rush forth to assume the direction of the affairs of an enlarged empire, after censuring measures which he does not comprehend, cannot comprehend; whose labyrinths he cannot trace, whose extensive bearings he cannot reach, whose distant consequences he cannot calculate? All this imagery is weak when applied to "the man who striveth with his Maker," and asks, "What doest Thou?" For whatever differences subsist between man and man, all are partakers of the same nature, and all are liable to error—But "in God there is no darkness at all."—"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid: how then could God judge the world?"

If we know not the peculiarities of the disease, how can we judge properly of the remedy which the physician prescribes? If we know not the station which the son is destined to occupy, how can we judge of the wisdom of the father in the education he is giving him? And how can we decide on the means which the Supreme Being employs, while we are ignorant of the reasons which move Him, and the plan which He holds in view?—A providence occurs; it strikes us; we endeavour to explain it—but are we certain that we have seized the true meaning? Perhaps what we take as an end, may be only the way; what we take as the whole, may be only a part; what we deprecate may be a blessing, and what we implore may be a curse; what appears confusion, may be the tendency of order; and what looks like the disaster of Providence, may be the preparation of its triumph. Before we begin to reform, let us be satisfied an amendment is necessary; and before we censure, let us understand.

—*Jay*, 1769–1853.

4. Must be acquiesced in believingly.

(4040.) Blessed it will be for us amid all these frowning providences, if, instead of presuming in a spirit of unbelief and distrust to ask, "What seekest Thou?" we are ready to hear the voice of the Unknown and Invisible saying, "Hold thee still; and know that I am God!" The dutiful servant asks no reason of his master; he does his appointed work in silent obedience. The loyal soldier asks no reason of his commanding officer for what he may think the hazardous and fatal movements in the day of battle; he obeys in prompt and willing silence. The faithful workman ask no reason for these rude gashes in the quarry; he is content to wait till builder or sculptor fashions the unshapely block into symmetry and beauty. We are apt, with Joseph, in our blind ignorance, to say, "Not so, my father;" but, like aged Jacob on that same occasion, God refuses our erring dictation, our unwise counsel, saying, "I know it, my son, I know it." It is the grandest triumph of faith thus to confide in the Divine leadings in the dark.

—*Macduff.*

(4041.) The mind of a pious workman, named Thierney, was much occupied with the ways of God, which appeared to him full of inscrutable mysteries. The two questions, "How?" and "Why?" were constantly in his thoughts—whether he considered his own life, or the dispensations of providence in the government of the world. One day, in visiting a ribbon manufactory, his attention was attracted by an extraordinary piece of machinery. Countless wheels and thousands of threads were twirling in all directions; he could understand nothing of its movements. He was informed, however, that all this motion was connected with the centre, where there was a chest which was kept shut. Anxious to understand the principle of the machine, he asked permission to see the interior. "The master has the key," was the reply. The words were like a flash of light. Here was the answer to all the perplexed thoughts. Yes; the master has the key. He governs and directs all. It is enough. What need I know more? "He hath also established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass"

5. The point from which they are to be solved.

(4042.) During more than fifty centuries man had fixed his gaze on the starry sky, observing the motions of the planets, and seeking to trace their laws; observations increased, calculations became more exact, and yet notwithstanding all this the law of harmony eluded the search of learned men; the worlds, as far as they knew, performed eccentric circles, the object of which they could not comprehend. The universe was a confused maze, a labyrinth which baffled them. One day a man of genius said to himself, "The worlds must be considered with reference to the sun, and not with reference to the earth." He placed the sun as the centre, and directly the harmony appeared; everything was explained, the planets and their satellites traced out their regular orbits, and the system of the universe was discovered. God is the sun of spirits, and the true centre of the universe; and it is from the heart of His truth alone that we can judge of the law of our destinies.

—*Eugène Bersier.*

6. Their solution must be awaited patiently.

(4043.) Adonibezec instructed by his punishment concerning his sins, gave glory to God: "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my

table: as I have done, so God hath rewarded me." It astonished one of the wisest and most virtuous of the Romans, that Pompey should perish in the defence of the juster cause, and Cæsar prosper in his violent usurpation; but if he had lived a while longer, and seen the usurper killed in the senate-house that Pompey had dedicated to the commonwealth, where Cæsar then exercised his tyranny, and that dying he fell at the feet of Pompey's statue, all stained with his blood, the darkness had been dispelled, and providence cleared up to his sight. Herod for assenting to the impious flattery of the people who deified him, was immediately struck with a shameful disease, and consumed by wretched vermin, as the just punishment of his pride. Pope Alexander the Sixth, was poisoned with that wine he had prepared for the murdering some rich cardinals. Henry III. of France was cut off by a stroke as dreadful as unexpected, on that day of the month and in that chamber where he was president of the council that contrived the bloody massacre of the Protestants. —*Bates*, 1625-1699.

(4044.) The sentences in the book of providence are sometimes long, and you must read a great way before you understand their meaning.
—*Matthew Henry*, 1662-1714.

(4045.) That great chain of causes, which, linking one to another, even to the throne of God Himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours. —*Burke*, 1728-1797.

(4046.) The Lord has reasons, far beyond our ken, for opening a wide door, while He stops the mouth of a useful preacher. John Bunyan would not have done half the good he did, if he had remained preaching in Bedford, instead of being shut up in Bedford prison.
—*Newton*, 1725-1807.

(4047.) However contradictory the designs of Providence at first appear to be, if we set ourselves to watch God in His works and ways with care, we shall soon discover that He acts according to some certain scheme or plan.

Were a person altogether unacquainted with architecture to visit some splendid temple in the process of erection, and observe the huge rough stones, and boards, and timbers, iron castings, bricks, lime, mortar, lying scattered in confusion all around; were he to see one group of workmen cutting up material here, another digging trenches there; one party raising a staging on this side, another nailing on some boards on that: were he to observe the blocks, the fragments, dust and rubbish, tools and instruments, all lying in disorder round about him, he might truly say that he could see no plan or system in the business; nor would he be likely to conceive or dream that out of such a chaotic mass of raw material, out of such contradictory labour, there could ever rise a magnificent temple, to reflect undying honour on the architect, and beautify the world!

But let the observer stop, and set himself to watch from day to day the busy work as it goes on; let him patiently examine, not only the minutest details, but also try to obtain a view of the general scope and bearing of the whole, and he will not be long in finding out that some superior mind controls and regulates the movements in accordance with some preconceived plan or system, which is constantly developing itself; and that every stroke of every workman is conducive to the same ultimate effect.

And when he comes to see the "beau ideal" of the builder realised in the fair proportions, in the classic beauty of the noble structure, he then perceives how inconsiderate, how unfair it was in him to decide upon a work in its incipient state, without some knowledge of the plan and the design of it.

God is building up the Christian in accordance with a perfect plan into a majestic temple for the decoration of the eternal city.

And though His dealings sometimes seem to be mysterious; though He seems to cut down here and to raise up there, to let the light into this part and to leave it dark in that; though it is hard to tell at times what such material is designed for, what this or that work means, or to conceive how the structure when completed will appear; it is nevertheless quite certain that God acts according to a fixed and unalterable plan; that every stroke we bear, or loss we mourn, is made subservient to the end; and although it is given us here to see only in part, whoever will take the pains to watch with care the course of providence will be convinced that it does not move along by chance, but that everything is done by a prospective plan.
—*E. Nason.*

(4048.) Those who have ever traversed the plains of Mexico have seen the *Cactaceæ* family. The cactus has an ungainly leaf, fat and thick, and full of thorns, so that, when men see it growing, they say, "It is a clumsy and hateful thing, that is ugly to look upon, and that pierces you whenever you touch it." Wait. When at last that plant, which grows in arid places, where hardly any weed will grow, with thick and succulent leaves, and a tough skin, and which stands almost without root through the whole year—when, at last, it has come to the point where it is developed, is there in the whole kingdom of beauty a blossom that is for exquisiteness of form and tint equal to the cactus blossom? It is the very perfection of beauty growing out of the very emblem of homeliness. And as it is with the vegetable kingdom, so is it with many developments of the Divine Kingdom. God's providence looks like a cactus-leaf—like an arid plant growing uselessly in the wilderness. But wait till it blossoms, and see how glorious is its beauty.
—*Beecher.*

III. *TRUST IN PROVIDENCE.*

1. Is always to be exercised.

(1.) *Even in the greatest straits of life.*

(4049.) I have a story which I think will interest you if you will try to listen to it, of a man in London fifty years ago or more—at a time when there used to be not £5 notes only, but £1 notes. Well, there were two gentlemen who had met each other walking about in the streets. One was a minister of some chapel, and he did not know the other when he came up and spoke to him, but the gentleman knew him very well. They walked along and began to talk, and at last the gentleman introduced the minister into his house. The minister hardly knew what to make of it. He was very friendly with him, but he did not quite understand him. He took him up into the upper rooms and then he sat down with him in the parlour, and he said

"You wonder why I am showing you these things. Now, you don't remember me, but I remember you." He said, "Many years ago I came to this town of London as a workman"—(an iron workman, I think he was)—and then he went on to say that he had come all the way from Scotland, and brought his wife with him, and they had lived in London. He had been ill and out of work for some months. He had pawned his things; nobody had befriended him, and he had been reduced from a state of being comparatively well-off as a working man till he had got lower and lower, and did not know what to do. He had no bread in the house—nothing at all—and he did not know where to get anything. It was a Sunday morning, and he set off with the intention of going and drowning himself. He got up early in the morning, and he went on till he passed a chapel where this minister was preaching. He went past it, and he saw people going in. In some places they preached early in the morning. And he said, "Well, I will just go and sit down there before I drown myself;" and he went in and sat down, and the sermon of that minister went home to his heart. The minister told him of God's loving-kindness and tender mercy to the poor sinner, until the thought of that love entered into the heart of that poor man. And he said at the close of the sermon, "Now, my dear friends, put the God of Israel to the test, and see if it is not as I have said. I have been telling you of His love, and now I ask you to come to Him now, and put Him to the test, and see whether it is not as I have said." And this poor man said to himself, "Well, I will go home, and I will put my trust in Him. He says that He will listen to the voice of those who come to Him. Well, I *will* put Him to the test." He went home straight to his wife and he said, "Let us have a little reading of the Bible." She was touched to the heart, for they had come from Scotland and used to read the Bible, but for many years they had forgotten it entirely. The wife agreed directly, and she wondered what it was that had induced him. And then he read a chapter, and knelt down and earnestly besought God to forgive him his sin, and also that He would give him food and show him how to go on. Well, there was no food to eat that day. They prayed again and again, that God would send them a deliverance from their trouble; that He would, in some way, help them out of their trouble, and earnestly begged God to forgive them their sin. Next day, in the morning, there came a letter to the house. It was a long time since they had had a letter from anybody. They opened it and found it came from a man who knew them years back, and knew that they were in trouble, and he said, "I have heard of such and such a place where they are seeking a workman. If you go there you will find, I think, that the master of the place will give you employment, and here is a one-pound note to help you in the meantime." The man felt he had put the God of Israel to the test, and God had answered his prayer. He went to the place indicated; and as he was really a good workman, he was employed, and soon got on. After a few years he became foreman; after that, partner in the business; and after that, I believe, he was pretty much the sole manager of it; and when he met the minister, he was a rich man. And he said to the minister, "All this is owing to your sermon that day. It was, through Jesus Christ, blessed to my soul. Now I have left off my wicked ways; I have come and trusted in God, and I have not only blessings around me, but I have a hope of blessedness hereafter in the world to come."

—*Sewell.*

(2.) *Even when God's providences run counter to our ideas and expectations.*

(4050.) The ways of the husbandman in ordering his fruit-trees are very strange to most people: some things seem contrary to reason, when he cuts down or digs up some fair large trees, beautiful to look upon, and sets small weak plants in their stead, and cuts off some large tops and branches of others, and grafts only a few little twigs in their room, wrapt about with a lump of clay; when in winter he prunes his trees and lays their roots bare, and scores and cuts their bodies on every side. These (and many such like works) are strange to most men; they have other thoughts of them than the husbandman hath.

This shadows out unto us that the dispensations of God towards His Church are contrary to the judgments of most people in the world.

—*Austen*, 1656.

(4051.) The providences of God are sometimes dark, and our eyes dim, and we can hardly tell what to make of them: but when we cannot unriddle providence, believe it shall work together for the good of the elect (Rom. viii. 28). The wheels in a watch seem to move cross one to another, but they help forward the motion of the watch, and make the alarum strike: so the providences of God seem to be cross wheels; but, for all that, they shall carry on the good of the elect. The pricking of a vein is in itself evil and hurtful; but as it prevents a fever, and tends to the health of the patient, so it is good: so affliction in itself is not joyous, but grievous; but the Lord turns this to the good of His saints. Poverty shall starve their sins, afflictions shall prepare them for a kingdom. Therefore, Christians, believe that God loves us, that He will make the most cross providences to promote His glory and our good.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(3.) *Even when God's providences seem to run counter to His promises.*

(4052.) The wheels in a clock move contrary one to another, some one way, some another, yet all serve the intent of the workman, to show the time, or to make the clock to strike. So in the world, the providences of God may seem to run cross to His promises: one man takes this way, another runs that way; good men go one way, wicked men another; yet all in conclusion accomplish the will and centre in the purpose of God, the great Creator of all things. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(4053.) God is to be trusted when His providences seem to run contrary to His promises. God promised David to give him the crown, to make him king; but providence runs contrary to His promise: David was pursued by Saul, was in danger of his life; but all this while it was David's duty to trust God. The Lord doth oftentimes, by cross providence, bring to pass His promise. God promised Paul the lives of all that were with him in the ship; but now the providence of God seems to run quite contrary to His promise; the winds blow, the ship splits and breaks in pieces; and thus God fulfilled His promise; upon the broken pieces of the ship,

they all came safe to shore. Trust God when providences seem to run quite contrary to promises.
—*Watson*, 1696.

2. Reasons for exercising it.

(1.) *Because distrust grieves the Divine Spirit.*

(4054.) We are apt to distrust the providential care of God, and so to grieve the Divine Spirit.

We should feel ourselves very much offended if our children manifested by their words or acts a suspicion or fear that we did not care for them. What would a mother think if in the forenoon she overheard her girls counselling with each other, and wondering whether there would be any provision made for their dinner! What would be thought of children who should sit together and query whether their mother and father would think that they needed clothes for the summer and the winter, and discuss in the coolest manner their affairs on the theory that their parents would overlook them and forget them, and form their own plans upon the ground that there was a necessity for it?
—*Beecher.*

(2.) *Because all things are in God's hand.*

(4055.) Well might we be distracted with these troubles, if we did not well know whence they come, even from a most wise, holy, powerful, just Providence. He that sits in heaven orders these earthly affairs, according to the eternal counsel of His will. It is that Almighty hand that holds the stern of this tossed vessel; and steers it in that course which He knows best. It is not for us, that are passengers, to meddle with the chart or compass. Let that all-skilful Pilot alone with His own work: He knows every rock and shelf that may endanger it, and can cut the proudest billow that threatens it with ease. "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."
—*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(3.) *Because nothing can take Him by surprise.*

(4056.) Everything in the future is appointed. Nothing shall happen to us which God has not foreseen. . . . We may derive no small comfort from this fact: for suppose one goes to sea under the most skilful captain, that captain cannot possibly know what may occur during the voyage, and with the greatest foresight he can never promise an absolutely safe passage. There may be dangers which he has never yet encountered—Atlantic waves, tornadoes, and hurricanes that may yet sweep the good ship away, and they that sailed out of port merrily may never reach the haven. But when you come into the ship of Providence, He who is at the helm is the Master of every wind that shall blow, and of every wave that shall break its force upon that ship; and He foresees as well the events that shall happen at the harbour for which we make as those that happen at the port from which we start. How safe are we, then, when embarked in the good ship of Providence, with such a Captain, who has fore-arranged and foreordained all things from the beginning even unto the end. And, furthermore, how much it becomes us to put implicit confidence in His guidance! Hold thy peace, man, even from counsel; for thy thoughts are vain where thy understanding is baffled.

"When my dim reason would demand
Why that or this Thou dost ordain,
By some vast deep I seem to stand,
Whose secrets I must ask in vain.

Be this my joy that evermore
Thou rulest all things at Thy will:
Thy sovereign wisdom I adore,
And calmly, sweetly, trust Thee still."
—*Spurgeon.*

(4.) *The Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants; and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.*

(4057.) Our storekeeper, an Englishman, earnest, hard-working, patriotic, and a Christian, was asked one day, when our supply of provisions was getting very low, to cut the slices of bread which he gave "the boys" a little thinner.

"Oh no!" said he, "I can't; the poor fellows are so hungry."

"But our bread will soon be gone."

"Well, I have faith that the Lord will send us more before we are quite out."

He was allowed to take his own course, though advised to be as sparing as possible. The day wore away, and still the hungry crowd of soldiers pressed around our doors. The last loaf was taken from the shelf. A hundred delegates were yet to have their supper. But there were no biscuits, no meat, no bread for them, or for the still unfed soldiers who, weary with wounds and a long, limping march from the field-hospital, lingered at our rooms for a morsel of food, a cup of coffee, and a word of direction about the trains for Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Just at the last moment, when our faith was almost exhausted, an immense load of provisions stopped before our quarters, and the drivers asked for the agents of the Commission. "We have brought bread, lint, bandages, jellies, and wines; we don't know just who are most needy, but we have confidence in you. Will you distribute these things for us?" The stores had come a hundred and three miles.

Never again did we chide the storekeeper's faith, nor did our stock of provisions ever again give out while we remained at Gettysburg.
—*Story of the Christian Commission.*

(4058.) David F—— is a very aged citizen of Western North Carolina. He connected himself with the Church when very young, and has always been noted among his neighbours for his honesty, charity, piety, and faith in the power and willingness of God to protect those who do His will. It was ten or fifteen years ago that he determined to travel through the trackless wilds of the great and sparsely-inhabited West. His route lay along the borders of the Missouri and Nevada, infested at that time with more numerous clans of highway robbers than at present. He knew all this very well, and although urged by his neighbours to procure a couple of revolvers to defend himself, he took only his pocket Bible, and armed thus, set out on the perilous journey. He had passed some of the clans on the northern border of the Missouri, and was nearing the resort of one of the most formidable ones, headed by a notorious desperado, Jim Stevens, when he met a gentleman who by some *coup d'état* had escaped the vigilant eye of the robber captain. The first question that he propounded to old David was,

"Are you armed?"

"Yes," was the aged Christian's reply, as he produced his pocket Bible.

The gentleman, who was almost weighed down with bowie-knives and pistols, laughed outright at what he considered the old man's folly, and with considerable ridicule in his tone remarked—

"If that is all the weapon you have, you had better be saying your prayers. The den of Jim Stevens is about ten miles farther on, just where you will get by night, and he cares as little for Bibles as a rattlesnake."

They exchanged names, and each went his own way: the one surprised at the other's apparent folly and recklessness; the other undismayed, and his faith in the protecting power of his Bible undiminished.

Night had thrown her dark mantle around the earth, and the chilling blasts had begun to pierce the somewhat feeble frame of old David, when he descried a light far down in a glen a short distance from the road. He was sure that it proceeded from a robber's den, but he must have shelter, and impelled by almost boundless faith, he directed his course thither. He halted when within a few paces of the door, and being coarsely greeted by some uncouth, mean-looking men, was invited to alight. When he entered the humble habitation he saw significant looks pass between the inmates, and each chuckle to himself, and he knew that he was at the headquarters of a "road committee," among a desperate, relentless, and murderous clan of banditti. Nothing daunted, he occupied the proffered seat. Having partaken of a rough meal, with which they furnished him at his request, he began conversation, which was continued till far in the night, when it was interrupted by the return of the captain, Jim Stevens, and a couple of his *confreres* in crime from a plundering raid. Stevens, advancing within a few feet of him, asked jeeringly,

"Old man, aren't you afraid to travel in this section, among the robbers, alone and unarmed?"

"No," was old David's bold and fearless reply, as he produced his Bible, continuing, "This is my weapon of defence. I always read a chapter, and pray, too, before I retire. I know you are robbers, but I shall read and pray here to-night, and you must join with me."

The roof of the shabby hut shook with loud taunting peals of laughter at this expression of the old man; but nothing dismayed he began to read. Gradually all became silent, and when he knelt to pray, every knee was bowed. That was a strange affecting sight—murderers and plunderers of their fellow-men kneeling and attentively listening to a prayer! Long and fervently the humble servant of God prayed: nor did their interest in the solemn scene and supplications abate. When he had finished he was conducted to a hard pallet, where he slept the livelong night undisturbed, and even free from haunting fears.

He arose very early in the morning, and read and prayed before breakfast. They refused to receive aught for his entertainment during the night, and, instead, cordially thanked him for the interest which he had manifested in their behalf. Asking for them the light of Divine grace and the purification of their hearts, he bade them adieu and departed. He pressed onward, strengthened in faith in the goodness of God.

At the next settlement he learned of the death of the gentleman he had met on the road, who had ridiculed the Bible. This incident confirmed him in his belief of the superiority of the Bible as a weapon of defence.

He prosecuted his journey successfully, and soon returned safely to his home, family, and friends. Often now he gathers around him his grandchildren and the juveniles of the neighbourhood, and relates to them his adventures among the robbers. With his face animated, and his eyes glowing with superhuman light, he dwells upon the prayer-scene in the banditti's hut, ecstatically exclaiming, "My Bible palsied their arms, unnerved their hearts, and bowed their knees." He always concludes his relation of the adventure with the solemnly-spoken exhortation, "Children, you need not fear the most perilous dangers of life, provided you are armed with the Bible, and have an abiding faith in the protecting power of God."

3. Is not to be allowed to degenerate:

(1.) *Either into an indolent fatalism.*

(4059.) As the mariner, when he perceiveth a tempest to be near, first calleth upon God by earnest prayer that he may safely attain to the wished-for haven, and then striketh his sails, and useth all good means which he supposeth needful for the same: even so we must so trust to the providence of God, that we also use our own industry in all good means convenient. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4060.) An imagined absurdity may sometimes best illustrate a real wrongness. We will suppose the improbable, to show the folly and sin of what is quite real and quite frequent in actual life. It is a winter day, and a father stands at his parlour window with his infant on his arm. Snow is on the ground. Near the window is a thorn tree, with its ripe red berries. Birds alight on the tree, scatter the snow, and eat the berries. It was in part for the birds that the berries have ripened.

The father looks up, and says—"How kind is God! This is His providence; He feeds the birds." And he speaks wisely and piously. But now, ringing the bell—"Nurse," he says, "see how God is feeding the birds! take our baby, and set him in the snow; God will care for him." So baby is set in the snow; and the rough wind soon extinguishes the tender flame of his life. Then the father cries—"What a dark providence! how inscrutable are the ways of God!" Are there not many like this supposed strange father? who talk of providence but as an excuse for their leaving those, whom they were expressly appointed to cherish and help, to stumble on unwatched, and front, as they may—with souls, and perhaps bodies, unclad and unhoused—the "bitter blast" of time. There are not wanting, too, men who, opening the window of their comfortable room, call out to the miserable to trust in God; and then, exhausted by the effort and chilled with the entering wind, turn round to the fire, and refresh themselves with wine, cake, and essays on philanthropy.

—*Lynch*, 1818–1871.

(2.) *Or into a rash presumption.*

(4061.) Let not fortune, which hath no name in Scripture, have any in thy divinity. Let Providence, not chance, have the honour of thy acknowledgments, and be thy Œdipus in contingencies. Mark well the paths and winding ways thereof:

but be not too wise in the construction, or sudden in the application. The hand of Providence writes often by abbreviatures, hieroglyphics, or short characters, which, like the laconism on the wall, are not to be made out but by a hint or key from that Spirit which indited them.

—*Sir T. Browne*, 1605–1682.

(4062.) God never promises anywhere that those who love and fear Him shall be always saved from the consequences of their mistakes. He never says that He will so interfere in their case, that their acts shall not produce their natural and necessary results. He does indeed sometimes do so, but He never undertakes to do it. Josiah was mistaken in going out against Pharaoh-Nechoh. He was not bound to do it. He was going out of his way to encounter a danger that did not lie in his way. It was, in a measure, presuming that God would keep him from an evil which he himself had sought. It was, in a manner, "entering into temptation." Even the heathen Pharaoh could see this. He had no personal hostility towards Josiah. He had no quarrel with him or his kingdom. And he sent to tell him so, and to urge him not to assail him as an enemy, when he was not at enmity with him. And this warning of the Egyptian king, though he did not know it, was really a warning from God; and is therefore called "the words of Necho from the mouth of God." Josiah did not regard this warning, and God allowed the natural consequences of his own act to take their course. The arrow did not turn aside because Josiah was a servant of Jehovah, but did its deadly work.

What God did then, He does now. A man is going a voyage. He receives information, on which he can rely, that the ship in which he means to sail is not well commanded, or scarcely seaworthy. He might not have heard this; but having heard it, it is a kind of warning to him not to sail by that ship. He does, however, and it is lost. When that ship, heavily encumbered where it ought to be kept free, strained by the weight that is badly placed and carelessly left, gets into the storm, and instead of rising well over the vast mountainous waves, is swept by one, half filled by another, put out of all power to make way by another, and at last lies upon the sea a heaving, helpless barque, slowly but surely foundering,—all this is only the opening out into particulars of what was wrapt up in the warning, which in God's providence was given to that man. And that ship, fast settling down, will not stop, because that man is a true servant of God. "One event happens to them all." —*Champneys.*

REGENERATION.

I. IN WHAT IT CONSISTS.

1. The difficulty of defining it.

(4063.) It is difficult to describe exactly the nature of regeneration because it is visible, not in itself, but in its effects. We know seed propagates itself, and produces its like, but the generative part in the seed lies covered with husks and skin, so that it is hard to tell in what atom or point the generative particle lies. We know we have a soul, yet it is hard to tell what the soul is, and in what part it principally resides. We know there are angels, yet what mortal can give a description of that glorious nature?

It is certainly true, that as a painter can better decipher a cloudy and stormy air than the serenity of a clear day, and the spectator conceive it with more pleasure; so it is more easy to represent the agitations and affections of natural corruption, than the inward frame of a soul wrought by the Spirit of God. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

2. Not in the destruction or removal of any of our natural qualities or characteristics.

(4064.) Regeneration is not a removal of the old substance or faculties of the soul. Some thought that the substance of Adam's soul was corrupted when he sinned, therefore suppose the substance of his soul to be altered when he is renewed. Sin took not away the substance, but the rectitude; the new creation therefore gives not a new faculty, but a new quality. The cure of the leprosy is not a destroying of the fabric of the body, but the disease; yet in regard of the greatness of man's corruption, the soul is so much changed by these new habits, that it is as it were a new soul, a new understanding, a new will.

It is not the destroying the metal, but the old stamp upon it to imprint a new. Human nature is preserved, but the corruption in it expelled. The substance of gold is not destroyed in the fire, though the metal and the flame mix together, and fire seems to be incorporated with every part of it; but it is made more pliable to what shape the artist will cast it into, but remains gold still. It is not the breaking the candlestick, but setting up a new light in it; not a destroying the will, but putting a new bias into it. It is a new stringing the instrument to make a new harmony. It is a humbling the loftiness, and bowing down the haughtiness of the spirit to exalt the Lord alone in the soul (Isaiah ii. 11), speaking of the times of the Gospel.

The essential nature of man, his reason and understanding, are not taken away, but rectified. As a carver takes not away the knobs and grain in the wood, but planes and smoothes it, and carves the image of a man upon it; the substance of the wood remains still; so God pares away the rugged pieces in a man's understanding and will, and engraves His own image upon it; but the change is so great that the soul seems to be of another species and kind, because it is acted by that grace, which is another species from that principle which acted it before.

New creation is called a resurrection. Our Saviour in His resurrection had the same body, but endued with a new quality. As in Christ's transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 2), neither His Deity nor humanity were altered, both natures remained the same. But there was a metamorphosis and a glorious brightness conferred by the Deity upon the humanity which it did not partake of before. So though the essence of the soul and faculties remain the same, yet another kind of light is darted in, and other qualities implanted. It was the same Paul when he complied with the body of death, and when he complained of it, but he had not the same disposition. As Adam in the state of corruption had the same faculties for substance which he had in the state of innocency; but the power, virtue, and form in those faculties, whereby he was acceptable to God, and in a capacity to please Him, was wholly abolished. We lose not our

substantial form, as Moses' rod did, when it was turned into a serpent; or the water at Cana when turned into wine. Our nature is ennobled, not destroyed; enriched, not ruined; reformed, not annihilated. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4065.) Regeneration is not a change of the essential acts of the soul, as acts. The passions and affections are the same as to the substance and nature of the acts, but the difference lies in the object. And acts, though for substance the same, yet are specifically distinguished by the diversity of objects about which they are conversant. Whatsoever is a commendable quality in nature, and left in man by the interposition of the Mediator, is not taken away; but the principle, end, and objects of those acts, arising from those restored qualities, are altered. The acts of a renewed man and the acts of a natural man are the same in the nature of acts, as when a man loves God or fears God, or loves man or fears man; it is the same act of love and the same act of fear; there are the same motions of the soul, the same substantial acts simply considered; the soul stands in the same posture in the one as in the other, but the difference lies in the objects; the object of the one is supernatural, the object of the other natural. As when a man walks to the east or west, it is the same motion in body and points, the same manner of going; yet they are contrary motions, because the terms to which they tend are contrary one to the other; or, as when we bless God and bless man, it is with one and the same tongue that we do both, yet these are acts specifically different, in regard of the difference of their objects. The nature of the affections still remain, though not the corruption of them, and the objects to which they are directed are different. If a man be given to thoughtfulness, grace removes not this temper, but turns his meditations to God. The solitariness of his temper is not altered, but something new offered him as the object of his meditation. If a man be hot and earnest in his temper, grace takes not away his heat, but turns it into zeal to serve the interest of God. Paul was a man of active disposition; this natural activity of his disposition and temper was not dammed up by grace, but reduced to a right channel, and pitched upon a right object; as he laboured more than any in persecution, so afterwards he laboured more than any in edifying (1 Cor. xv. 9, 10). His labour was the same, and proceeded from the same temper, but another principle in that temper, and directed to another term. As it is the same horse, and the same mettle in the beast, which carries a man to his proper stage that carried him before in a wrong way, but it is turned in respect of the term. David's poetical fancy is not abolished by this new principle in him, but employed in descanting upon the praises of God, which otherwise might have been lavished out in vanity, and foolish love-songs, and descriptions of new mistresses. So that the substance and nature of the affections and acts of a man remain; but anger is turned into zeal by virtue of a new principle; grief into repentance, fear into the fear of God, carnal love into the love of the Creator, by another principle which doth bias those acts. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

3. Not in the impartation of any new faculties.

(4066.) In regeneration nature is not ruined, but rectified. The convert is the same man, but new made. The faculties of his soul are not destroyed, but they are refined; the same viol, but new tuned. Christ gave not the blind man new eyes, but a new sight to the old ones. Christ did not give Lazarus a new body, but enlivened his old body. So God in conversion doth not bestow a new understanding, but a new light to the old; not a new soul, but a new life to the old one. The powers of the man are like streams, not dried up, but turned into another channel. The truth is, that man by his fall from God is so exceedingly degenerated and polluted, that repairing and mending will not serve, he must be wholly and thoroughly new made; as the house infected with the leprosy, scraping would not do, it must be pulled down, and new set up; but as when a house pulled down is new set up, we use possibly the same timber and stones, and materials, which were in it before, only they are new squared and polished; what is rotten or amiss in them is pared off, and what is wanting, as several things will be, are added; so when this new building of regeneration is erected, the Spirit of God makes use of the old substantial materials —the soul and its faculties, the body and its members which were in man before, only polisheth and purifieth them, and squareth them according to the rule of God's Word; it hews off what is unsound and sinful, and bestoweth that grace and holiness which is needful. He taketh not away our beings, but the wickedness and crookedness of our beings, and addeth a new gracious beauty which we had not before. We put off the rags of the old man, and put on the robes of the new man, and continue in regard of substance the same men. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

4. Not in the addition of anything to what we already possess.

(4067.) Nor is regeneration an addition to nature. Christ was not an addition to Adam, but a new Head by Himself, called Adam in regard of the agreement with him in the notion of a head and common person, so neither is the new creature, or Christ formed in the soul, an addition to nature. Grace grows not upon the old stock. It is not a piece of cloth sewn to an old garment, but the one is cast aside, the other wholly taken on; not one garment put upon another; but a taking off one and a putting on another; "putting off the old man, putting on the new man" (Col. iii. 9. 10). It is a taking away what was before, "old things are passed away," and bestowing some thing that had no footing before. It is not a new varnish, nor do old things remain under a new paint, nor new plaster laid upon old; a new creature, not a mended creature. It is called light, which is not a quality added to darkness, but a quality that expels it; it is a taking away the stony heart and putting a heart of flesh in the room (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). The old nature remains, not in its strength with this addition, but is crucified, and taken away in part with its attendants—"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." As in the cure of a man, health is not added to the disease; or in resurrection, life added to death, but the disease is expelled, death removed, and another form and habit set in the place. Add what you will without introducing another form, it will be of no more efficacy than flowers and perfumes strewed upon a dead carcase can restore

it to life and remove the rottenness. Nothing is the terminus *a quo* in creation; it supposes nothing before as a new subject capable; nothing in a natural is a subject morally capable to have grace, without the expulsion of the old corrupt nature. It is called a new creature, a new man; not an improved creature, or a new-dressed man.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

5. Not in the calling forth of good latent within us.

(4068.) Regeneration is not an excitation or awakening of some gracious principle which lay hid before in nature, under the oppression of ill habits, as corn lay hid under the chaft, but was corn still. Not a beating up something that lay skulking in nature, not an awakening as of a man from sleep, but a resurrection as a man from death—a new creation, as of a man from nothing. It is not a stirring up old principles and new kindling of them; as a candle put out lately may be blown in again by the fire remaining in the snuff, and burn upon the old stock—or as the life which retired into the more secret parts of the body in those creatures that seem dead in winter, which is excited and called out to the extreme parts by the spring sun. Indeed, there are some sparks of moral virtues in nature which want blowing up by a good education; the foundation of these is in nature, the exciting of them from instruction, the perfection of them from use and exercise. But there is not in man the seed of one grace, but the seeds of all sin. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." Some good thing may be in me, but it ariseth not from my flesh; it is not from any seed sown by nature, but it is another principle put in me, which seminally contains in it all grace: it is a putting a new seed into the soil, and exciting it to grow, "an incorruptible seed" (1 Peter i. 23). Therefore the Scripture does not represent men in a trance, or sleep, but dead; and so it is not only an awakening, but a quickening, a resurrection (Eph. ii. 5, &c.). We are just in this work as our Saviour was when the devil came against Him. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." He had nothing to work upon in Christ, but he rakes in the ashes of our nature and finds sparks enough to blow upon; but the Spirit finds nothing in us but a stump, some confused desires for happiness; He brings all the fire from heaven, wherewith our hearts are kindled. This work, therefore, is not an awakening of good habits which lay before oppressed, but a taking off those ill habits which were so far from oppressing nature that they were connatural to it, and by incorporation with it quite altered it from that original rectitude and simplicity wherein God at first created it. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

6. Not in any merely outward reformation of character or conduct.

(4069.) Reformation may proceed either—(1)—from force and fear. Such a reformation is from impediments, not from inclination. The cutting a bird's wings takes not away its propensity to fly, but its ability; the cutting the claws of a lion or pulling out his teeth changes not his lionish nature. Fear restrained Herod from putting John to death when his will was inclined to the act. Fear may pare the nails of sin, grace only can hinder the growth and take away its life. This doth but only stop the streams, not choke the fountain.

Or—(2)—from sense of outward interest. It may be a rational abstinence from those sordid pleasures which debase a man's esteem and prey upon his reputation, and in the meantime his inward lusts may triumph, while outward appearances are stopped. Such a splendid life may consist with those inward vermin, more contrary to the pure nature of God, and as inconsistent with a man's happiness. The river which ran in open view may sink and run as fiercely through subterraneous caverns. Men may cast out one gross devil to make way for seven more spiritual ones. The interest which restrains outward acts will not restrain inward lusts.

Well then, an outward reformation without an inward grace can no more rectify nature than an abstinence from luxury can cure a disease a man has contracted through intemperance, without some other physic to pluck up the root of the distemper. Outward applications of salves and ointments will do little good in a fever, unless the spring of the disease be altered, and a new crasis wrought in the blood.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4070.) A man may reform, without true repentance, though no man can truly repent without moral reformation. Reformation whitewashes the house: regeneration takes the house to pieces, and rebuilds it from the ground. Reformation varnishes the outside of the vessel; regeneration melts the vessel down, and casts it into a new mould.

—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(4071.) It often happens that men deceive themselves on this important subject, and rest satisfied with some partial change which does not more truly constitute the new birth, than the shadow identifies itself with the substance. Suppose the case of a man who has diminished his fortune and shattered his constitution by sensual indulgences. He foresees that his last shilling will soon be spent, and that life will be very speedily extinguished if he continue in his present course. He is wise enough to listen to the voice of reason and to desist. But he does not cease to love the criminal pleasures in which he had indulged. It is, on the contrary, a source of perpetual annoyance and mortification to him, that he cannot give the reins to his corrupt propensities as he had been wont to do. Are we to consider such a man a new creature? Surely not. It is the mind that constitutes the man, so that, while the identity of the mind remains, it would not be much more absurd, because an individual had altered his dress, to call him a new creature, than so to designate him, because he had made clean the exterior of his character, or rather its dress, while the interior remained as filthy and abominable as ever.

—*Payne*.

7. But in the impartation of new life to the soul.

(4072.) Regeneration is not a new beginning of a man, but a beginning of the best good in a man. It confers no fresh faculties or sensibilities, but awakens, restores, and controls those already in existence. The only thing bad in man is sin. That is the root of all other evil—of darkness, weakness, and corruption—and the grace of God is to put that away. It is as with a painting covered through long years with dust and smoke, looking as if one dark surface—the divine grace cleanses that surface and restores the portrait, not by making fresh features, but bringing out the old ones. It is as with natural life: a man has little vital power, the action

of the heart is feeble almost to death, and it shows itself in different effects, according to the several functions of the body, causing torpor, pain, or disfigurement, as the case may be, or all together; and the Divine grace quickens new life, and without adding or altering organs, secures the regular and energetic action of each. —*A. J. Morris.*

8. In a change of heart.

(4073.) Regeneration is principally an inward change. It is as inward as the soul itself. Not only a cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, a painting over the sepulchre, but a casting out the dead bones and putrified flesh; of a nature different from a Pharisaical and hypocritical change. It is a clean heart David desires, not only clean hands. If it were not so, there could be no outward rectified change. The spring and wheels of the clock must be mended before the hands of the dial will stand right. It may stand right two hours in the day, when the time of the day comes to it, but not from any motion or rectitude in itself. So a man may seem by one or two actions to be a changed man, but the inward spring being amiss, it is but a deceit. Sometimes there may be a change, not in the heart, but in things which the heart was set upon, when they were not what they were. As a man whose heart was set upon uncleanness, change of beauty may change his affection; the change is not in the man, but in the object. But this change I speak of is a change in the mind, when there is none in the object: as the affection of a child to his trifles changes with the growth of his reason, though the things his heart was set upon remain in the same condition as before. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4074.) Regeneration is a change of principle. The principle of a natural man in his religious actions is artificial; he is wound up to such a peg, like the spring of an engine, by some outward respects which please him; but as the motion of an engine ceases, when the spring is down, so a natural man's motion holds no longer than the delight those motions gave him, which first engaged him in it. But the principle in a good man is spirit, an eternal principle, and the first motion of this principle is towards God, to act from God, and to act for God.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4075.) He who is born of God hath a new heart: new, not for substance, but for qualities. The strings of a viol may be the same, but the tune is altered. —*Watson*, 1696.

(4076.) Observe the order in which these things are arranged. "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them." Thus principle precedes practice, and prepares for it. And here we admire the plan of the gospel. To make the fruit good, it makes the tree also: to cleanse the stream, it purifies the fountain. It renews the nature, and the life becomes holy of course. —*Jay*, 1769–1853.

9. In the impartation of a new impulse and direction to the moral nature.

(4077.) Reformation does but turn the course or stream of men's affections, it does not change the nature of them. They are the same in their spring and fountain as ever they were, only they are habituated into another course than what of themselves they are inclined to. You may take a young whelp of the most fierce and savage creature, as of a tiger, or of a wolf, and by custom or usage make it tame and harmless as any domestic creature,—or dog, or the like: but although it may be turned into quite another way or course of acting than what it was of itself unto, yet its nature is not changed; and therefore frequently, on occasion, opportunity, or provocation, it will fall into its own savage inclination, and having tasted of the blood of creatures, it will never be reclaimed. So it is with the depraved affections of men with respect to their change: their streams are turned, they are habituated unto a new course, but their nature is not altered, at least not from rational to spiritual, from earthly to heavenly.
—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(4078.) We do not mean to assert that any new faculties of mind will be implanted, but that there will be a new impulse given to those which you do possess—new motives, new desires, new actions, new conduct. Nay, all obey the hand of another master, and are under the direction of a new influence, like a harp of which the strings remain the same; but the tones and music are various, as the hand that moves them varies. With one it may send forth harsh and discordant sounds; but, played on by another, the same chords ravish the senses with their rich and flowing music. —*Salter.*

10. In the transformation of our moral likeness into the image of God.

(4079.) It is the whole image of God which is drawn in the new creature. It is "the image of God" (Col. iii. 10.), not a part: a foot or a finger is but the image of those parts, not of a man. The members in a child answer to those in a parent, though not in so great a proportion. The image of a man has not only the face, or eyes, but the other members. Though a Christian may have one or two parts of this image more beautiful than the rest, as a man may have a sparkling eye that has not a proportionable lip, yet he has all the members of a man. The painter's skill appears in some lineaments more than in others. So the Spirit's wisdom appears in making some eminent in one grace, some in another, according to His good pleasure; yet the whole image of God is imprinted there; it would not else be a likeness, but a monstrous birth in defect. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth (Eph. v. 9.), and therefore the immediate effect of the Spirit in the soul is the engrafting all goodness, righteousness, and truth in the essential parts of it. As God's nature is holy, His perfections holy, His actions holy, so holiness beautifies the nature, spirits the actions, and is writ upon all the endowments of a renewed man. There is an impression of the wisdom of God in the understanding, and of the holiness of God in the will.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

II. *WHY IT IS NECESSARY.*

1. To render us acceptable in the sight of God.

(4080.) There may be several things which may help to make the life fair in the eyes of men; but nothing will make it amiable in the eyes of God, unless the heart be changed and renewed. All the medicines which can be applied, without the sanctifying work of the Spirit, though they may cover,

they can never cure the corruption and diseases of the soul. The best man without this is like a serpent, painted, as it were, without, but poisonous within. As the herb biscort, he may have smooth and plain leaves, but a crooked root; or as a pill, be gilded on the outside, when the whole mass and body of it is bitterness. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4081.) An apple may look very fair to the eye—quite ripe and red; and yet it may be full of rottenness within; so, on the other hand, the fruit may be brown, and flecked with spots, and burrowed into by wasps in search of its sweetness. But if we cut it open, and find it sweet in its substance and sound to the core, we say that it is good. It is just the same with man in his relation to God. He may look very fair on the outside, he may be respected and honoured by his fellow-men; but if his heart has not been renewed by divine grace, there is nothing but rottenness and corruption in the sight of God. While, in contrast with this, he who has come to his Heavenly Father believing in Jesus Christ, and repenting of his dead works and his idle words, cannot but be, by God's grace, sound and pure, however humble and despised he may appear. —*Hooper.*

2. Because without it no spiritual blessing can be obtained.

(4082.) A grave and wise counsellor of France, being desirous in his old age to retire himself, was entreated by the king to write down some directions, and leave with him, for the more prosperous government of his realm. The counsellor took some paper, and wrote on the top, moderation; in the middle, moderation; at the bottom, moderation. Demosthenes being asked what was the chief thing in an orator, answered, elocution; and being demanded the same question three times, what made an orator, he still gave the same answer. Augustine being demanded what was the greatest requisite of a Christian, what was the first, second, and third, still answered, humility, humility, humility. Truly what the counsellor said of moderation, the Grecian of elocution, and the Father of humility, I shall say of regeneration. If you ask me what is the chiefest thing in the world for a man to mind; what is that which is worthy of all his time, and strength, and thoughts, and words, and actions? I answer, regeneration. If you demand what is that which is of the greatest necessity and excellency, that bringeth in the greatest profit, delight, and happiness? I answer, regeneration. He that hath this, hath all that is worth having; the having of this is heaven. He that wanteth this hath nothing; the whole world cannot make up the want of this; the want of this is hell.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4083.) "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."—Mark the thoroughness of this desire. Not only must sin be blotted out, but the sinner himself must be washed and cleansed. There must not be merely a change of state, but a change of nature. Not only must the debt be forgiven, but all disposition to contract further debt must be eradicated. When the criminal has completed his term of imprisonment, he may be innocent in the eyes of the law, but unless that criminal has repented of his sin, he is as much guilty as on the day in which he first bowed his head under a prison door. All true and lasting change must be made in the nature.

—*Parker.*

3. To heal the disease of sin.

(4084.) Shame may hide sin, but it will not heal it. Corruption often lies secret in the heart, when shame hinders it from breaking out in scabs and blotches in the life.

Example, custom, and education may also help a man to make "a fair show in the flesh," but not to "walk after the Spirit." They may prune and lop sin, but never stub it up by the roots. All that these can do is to make a man like a grave, green and flourishing on the surface and superficies, when within there is nothing but noisomeness and corruption. It has often appeared that those means which the great moralists have used to bridle their lusts and passions have rather, like strong scents to epileptic bodies, raised than recovered them. Indeed, if the chief fault were not in the vital parts, these outward applications might be effectual; but when the heart, and lungs, and inwards are all corrupted, plasters applied to the face, or hands, or thighs, or sides will do little good. When the fault is in the foundation of a house, it cannot be mended by plastering or rough-cast. A leopard may be flayed, but he is spotted still, because the spots are not only in the skin, but in the flesh, and bones, and sinews, and most inward parts. When the disease is accidental, as to lose the sight by small-pox, or the like, there the physic of morality may be advantageous; but where the disease is natural, as in the man who was born blind, there physic will do no good; a miracle alone must restore such a one to his sight. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4085.) There are different ways of treating diseases. A man has a bad malady upon him, and it breaks out in his flesh. He goes to a quack, who gives him an ointment, which he applies outwardly to heal the sore till the morbid appearances vanish, and he congratulates himself on the cure, and commends the charlatan for his skill. By and by the man is lying so grievously sick and ill that he does not know what to do. "Oh," thinks he to himself, "have I made a mistake?" And when the true physician comes he says, "What have been your symptoms?" He tells the tale of an eruption on his skin, and the remedies he resorted to. "Ah," says the physician, "the disease is driven inwards; you have taken the wrong course; your present symptoms are fatal; you will die. It was well that it should come out on your flesh, seeing it lurked in your constitution. When you have a disease, you had need lay the axe at the root, and not at the branches. It is not the disfigurement of the skin that is so alarming as the blood-poisoning that caused it." Forthwith he begins to deal with the real evil.

So, my dear friends, you are only tinkering with the symptoms, the mere eruption on the skin, while you aim at outward reformation. You must be born again: that is the only cure for the leprosy of sin.

—*Spurgeon.*

4. To destroy the love of sin in the soul.

(4086.) It is one thing to be angry with sin upon a sudden discontent, as a man may be with his wife whom he loves dearly, and another thing to hate sin as that which we abhor to behold and endeavour to destroy. A filthy heart, like a foul body, may seem

for a good while to be in a good plight; but when the heats and colds of temptation appear, it will betray itself. Some insects lie in a dead sleep all the winter, stir not, make no noise, that one would think them dead; but when the weather alters, and the sun shines, they revive and show themselves: so, though lusts may seem dead in an unregenerate man, they are only laid asleep, and when opportunity is, will revive again. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4087.) Fear will do somewhat to curb a vitiated nature, but it cannot cure it. The bear dares hardly touch his desired honey, for fear of the stinging of the bees. The dog forbears the meat on the table, not because he does not love it, but because he is afraid of the cudgel. Many leave some sin, in their outward actions—as Jacob parted with Benjamin, for fear they should starve if he kept him—who are as fond of it as the patriarch of his child. This inward love of sin is indeed its life, and that which is most dangerous and deadly to the soul. As an imposthume is most dangerous for being inward, and private rocks under water split more vessels than those that appear above water, so sin reigning only in the heart is oftentimes more hurtful than when it rages in the life. Such civil persons go to hell without much disturbance; being asleep in sin, yet not snoring to the disquieting of others, they are so far from being jogged or awaked, that they are many times praised and commended.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4088.) A vicious horse is none the better tempered because the kicking straps prevent his dashing the carriage to atoms; and so a man is none the better really because the restraints of custom and providence may prevent his following that course of life which he would prefer. Poor fallen human nature behind the bars of laws, and in the cage of fear of punishment, is none the less a sad creature; should its master unlock the door we should soon see what it would be and do. A young leopard which had been domesticated, and treated as a pet, licked its master's hand while he slept, and it so happened that it drew blood from a recent wound; the first taste of blood transformed the gentle creature into a raging wild beast; yet it wrought no real change, it only awakened the natural ferocity which had always been there. A change of nature is required for our salvation—mere restraints are of small value.

—*Spurgeon.*

5. To eradicate pride and self-sufficiency.

(4089.) We cannot without regeneration perform gospel duties humbly. Old things must pass away, that God may be all in all in the creature. We cannot without a new nature make a true estimate of ourselves, and lie as vile and base in the presence of God. A stone with all the hammering cannot be made soft. Beat it into several pieces, you may sever the continuity of its parts, but not master its hardness. Every little piece of it will retain the hardness of its nature. So is it with a heart of stone. The nature must be changed before it be fit for those services which require melting, humble, and admiring frames. There is a necessity of a residing grace, like fire, to keep the soul in a melting temper.

—*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

6. To enable us to derive profit from religious ordinances.

(4090.) Without regeneration ordinances cannot be improved. The word has no place with the unregenerate (John viii. 37). There is no footing naturally for any divine and spiritual truth. The nature of the soil must be changed before this heavenly plant will thrive. Plants grow not upon stones, nor this heavenly plant in a stony heart. The vine and the weed draw the same moisture of the earth, which in the vine is transmuted by the nature of the plant into a nobler substance than that in the weed. The new nature of a good man turns the juice of the word into a nobler spirit in him; and according to the nature of a good man is enriched with grace, the more does he concoct the word and improve it, to the bringing forth fruit, and fruit of a diviner nature than another. The juice it affords to all is the same, but the nature of the creature turns it into concoction. Nature must be changed, then, to make any profitable improvements of the word and other institutions. A stone receives the water upon it, not into it; it falls off or dries up as soon as ever it falls; but a new heart, a heart of flesh, sucks in the dew of the word, and grows thereby. The new birth and nature makes us suck in the milk, and grow thereby.

—*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

7. To enable us to live for the glory of God.

(4091.) Unsanctified persons at best act from themselves, and therefore for themselves. As the kite, they may spread their wings and soar aloft as if they touched heaven, when, at the highest, their eyes are upon their prey upon earth. Lucullus told his guests, when he had feasted them liberally, and they had admired his bounty in their costly entertainment, "Something, my friends, is for your sakes, but the greater part is for Lucullus' own sake." An unconverted person may do something, some small matter for the sake of religion, from common gifts of illumination, &c.; but the most that he does is for his own sake, for that credit or profit which he expects thereby. If anything be enjoined which thwarts his interest, he will reply with Ajax, when commanded to spare Ulysses, "In other things I will obey the gods, but not in this."

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

8. To enable us to live a holy life.

(4092.) An old heart will never serve for, or enable unto, the acts of new obedience. The water will rise no higher than the fountain-head whence it floweth. If you would have a clock to move regularly, and the hand without to go true, you must have the wheels and poises right within.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4093.) Thou must be righteous and holy, before thou canst live righteously and holily. If the ship hath not its right make at first, be not equally poised according to the law of that art, it will never sail trim; and if the heart be not moulded anew by the workmanship of the Spirit, and fashioned according to the law of the new creature, "*in which old things pass away, and all things become new*," the creature will never walk holily. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4094.) We must be born again; it is not a dead nature, nor a dead faith, can produce living fruit for God. We may as well read without eyes, walk without legs, act without life, as perform any service to God without a new nature; no, we cannot perform the least; a dead man can no more move his finger than his whole body.

—*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

(4095.) Without a change of nature, men's practice will not be thoroughly changed. Until the tree be made good, the fruit will not be good. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. The swine may be washed, and appear clean for a little while, but yet, without a change of nature, he will still wallow in the mire. Nature is a more powerful principle of action, than anything that opposes it: though it may be violently restrained for a while, it will finally overcome that which restrains it. It is like the stream of a river, it may be stopped a while with a dam, but if nothing be done to dry the fountain, it will not be stopped always; it will have a course, either in its old channel, or a new one. Nature is a thing more constant and permanent than any of those things that are the foundation of carnal men's reformation and righteousness. When a natural man denies his lust, lives a strict, religious life, and seems humble, painful, and earnest in religion, it is not natural, it is all a force against nature; as when a stone is violently thrown upwards. But that force will be gradually spent; nature will remain in its full strength, and so prevails again, and the stone returns upwards. As long as corrupt nature is not mortified, but the principle left whole in a man, it is a vain thing to expect that it should not govern. But if the old nature be indeed mortified, and a new heavenly nature infused, then may it well be expected, that men will walk in newness of life, and continue to do so to the end of their days.

—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1637–1716.

9. To make us like Christ.

(4096.) As we cannot be like to Christ in our walk here without a new birth, neither can we without it be like to Christ in glory hereafter. It is not the place makes us like to God, but there must be a likeness to God to make the place pleasant to us. When once the angels had corrupted their nature, the short stay they made in heaven did neither please them nor reform them. And when Satan appeared before God, among the angels (Job i. 6), neither God's presence nor His speaking to him did anywise better him; he came a devil and he went away so, without any pleasure in the place or presence, but by the permission of God to wreak his malice on holy Job.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

10. To ensure a durable profession.

(4097.) Reader, make sure of this inward change; otherwise, though thy conversation may be specious, it can never be gracious, nor thy profession durable. If the house be built on loose earth, it will never stand long. When the principles are variable and uncertain, so will the practices be. If the arguments upon which thou takest upon thee the livery of Christ, and the grounds of thy engagement in His service, be not firm and constant—the love of God, and hope of eternal life, &c.—such as the world and flesh cannot over-top, thou wilt throw up thy profession and leave thy Master, when thou art offered, in thy blind judgment, a better service (though it be but the pleasures of sin for a season, with eternal pains at the end of them) for thy soul and Saviour and eternal salvation. How well may he prove a bankrupt, who is worse than nought when he first sets up! I wonder not that many professors disown the Lord Jesus, when they are ignorant why they at any time owned Him. He that takes up religion on trust, will lay it down when it brings him into trouble. He that follows Christ, he knoweth not why, will forsake Him, he knoweth not how.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

11. To qualify us for heaven.

(4098.) As regeneration is necessary to a gospel state, so it is necessary to a state of glory. It seems to be typified by the strength and freshness of the Israelites when they entered into Canaan. Not a decrepit and infirm person set foot on the promised land: none of those who came out of Egypt with an Egyptian nature, and desires for the garlic and onions thereof, with a suffering their old bondage, but dropped their carcases in the wilderness; only the two spies, who had encouraged them against the seeming difficulties. None that retain only the old man, born in the house of bondage, but only a new regenerate creature, shall enter into the heavenly Canaan. Heaven is the inheritance of the sanctified, not of the filthy (Acts xxvi. 18), "That they may receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified, through faith that is in me."

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4099.) As we come out of the quarry of nature, rough and unpolished, we are not fit to be cemented with the corner-stone in the heavenly building: we must be first smoothed and altered by grace.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4100.) The duties of heaven cannot be performed without a new nature. Is it usual in this world to take up a person from under a hedge, and bring him to an immediate attendance on a prince without cleansing him, and begetting the other dispositions and behaviour in him by some choice education? God picks some out for an immediate attendance on Him in heaven; but He sends His Spirit to be their tutor, to breed them up, and grace their deformed souls with beautiful features; and their ulcerous and cancerous spirits, with a sound complexion, that they may be meet to stand before Him. When God calls any to do Him service in a particular station in the world, He gives them another heart; so he did to Saul for the kingdom (1 Sam. x. 9). Is there not much more necessity of it for an immediate service of God in heaven? A malefactor, by pardon, is in a capacity to come into the presence of a prince, and serve him at his table; but he is not in a fitness till his noisome garments, full of his prison vermin, be taken off. Can one that is neither pardoned nor purified, one with guilt of rebellion upon him, and a nature of rebellion in him, be fit to stand before God?

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4101.) If God should bring a man with his corrupt nature into local heaven, God could not please Himself in it, nor such an one delight himself in God, no more than a swine can be pleased with the presence of an angel, or a mole sport itself with the beauty of flowers, or a vitiated eye rejoice at the brightness of light.

Without a new nature, a new frame, we are no more able to understand or enjoy the pleasures of heaven, than a bat is to take pleasure in a mathematician's lines or a philosopher's books.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4102.) The new birth is necessary as to the duty, so to the reward of heaven. As the reward is

exceeding glorious, the preparation thereto must be exceeding gracious. The rewards of heaven are something incorporated with us, in the very frame of our souls, and cannot be conceived enjoyable without a change in the nature of the subject. Man was first formed before he was brought into the garden of Eden, or pleasure: there He "put the man whom He had formed." Man must be new formed before he can be brought into that place, which is the antitype of Eden, the place of eternal and spiritual pleasure. A natural man can no more relish the rewards of heaven, than a dead carcase can esteem a crown and a purple robe; or be delighted with the true pleasure of heaven, than a swine that loves to wallow in the mire can be delighted with a bed of roses. A disorder in nature is a prohibition to all happiness belonging to that nature; a distempered body under the fury of a disease can find no delight in the pleasures of the healthful; a wicked man, with a troubled and foaming sea of sin and lust in his mind, would find no more rest in heaven than a man with his disjointed members upon a rack can in the beauty of a picture. We must be spiritually-minded before we can have either life or peace. Righteousness in the soul is the necessary qualification for the peace and joy in the kingdom of God: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." While malice remains in the devil's nature, were he admitted into heaven he would receive a torment instead of a content. A wicked man would meet with hell in the midst of heaven as long as he carries his own rack within him, boiling and raging lusts in his heart, which can receive no contentment without objects suitable to them, let the place be what it will. Heaven, indeed, is not only a place, but a nature; and it is a contradiction to think that any can be happy with a nature contrary to the very essence of happiness.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

12. Because there can be no substitute for it.

(4103.) No earthly change whatever can be a substitute for the change which comes from above; any more than the lights of earth will suffice for the sun, moon, and stars, any more than all the possible changes through which a potter may pass a piece of clay can convert it into the bright, round, pure, stamped, golden coin of the realm.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(4104.) If the works of a watch are out of order, it is of no use to be continually setting the hands, they will soon be wrong again; you must go to the watchmaker's to repair the interior mechanism: so it is for no purpose for a vicious man to be now and then attempting some little reformation in outward conduct, he must also pray for the renewal of his heart. —*Salter.*

(4105.) "You are vile-looking stuff!" said a stone of Lime to a lump of soft Red Clay by the door of the Pottery, one day.

"Very true," thought the Clay within itself; and as it could not deny what was said, it said nothing.

"I suppose you would not object to a better condition if you might?" said the other.

"Truly I would not," replied the Red Clay; "but the question is, How may it be done?"

"I have the quality of whitening whatever I touch," answered the Lime, "and am therefore, out of pure pity, willing to render you a good service."

"It will be very thankfully received," said the Clay.

"Well, you see," said the Lime, "I'm connected with the whitewashing business, which is a very wholesome and purifying process. Now, a little that I could make, rubbed over your surface, would turn you as white as any snowball."

"Would it!" said the Clay.

"Yes it would, I promise," answered the Lime.

"That would be a wonderful thing in my favour, so far as appearance is concerned," said the Clay.

"And what would you wish for more?" observed the Lime. "It is your appearence that you want to improve, is it not?"

"Truly; but, I'm thinking, as it would not change my nature, I should still only be Clay inside, after all," it replied.

"Oh, inside! Never mind that, if you are fair outside. Better the deception if nobody could discover it," answered the Lime.

"And would it last always?" asked the Red Clay again.

"If you were not to be meddled with; and were particularly careful to keep out of the way of water," said the Lime.

"Why?" it inquired.

"Oh; why? why because, of course, whitewash will rub off and easily wash off. To keep white, only keep out of the way of rubbing and rain," remarked the Lime.

"Ah! yes, I see: but thank you, I had rather honestly own what I am, than wear a disguise, and be a whitewashed deceiver. The true way of having my condition bettered, is by being manufactured into some useful article. Do you observe all those pans, pitchers, and other admirably formed vessels? Well, they were all once only Red Clay like me; we have but the same common origin; and the skill that converted lumps of vile earth into such beautiful and useful things, is able to make me into a vessel 'fit for the Master's use:' for which purpose, I have been taken up out of the miry pit; and am placed here by the Good Potter, who will not despise the work of His own hands, however vile by nature I acknowledge that I am."

No external rites can change the heart; which, by nature, is earthly throughout and vile before God. Our Lord described some Pharisaical characters as "whited," or whitewashed, "sepulchres." Only the work of the Holy Spirit by His renewing grace, can mould us according to the will of God, and make us "vessels of honour meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. ii. 21). —*Bowden.*

III. *ITS AUTHOR.*

(4106.) All a man's teaching will never reform the heart. Man's light is as a March sun, which raises vapours, but does not dispel and scatter them: so it discovers lust, but does not give us power to suppress it. Therefore our main business must be to be taught of God. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4107.) Man, by the help of instituted privileges, does not produce this work of regeneration in himself, without a supernatural grace attending them. Ordinances cannot renew a man, but the arm of

God, which manages them, edges them into efficacy, as the arm that wields the sword gives the blow. Means are the showers of heaven, but they can no more make the heart fruitful till some gracious principles be put in, than the beams of the sun, the dews of heaven, and the waterpots of the clouds, can make a barren ground bring forth flowers, without a change of the nature of the soil, and new roots planted in it. All the spectacles in the world cannot cure a man's eyes; he must have a visive faculty to make use of them. Our faculty must be cured before we can exercise it about objects, or use means proper to that faculty. All persuasions will not prevail with a dead man; the fairest discourses, the most undeniable arguments, the most moving rhetoric will not stir or affect him, till God take away the stone from the grave and raise him to life. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4108.) Ascribe nothing to instruments, either men or means. It is not of the will of man, nor another's will. Without the efficacious working of the Spirit, the gospel itself is but as a dead letter; the Spirit only quickens it. It is not outward teaching and blowing which of itself will kindle these sparks; an instrument cannot act without the strength of an agent to manage it; the chisel forms the stone into a statue, but according to the skill and strength of the artificer moving it. It is not the breath of a man, and a few words out of his mouth, can produce so great a work as the new creation; this might be a reason why God chose so weak an instrument as man to preach the gospel, to evidence that the great work was not from the weakness of man, but the power of God.
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4109.) All mere outward declarations are but suasions, and mere suasion cannot change and cure a disease or habit in nature. You may exhort an Ethiop to turn himself white, or a lame man to go; but the most pathetical exhortations cannot procure such an effect without a greater power than that of the tongue to cure nature; you may as well think to raise a dead man by blowing in his mouth with a pair of bellows. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4110.) All the power of regenerate men in the world joined together cannot renew another; all the industry of man, without the influence of the heavens in the sun and rain, cannot produce fruit in the earth, no, nor the moral industry of men grace in the soul. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4111.) The wintry day is a striking emblem of the state of the soul of every individual till it is renewed. The mind of the sinner is so benighted, that he sees no glory in God: his heart is so cold that he is a stranger to the sweet emotions of love and gratitude; and his life is barren, like the wintry soil, of the wholesome fruits of righteousness. The day in spring, on the contrary, is obviously descriptive of the renewed soul—all is life, animation, fruitfulness. Then the eye is opened, and God has said, "Let there be light," and there is light. It is the blessed dawn of an eternal day. It is the work of God to change the gloomy month of winter for the delightful season of spring: "Every good gift," &c. No one but He that formed the spring can renew it. No human power could have introduced the spring a month earlier, or have introduced it at all. So the efforts of the greatest and best of men for the renewal of sinners, without the gracious influences of the Spirit, will be equally inefficacious.
—*Salter*.

(4112.) Some people laugh at regeneration by the Spirit of God, and think there is nothing in it; a plain sign that they themselves are quite without it. If a man were to come and tell me that there is no such thing in the world as money, I should take it for granted that he therefore thinks so, because he himself never had any.
—*Toplady*, 1740–1778.

(4113.) No plant or tree can grow by any inherent ability, apart from sun, soil, moisture, heat, and the like. No animal can do so simple a thing as breathing by inherent ability, he must have air; he can walk, or run, or climb, or fly, only by conditions external, that must be supplied. So also the mind or intelligence can remember only as fit associations are supplied to assist the recall of things gone by, or discover laws only when stimulated by the suggestions of appropriate facts, or maintain a power of high command only where there are great occasions and perils to be mastered. In just the same way, passing to what is spiritual, God cannot be loved, save as He is offered to love in qualities that will awaken and support love; and, for the same reason, no sinner of mankind can regenerate himself by any inherent ability, apart from conditions powerfully presenting God, and pouring His radiance into the soul; for the regenerate state is only the new revelation of God within, whence before He was excluded, so that now life proceeds from Him as its actuating impulse and law.
—*Bushnell*.

IV. *ITS EVIDENCES.*

1. If it has taken place, there are sure to be evidences of it.

(4114.) Regeneration is never without some effect; if we have not the properties, we have not the nature. If the air be dark and pitchy, that a man cannot see his way, it is a sign the sun is not up to enlighten that hemisphere. A thick darkness cannot remain with the sun's rising. The works of darkness, with their power, cannot remain with a new creature state. The old rubbish cannot wholly remain with a new building. Look well, therefore, whether old principles, aims, customs, company, affections, are passed away, and whether new affections, principles, ends, be settled in the room. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4115.) In the Bible it is designated as "life from the dead," and as a "new creation;" and it is impossible that this change should take place and no evidence be furnished of it; or that it should occur and produce no difference in the life. Can the vegetable world again bloom with beauty in the returning spring, after the long death of the winter, and give no evidence of life? Can the buds open, and the flowers blossom, and the grass carpet the earth, and yet all be as cold and sterile as in the winter? Could the now pale, and stiff, and mouldering corpses under ground leave their graves and come forth, and yet there be no evidence of life? Could the sun rise suddenly at midnight, and shed his beams on the dark world, and there be no evidence of the mighty change? And can a sinner, dead in sin, be quickened into life by the power of God's Spirit, and still there be no life; can the

powers of the soul, long torpid and chill in the dreary winter of sin, be warmed and animated with the love of God, and no one know it? Can the pure light of the Sun of Righteousness pour its beams into the soul darkened by sin, and all be as benighted as ever? Can the slave in sin be at liberty? can the Gospel touch his shackles, and his limbs feel the manly impulse of freedom of the sons of God, and he continue to feel and act as if he were still a slave? Can the poor maniac be restored to his right mind, the wandering eye of the lunatic become settled and calm, and no one know it? Can he who has all his life hated eternal and infinite excellence, be brought to love it, and the soul itself be ignorant of the amazing transformation? And can he who has despised the Cross, and trampled the blood of the covenant beneath his feet, embrace that Cross as the only foundation of his hope of heaven, and yet give so dubious indications of the change that no one shall know it, or suspect it from his conduct?

—*Barnes*, 1790–1870.

2. Purification of the thoughts of the heart.

(4116.) We can have no greater evidence of a change in us from this state and condition, than a change wrought in the course of our thoughts. A relinquishment of this or that particular sin is not an evidence of a translation from this state; for such particular sins proceed from particular lusts and temptations, and are not the immediate universal consequence of that depravation of nature which is equal in all. Such alone are the vanity and wickedness of the thoughts and imaginations of the heart. A change here is a blessed evidence of a change of state. He who is cured of a dropsy is not immediately healthy, because he may have the prevailing seeds and matter of other diseases in him, and the next day die of a lethargy; but he who, from a state of sickness, is restored, in the temperature of the mass of blood and animal spirits, and all the principles of life and health, unto a good crisis and temperature, his state of body is changed. The cure of a particular sin may leave behind it the seeds of eternal death, which they may quickly effect; but he who has obtained a change in this character, which belongs essentially to the state of depraved nature, is spiritually recovered. And the more the stream of our thoughts is turned, the more our minds are filled by those of a contrary nature, the greater and more firm is our evidence of a translation out of that depraved state and condition.

—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

3. Hatred of sin.

(4117.) St. John spoke a hard saying, but by the Spirit of manifestation we are all taught to understand it: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9). The seed of God is the Spirit, which hath a plastic power to efform us *in similitudinem filiorum Dei*, into the image of the sons of God; and as long as this remains in us, while the Spirit dwells in us, we cannot sin; that is, it is against our natures, our reformed natures, to sin. And as we say we cannot endure such a potion, we cannot suffer such a pain; that is, we cannot without great trouble, we cannot without doing violence to our nature; so all spiritual men, all that are born of God, and the seed of God remains in them, "they cannot sin;" cannot *without trouble*, and doing against their natures and their most passionate inclinations. A man if you speak naturally, can masticate gums, and he can break his own legs, and he can sip up by little draughts, mixtures of aloes and rhubarb, of henbane or the deadly nightshade; but he cannot do this naturally, or willingly, or cheerfully, or with delight. Every sin is against a good man's nature; he is ill at ease when he has missed his prayers, he is amazed if he have fallen into error, he is infinitely ashamed of his imprudence; he remembers a sin as he thinks of an enemy, or the horrors of a midnight apparition; for all his capacities, his understanding, and his choosing faculties, are filled up with the opinion and persuasions, with the love and with the desires of God.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(4118.) The Spirit of God begets in the man that is born of the Spirit a natural hatred to sin, though he loved it in his old estate. The vulture's nature is to prey with horrid preference on the putrid carcases of the dead. But did you ever see the gentle dove gorging the loathsome food? So the sinner feeds with delight on the nauseous enjoyments of his iniquity, like the carrion-eating bird of prey, while the regenerate soul has a holy disgust of all that is offensive to his heavenly nature.

—*Salter.*

4. Holiness of life.

(4119.) As a man is judged and known to be waking when he can do the office of a waking man, as talk, work, write, or such like: even so is a man awaked out of the sleep of sins when he lives in charity, fears God, and walks according to His law in His vocation. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4120.) If you have learned Christ as the truth is in Him, you have so learned Him as to put off the old man and to put on the new. Faith works by love, even as the tree has both its leaf and fruit. And as if a tree should be changed from one kind to another, the leaves and fruit should likewise be changed; as if a pear-tree should be made an apple-tree, it would have leaves and fruits agreeing to the change made in it; so man by faith having his heart purified, made a tree of righteousness, he has his leaves and fruits; leaves of profession, fruits of action. So again, a man, as a new tree set into and growing out of Christ, bears a new fruit, he converses in holiness and newness of life. Thus you see how those that are faithful are also saints, because by faith their heart is purified, their profession and conversation are sanctified.

—*Bayne*, 1617.

5. Likeness to Christ.

(4121.) The creation of the world is a shadow of the regeneration of a Christian. First, there was an earth without form, void, and a darkness upon the face of the deep. Predestination is this great deep, which cannot be discovered or discerned. There the light was separated from the darkness; here knowledge is separated from ignorance in the soul; there is calling. Then was the sun created; so here the bright beams of grace are diffused into our hearts which fill us with spiritual joy; there is sanctification. Lastly, Adam was created after the image of God, and placed in Paradise; so the new man is conformed to the image of Christ, and shall be reposed in the paradise of everlasting glory.

—*Adams.* 165[illegible]

6. Ease and delight in the performance of duty.

(4122.) Regeneration changeth the frame of our thoughts, and maketh us to mount upwards. Those that are regenerated can in some measure perform their duties naturally and easily; it is as easy for the flame to ascend as for a stone to descend. A vine doth with as much ease produce grapes as a thistle or a thorn doth prickles; and, therefore, thy heart may produce spiritual meditations with almost as much ease as a carnal man shall produce sensual, corrupt, vile thoughts, if thou dost not injure the divine nature, but exercise it in sending up holy thoughts towards God. —*Salter.*

(4123.) What is the religion of too many?—They are like machines, impelled by force: they are influenced only by external considerations. Their hearts are not engaged. Hence, in every religious exercise they perform a task. They would love God much better, if He would excuse them altogether from the hateful obligation. They put off these duties as long as possible; resort to them with reluctance; adjust the measure with a niggardly grudge; and are glad of any excuse for neglect. While labouring at the drudgery, they entertain hard thoughts of the cruel Taskmaster, who can impose such severities upon them, and sigh inwardly, "When will the Sabbath be over? when shall we unbend from these spiritual restraints, and feel ourselves at liberty in the world?" Can this be religion? Is there anything in this, suitable to the nature of God, who is "a Spirit"? or to the demands of God, who cries, "My son, give Me thine heart;" "serve the Lord with gladness, and come before His presence with singing"? Behold a man hungry—he needs no argument to induce him to eat. See that mother—she needs no motive to determine her to cherish her darling babe—nature impels. The obedience of the Christian is, in consequence of regeneration, natural; and hence it is pleasant and invariable: "He runs and is not weary, he walks and is not faint."

—*Jay*, 1769–1853.

7. Wisdom in the use of the law.

(4124.) There is in a renewed understanding, a principle teaching how to make use of the law. It is like the inward skill of a pilot, who guides the ship by the compass and rudder. The outward law is the compass by which we must steer; the inward law is the practical knowledge of this; an inward skill to make application of it to particular occasions.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

IV. *SHOULD BE SOUGHT EARLY.*

(4125.) Deferring the seeking after this new birth till more years grow upon you is a mighty folly. It is a matter of the highest concern, the greatest necessity, in comparison of which all other things are but toys and superfluities. Is it not folly to prefer superfluous things before necessary? Is it not a madness for a man to be mending the mud wall about his garden, and neglect to quench the fire which has got hold of his house? You are poisoned in your nature, you have plague spots upon your hearts. Would it not be ridiculous for a man that has drunk poison, and spilt some upon his clothes, to be more careful to have the stains fetched out of his garments than the poison out of his stomach? You are careful about the concerns of the body and flesh; oh! be not such fools as to let the poison within get the greater head, and the plague continue in the heart.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4126.) As an early regeneration makes for God's honour, so it makes for your own interest. Your new birth will be the gentler. The work of conscience will be more kindly, without the horrors they have who have lain many years soaking in the old nature. More of hell must be flashed in an old sinner's face, to awaken him from his dead sleep. Paul, who had sinned some years with an high hand, was struck to the earth. Christ, as it were, took him by the throat, and shook him: (Acts ix. 6.) He trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" There will be more amazing aggravations of sin to reach the conscience, and consequently more anguish. Putrified wounds require more lancing; and therefore are more painful in the cure than those which are but newly made. The more we are alienated from the life of God, the harder it will be to return to live that life again. The farther a man is gone out of his road, the longer he must travel to come in again; and the more pains he must take in running or riding, than that he wandered but a little from it.

Charnock, 1628–1680.

V. *IN WHAT SENSE IT IS INSTANTANEOUS.*

(4127.) I shall show what regeneration is: by which it will plainly appear, that there is no necessity that it should be effected in an instant and at once, but that it will admit of degrees. I do not deny that it may be in an instant and at once. The power of God is able to do this, and sometimes does it very thoroughly and very suddenly. But the question is whether there be a necessity it should be so and always be so. Now regeneration is—the change of a man's state from a state of sin to a state of holiness; which, because it is an entrance upon a new kind or course of life, is fitly resembled to regeneration or a new birth; to a new creation; the man being, as it were, quite changed, or made over again, so as not to be, as to the main purpose and design of his life, the same man he was before. This is a plain sensible account of the thing, which every one may easily understand. Now there is nothing in reason why a man may not gradually be changed, and arrive at this state by degrees, as well as after this change is made, and he arrived at this state of a regenerate man, he may by degrees grow and improve in it. But the latter no man doubts of, but that a man that is in a state of grace may grow and improve in grace; and there is as little reason to question why a man may not come to this *state* by degrees, as well as leap into it at once.

All the difficulty I know of in this matter is a mere nicety, that there is an instant in which every thing begins, and therefore regeneration is in an instant; so that the instant before the man arrived at this state, it could not be said that he was regenerate; and the instant after he is in this state, it cannot be denied that he is so. But this is idle subtility, just as if a man should prove that a house was built in an instant, because it could not be said to be built till the instant it was finished, though for all this, nothing is more certain than that it was built by degrees. Or, suppose the time of arriving

at man's estate be at one and twenty, does it from hence follow that a man does not grow to be a man by degrees, but is made a man in an instant, because just before one and twenty he was not at man's estate, and just then he was. Not but that God, if He please, can make a man in an instant, as He did Adam; but it is not necessary from this example, that all men should be made so, much less does it follow from this vain subtility. This is just the case. All the while the man is tending towards a regenerate state, and is struggling with his lusts, till, by the power of God's grace and his own resolution, he get the victory; all the while he is under the sense and conviction of his sinful and miserable state, and sorrowing for the folly of his past life, and coming to an effectual purpose and resolution of changing his course; and, it may be, several times thrown back by the temptations of the devil, and the power of evil habits, and the weakness and instability of his own purpose, till at last by the grace of God following and assisting Him, he comes to a firm resolution of a better life, which resolution governs him for the future; I say all this while, which in some persons is longer, in others shorter, according to the power of evil habits and the different degrees of God's grace afforded to men; all this time the work of regeneration is going on; and though a man cannot be said to be in a regenerate state till that very instant that the principle of grace and his good resolution have got the upper hand of his lusts, yet it is certain for all this that the work of regeneration was not effected in an instant. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4128.) Let us look a little at what is meant by immediate regeneration. It is not meant, in the first place, that the preparatory steps, which consist in the infusion of knowledge, and in all those influences which go to form, if not the element, yet the vehicles, of moral power, are instantaneous. On the contrary, experience teaches—and Scripture corroborates it—that the state of preparation for change may admit of any amount of gradualness. A man's education in the household may be part of a work which has its final solution scores of years afterward. A man that goes from wickedness into a congregation, may from Sabbath to Sabbath attend there, and may for months and even years be undergoing a sort of preparatory change. When you plant peach-pips, they lie all winter long, doing what? Unglueing the edges of the containing shell. The frost and the moisture are preparing it so that when spring comes, the germ is unlocked, and allowed to swell and grow. Here has been a whole six months in which there was a constant state of preparation for the germination which takes place within perhaps a day or two. A six months' preparation was necessary to make that possible. There may be a long series of ameliorations, there may be the wasting of prejudices, there may be the supplanting of ignorance by better views, there may be an increase of sensibility to that which is right and noble, there may be a greater conformity of conduct to right rules and principles, there may be an infinite number of minute and gradual unfolding processes; so that when men say, "That man was not suddenly converted; I have seen the work preliminary to his conversion going on for two or three years, and have noticed his leaving off one habit and taking on another, extricating himself from one set of influences, and giving himself up to another set of influences,"—when men say this, it may be true. But that does not touch the moment of change. Preparations may be gradual; but all changes that turn upon volition must be instantaneous.

A man is pondering whether he will transfer himself from the east to one of the newer states. It is a matter of thought with him through a whole year. It is uncertain what he will do. He reads, and he talks with all returned travellers from that state. There is a growing inclination on his part to go. His affairs are settled, so that it is possible for him to take his choice between going and staying. And yet, he is not determined until it comes to the month, to the week, to the day, to the hour, to the minute, when he must make up his mind. There was a second, when the man came to a decision and said, "I will go!" He was years, it may be, preparing; but when the thing was done, it was done instantaneously.

You are travelling in a given direction, and you at first have a faint perplexing feeling, "I am afraid I have the wrong road;" but you travel on, and the feeling grows on you, and evidences increase, and you walk slower, and are more irresolute, till by and by the conviction flashes on you, "I am wrong!" and you turn about and go the other way. There is an instant in which you stop, although it may be preceded by hours of thought, and a growing tendency to change; and when a man changes from going in a wrong direction to going in a right, there is an instant in which he turns.

And so it is in moral things. A man may have been undergoing moral ameliorations and tendencies, and obstacles may be removed on the one side and the other, but when at last the preparations that he has gone through become operative, there is a decisive moment. And when a man changes from the power of supreme selfishness to the power of supreme love, from the service of the world to the service of God, the change is instantaneous, though the causes leading to it are gradual.

—*Beecher.*

RELIGION.

I. *IS A NECESSITY OF THE SOUL.*

(4129.) No man can be without his god; if he have not the true God, to bless and sustain him, he will have some false god, to delude and to betray him. The Psalmist knew this, and therefore he joined so closely the forgetting the name of our God, and holding up our hands to some strange god. For every man has something in which he hopes, on which he leans, to which he retreats and retires, with which he fills up his thought in empty spaces of time; when he is alone, when he lies sleepless on his bed, when he is not pressed with other thoughts; to which he betakes himself in sorrow or trouble, as that from which he shall draw comfort and strength,—his fortress, his citadel, his defence; and has not this good right to be called his god? Man was made to lean on the Creator; but if not on Him, then he leans on the creature in one shape or another. The ivy cannot grow alone; it *must* twine round some support or other; if not the goodly oak, then the ragged thorn; round any dead stick whatever, rather than have no stay or support at all. It is even so with the heart and

affections of man; if they do not twine around God, they must twine around some meaner thing.
—*French.*

(4130.) "These troublesome vines," exclaims the vintner, "why can they not grow upright like bushes?" And one man comes to him and says, "It is all because you have tied them to oak stakes. If you will get cedar stakes you will have no difficulty." The vintner goes to the forest for cedar stakes, but still the vines creep and cling. Another man says, "Cedar stakes are not good; you must have hickory;" and he gets hickory, but the vines clasp them also. Another man says, "It is not hickory, but chestnut stakes that you need;" and so he gets chestnut stakes, but it is all the same to the vines. At length there comes a man who says, "Your course is wrong from beginning to end. If you will throw away all your stakes, and stop your training, and leave the vines to nature, you will have none of these clambering, wild-roaming, embracing ways." So the vintner pulls up the stakes, and clears the piles of timber from the ground, and leaves the vines unpropped. And now do they grow upright, and cease to throw out tendrils and clasping rings? No. It is their nature to cling to something; and if you will not give them help to climb upward, they will not on that account cease to reach out, but will spread all over the ground, clasping cold stones, and embracing every worthless stick, and the very grass.

Now our religious nature, like the vine, must have something to cling to; and one man says, "The Brahminical system is as good as the Christian;" another says, "The old Greek mythology is better than either;" and another says, "Catholicism is preferable to the Protestant form of Christianity;" and then comes a man who declares that all systems are extraneous and hurtful, and that if we were left to grow up unprejudiced, with the light and laws of nature, such a thing as a religious system would never be known nor needed. "First," he says, "the nurse befools the child, and then the mother takes him, and then the priest and the Church; and so he is educated to false views from the beginning." The truth of the matter is this: religious systems do not create the religious nature in man. The religious nature itself, craving and longing for development, creates both the systems and the priests who minister in them. The heart, with its thousand tendrils, reaches forth to God, and in its reaching clasps whatever it may.

A student, annoyed by the notes of the canary-bird in his window, says, "It is the robin in the opposite cage that makes the canary sing," and so he takes the robin away; but still the song goes on. It was not its companion that made it call, but something yearning out of its own little bosom; and because of this yearning, whether alone or with its mates, in summer or winter, in light or darkness, it still will sing. So the heart yearns and calls for God; not because of outward solicitation, but because of the longing, the want it feels within. No difference of teachers or systems can change this nature of the soul. The ocean is the same, whatever craft sail up and down upon it, whether they be pleasure-boats, brigs, merchant-ships, pirates, or men-of-war; so whatever religious navigators may be going up and down the sea of life, its depths, and shores, and distant haven remain the same. The stars never change for astrologers or astronomers. They roll calmly above storms and above opinions. So man's nature does not vary for circumstances, or conflicting views, but still wants God above, and fellow-man below.

However various our wants may seem, what we all need is God. He has given us the earth for our body, but He Himself is the soil in which our souls must root; the eternal help, the source of succour and all supply, the bread of life, and the water of life. Feeding upon Him, we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, but be satisfied.
—*Beecher.*

II. *TRUE RELIGION—IN WHAT IT CONSISTS.*

1. Not in outward observances.

(4131.) Outward observances, indispensable as they are, are not religion; they are its aliment, but not its life: the fuel, but not the flame; the scaffolding, but not the edifice. —*Salter.*

(4132.) It is not by enthroning religion on Sunday in the sanctuary; but it is by bringing religion into the counting-house, the exchange, and the market, that we really honour her. It is not by studied service, by early matins, by twilight vespers, by chimes of holy bells that summon us three times a day to come to worship, that we do homage to Christ. True, such is thought religion; in Rome it is pronounced so; by the imitators of Rome it is felt that you may spend the evening in the opera, if only an hour before you come to vespers; and that in the morning, you may do anything you like, provided you have come only first to matins: if you attend to religion in consecrated places, in canonical hours, that is being religious; and as for the intervals between, you may follow the lust of the eye, the pride of life, and the love of this present world. Now it seems to me that to be truly religious is not to go to matins, nor to vespers, nor to go to church on Sunday (though this last is right and dutiful); but it is to bring the motives, the hopes, the precepts, the spirit of religion into all our walks and ways in the world, till our whole life becomes religious. —*Cumming.*

(4133.) A religion that does not take hold of the life that now is, is like a cloud that does not rain. A cloud may roll in grandeur, and be an object of admiration, but if it does not rain, it is of little account so far as utility is concerned. And a religion that consists in the observance of magnificent ceremonies, but that does not touch the duties of daily life, is a religion of show and of sham. —*Beecher.*

(4134.) The spiritual life is closely connected with ordinances, actions, and activities,—but it no more stands in these things,—it is no more ordinance, or action, or activity—than the life of a tree is the fruit of the tree, or the means used for cultivating the tree.

(1.) *It does not consist in ordinances, many or few.* These are means in God's hand, of kindling the spiritual life in the soul of man, or means of feeding the flame when kindled; but they are not the flame itself, they are not the life. It may be very necessary for a fruit-tree, in order to its bearing fruit, that its roots should be stirred with the spade, overlaid with the manure, moistened with

the watering-pot; but nothing can be clearer than that the spade, the manure, and the watering-pot are distinct things from the life of the tree. Yet so apt are we (at least in spiritual subjects) to confound means with ends, and to erect the means into an end, that even religious people often find it hard to conceive of a devout life in the absence of an apparatus of ordinances; whereas it is quite clear that such might exist where, for some reason or other, the ordinances could not be had; in which case God, who is independent of ordinances, would no doubt supply their virtue immediately to the soul.

(2.) *The spiritual life does not consist in actions.* The actions are the result, the fruit, but they are not the life of the tree. Yet how frequently, in the popular estimate of the subject, are the two confounded. —*Goulburn.*

(4135.) We need to draw the distinction more broadly between religion and the instruments of religion—its institutions, its doctrinal forms, and its modes of worship. For it cannot be denied that the popular mind scarcely discriminates between the instruments of religion and the thing itself. In husbandry, no man ever says that hoes, and ploughs, and harrows, and harnesses, are very precious for food. The veriest boor knows that these are simply the instruments by which we procure food from the soil. But there are thousands of men that are neither boors nor clowns who look upon churches, and days, and books, and doctrines, and ministers—the things which are the mere tools of spiritual husbandry—as a very part of religion itself. They are not religion. They may be the physical instruments by which you seek to excite and educe a religious life. But religion is the product of the soul. It is a vital mental state. A music-book is not a tune, though it may carry that which represents a tune, and may be essential to the production of music. And ministers, and doctrines, and books, and days, and churches, though they have an important relation to the production of religion, are not religion. Religion is brain-work, and soul-work. It is a living power in the individual man.

—*Beecher.*

2. Not in fluent speech concerning sacred things.

(4136.) To talk about religion, ministers and sermons, missions and missionaries, religious schemes and books, revivalists and revivals, is not religion. Some have been the most fluent talkers about these things who feel them least. Shallow rivers are commonly noisy rivers; and the drum is loud because it is hollow. Fluency and feeling don't always go together. On the contrary, some men are most sparing of speech when their feelings are most deeply engaged. I have been told that there is an awful silence in the ranks before the first gun is fired, and little talking heard during the dreadful progress of the battle, or sound, save the roar of cannon, the cries of wounded, the shouts of attack, the bursts of musketry, and bugles sounding the charge. And I have also heard men say, that when the ship is labouring for her life, and every moment may decide her fate, and whether she shall clear reef or headland hangs in anxious suspense, there is no talking; nothing is heard amid the roaring of the storm but the voice of officers, as they shout their orders—to cut away the mast—let go the sails—or put the helm hard a-port. Deep passions, like deep waters. often run silently; and men in earnest are more given to act than to talk. True, out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh; still, the fuller the heart is, the less fluent sometimes is the speech. There are things too deep for utterance. Strong gratitude, deep love, are not fluent, nor is intense anxiety. The sight of her child wrapped in flames, or tottering on the edge of a precipice, has paralysed its mother; rooted to the ground, she has gazed in speechless horror, unable to raise a shriek, or move a foot to save it.

Besides, owing, perhaps, to constitutional peculiarities, the religion of some has its most perfect emblem in Christ's own words, "Ye are the light of the world." It is a thing seen; not heard, it shines, but it makes no sound; not often found on their lips, but always in their lives. —*Guthrie.*

3. Not in unpractical meditations on spiritual things.

(4137.) We have greater work to do here than merely securing our own salvation. We are members of the world and Church, and we must labour to do good to many. We are trusted with our Master's talents for His service, in our places to do our best to propagate His truth, and grace, and Church, and to bring home souls, and honour His cause, and edify His flock, and further the salvation of as many as we can. All this is to be done on earth, if we will secure the end of all in heaven.

It is then, an error, though it is but few, I think, that are guilty of it, to think that all religion lieth in minding only the life to come, and disregarding all things in this present life; all true Christians must seriously mind both the end and the means or way. If they mind not, believingly, the end, they will never be faithful in the use of means. If they mind not, and use not, diligently, the means, they will never obtain the end. None can use earth well that prefer not heaven, and none come to heaven, at age, that are not prepared by well using earth. Heaven must have the deepest esteem, and habituated love and desire and joy; but earth must have more of our daily thoughts for present practice. A man that travelleth to the most desirable home, hath a habit of desire to it all the way, but his present business is his travel; and horse, and company, and inns, and ways, and weariness, &c., may take up more of his sensible thoughts, and of his talk and action, than his home. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4138.) Any such thought of the things unseen and eternal as shall unfit a man for his daily secular duties, or teach him to despise them, is *wrong* thought, and should be discarded. Religion underlies all things. It is intended to fit a man for *life*—to teach him how to carry himself in his business, his pleasures, and his pains, as much as to aid him when he dies. It was not meant to lift him out of, or beyond, the common work or wants of life *until life is passed.* —*Beecher.*

(4139.) The men who walk in lonely places thinking only of God and the angels, are not the most reliable Christians, are not the bone and sinew of the Church. This has been proved throughout the ages. —*Beecher.*

4. Not in a confident assurance of our personal safety.

(4140.) Some men think of religion as if it were, on the whole, simply a title to heaven. They love

the hymn, "When I can read my title clear." They understand deeds, and titles, and conveyances. Their heavenly title seems to them, in the earlier part of their religious experience, to be disputed. It is as if the devil were some sneaking man seeking to invalidate their title to their property. They go into court, invalidate the claim of their adversary, and establish their own. That is to say, they are awakened, convicted, and converted. And now they say, "I have a title to heaven." It is as if a man had a large estate which he was carrying on in a certain way, and for which there had risen up a claimant, and he went before the tribunals, and there contested his right, and got a verdict in his favour, and then returned home, and lived on the estate as before, without repairing the fences, without better tilling it, without building new mansions upon it, but allowing it to remain the same old thistle-grown estate that it was before; the only change being that his title to it is confirmed, so that he can say, "I own it." There are a great many men to whom religion seems to be simply the authentication of their title to heaven. When they think they have obtained it, they say to themselves, "Now, whatever may befall the world,"—while they have a heritage, perhaps of brimstone and fire,—"I am called, elected, sealed, and adopted. I am going to heaven!" But their life remains the same as before. They are no better, no more honourable, no more truthful, no more spiritual, no more devout, no more holy. —*Beecher.*

5. Not in a mere prudential morality.

(4141.) Religion in most countries—more or less in every country—is no longer what it was, and should be,—a thousand-voiced psalm from the heart of man to his invisible Father, the fountain of all goodness, beauty, truth, and revealed in every revelation of these; but for the most part a wise, prudential feeling, grounded on mere calculation; a matter, as all others now are, of expediency and utility; whereby some smaller quantum of earthly enjoyment may be exchanged for a far larger quantum of celestial enjoyment. Thus religion, too, is profit, a working for wages; not reverence, but vulgar hope or fear. Many, we know—very many, we hope—are still religious in a far different sense; were it not so, our case were too desperate: but to witness that such is the temper of the times, we take any calm observant man, who agrees or disagrees in our feeling on the matter, and ask him whether our view of it is not in general well founded. —*Carlyle.*

6. Not merely in the performance of acts of benevolence.

(4142.) To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep one's garments unspotted from the world, under the influence of the holiest motives and with a view to the highest ends, though here called pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, is not the sum total of true religion. These are but samples of the stock—the small segments of a large circle. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, a part, or parts, is put for the whole; and these two are selected for this, among other reasons, that they are characteristic and most important; not secondary, but primary; not accidental, but essential features of all true religion. To make this plainer, it is as if I described a living man by saying, he breathes. But he does many things else. He sees and hears; he walks and talks; he thirsts and hungers—and a hundred things besides. Still, unless he breathes, he is not alive, but dead; and dead is the religion that does not aim at these two things, personal purity and active charity; in other words, doing good and being good. —*Guthrie.*

7. But in a right government of the soul.

(4143.) The religion of heaven, being full of holy love and joy, consists very much in affection: and therefore, undoubtedly, true religion consists very much in affection. The way to learn the true nature of anything, is to go where that thing is to be found in its purity and perfection. If we would know the true nature of gold we must view it, not in the ore, but when it is refined. If we would learn what true religion is, we must go where there is true religion, and nothing but true religion, and in its highest perfection, without any defect or mixture. —*Jonathan Edwards*, 1703–1758.

(4144.) Some men think that religion is a mere ecstatic experience, like a tune rarely played upon some faculty; living only while it is being performed, and then dying in silence. And, indeed, many men carry their religion as a church carries its bell—high up in a belfry, to ring out on sacred days, to strike for funerals, or to chime for weddings. All the rest of the time it hangs above reach—voiceless, silent, dead. But religion is not the speciality of any one feeling, but the mood and harmony of the whole of them. It is the whole soul marching heavenward to the music of joy and love, with well-ranked faculties, every one of them beating time and keeping tune.

The religious life is thoughtful, but thought is not alone its nature. It is full of affection, but it has more than mere feeling; it abounds in grand moral impulses. Effervescent experiences are not its characteristic. It is the soul of a man made wondrously rich, moving to the touch of Divine influence, in every way to which so facile and elaborate a creature as man can move. There is no end to its combinations. It shapes itself beyond all enumeration of shapes. It thinks in vast and fathomless streams. It wills with all attitudes of authority and decision. It feels with all moods and variations of social affection. It rises by the wings of faith, into the invisible, and fashions for itself a life there, glowing with every imaginable ecstasy. And neither one of these is religion more than another. It is the whole soul's life that is religion. When the sun rose on Memnon, it was fabled to have uttered melodious noises; but what were the rude twangings of that huge grotesque statue, compared with the soul's response when God rises upon it, and every part, like a vibrating chord, sounds forth, to His touch, its joy and worship? —*Beecher.*

(4145.) There are a great many persons who think, "I must take care of my religion." They have got something that they call religion which they conceive needs to be guarded. Just if I should say, "I must take care of my health," and should yet neglect my body, so that my nerves were out of order, and my heart was out of right beat, thinking that I had something distinct from the body, which was health; whereas health means a body acting right in every one of its parts! And religion is to the soul what health is to the body—it is the

right ordering of all the faculties. Many persons think it is confined to certain faculties, which must be set buzzing at particular times. They treat it very much as a boy would a caged bird. They keep their religion at home all the week, and on Sunday they go and slip it into the cage, and let it sing; but its voice is hushed the moment they take it out. —*Beecher.*

8. In doing secular work from sacred motives.

(4146.) To be conversant in holy duties is indeed more sweet to a man's self, and is a heaven upon earth; but to be conversant in our calling is more profitable to others—to the Church, the commonwealth, or the family—and so may glorify God more (Phil. i. 24). "More fruit" is brought forth when both are joined and wisely subordinated, so as the one is not a hindrance to the other. Though the child, out of love to his mother and the sweetness he has in her company, could find it in his heart to stay all day at home to look on her, yet it pleases her more for him to go to school all day, and at night to come home and be with her, and play with her; and she then kisses him and makes much of him. —*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(4147.) It is a grand mistake in the world to think that you can only be religious when engaged in religious work. That is not true. You are religious when you are building, or ploughing, or sowing, or reaping. If anything were to go wrong, or any temptation urged to do wrong, you would fall back upon the grand governing motive, "Serve the Lord Christ:" but for the time you are engaged wholly in the work; and it is not irreligious to do it with all your might, when the motive for which you do it, and the end to which you do it, is a Divine one. It is not true that doing religious work is necessarily being religious. A man may spend twelve hours every day in building a church, and may be an absolute heathen or atheist. Another man may spend sixteen hours a day in building a warehouse, and may be doing a most holy and religious work. It is not the work that makes the workman holy, but it is the workman's heart that consecrates the toil, and makes all he does to be serving the Lord Christ. —*Cumming.*

9. In a faithful discharge of our duties toward both God and man.

(4148.) As the boat cannot move rightly when the oars only on one side are plied; or as the fowl, if she use only one wing, cannot fly up: so religion consisteth of duties to be performed, some to God and some to man—some for the first table of the law, some for the second; otherwise that religion will never profit that hath one hand wrapped up that should be towards man in all offices of charity, though the other be used towards God in all offices of piety. —*Gregory the Great*, 545–604.

(4149.) Herein is religion best seen, in an equal and uniform practice of every part of our duty; not only in serving God devoutly, but in demeaning ourselves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably towards all men, not only in restraining ourselves from the outward act of sin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in subduing our lusts, and governing our passions, and bridling our tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life must not only guard himself against the chief and common diseases which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them, but must likewise be careful to preserve himself from those that are esteemed less dangerous, but yet sometimes do prove mortal; he must not only endeavour to secure his head and heart from being wounded, but must have a tender care of every part, there being hardly any disease or wound so slight but that some have died of it. In like manner the care of our souls consists in a universal regard to our duty, and that we be defective in no part of it; though we ought to have a more especial regard to those duties which are more considerable, and wherein religion doth mainly consist, as piety towards God, temperance and chastity in regard of ourselves, charity towards the poor, truth and justice, goodness and kindness towards all men; but then no other grace and virtue, though of an inferior rank, ought to be neglected by us. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

10. In likeness to God.

(4150.) "Be ye followers of God as dear children." The abstract of religion is to imitate Him whom thou dost worship. Such an one hath done me insufferable wrong, how can I forgive him? God would. Another is gotten into my debt, and abuseth my patience, how can I forbear him? God would. Be thou a follower of God in grace, that thou mayest ascend to His glory. A man is travelling to this city, at least in his own opinion he thinks so, and tells all he meets that he is going to London; yet still he keeps his back upon it, and bends his course the contrary way. So ridiculous a thing is it for men to profess that they are going to heaven when their whole life is directly forwarding themselves to hell. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4151.) The *first* act of religion is to know what is true of God, the *second* act is to express it in our lives. —*Whichcote*, 1610–1683.

(4152.) The best way to find out what is religion in us, is to inquire what is true concerning God: for religion in us is our resemblance of God, who is ever best pleased with those things in His creatures which are most eminent in Himself. —*Whichcote*, 1610–1683.

(4153.) To be godly is to be godlike. The full accord of all the soul with His character, in whom, as their native home, dwell "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely," and the full conformity of the will to His sovereign will who is the life of our lives—this, and nothing shallower, nothing narrower, is religion in its perfection, and the measure in which we have attained to this harmony with God is the measure in which we are Christians. As two stringed instruments may be so tuned to one keynote that if you strike the one, a faint ethereal echo is heard from the other, which blends undistinguishably with its parent sound; so drawing near to God, and brought into unison with His mind and will, our responsive spirits vibrate in accord with His, and give forth tones, low and thin indeed, but still repeating the mighty music of heaven. —*Maclaren.*

(4154.) By religion I mean *perfected manhood*,—the quickening of the soul by the influence of the Divine Spirit. —*Beecher.*

11. In communion with God.

(4155.) There is another kind of virtue that may find employment for those retired hours in which we are altogether left to ourselves and destitute of company and conversation; I mean that intercourse and communication which every reasonable creature ought to maintain with the great Author of his being. The man who lives under an habitual sense of the Divine presence keeps up a perpetual cheerfulness of temper, and enjoys every moment the satisfaction of thinking himself in company with his dearest and best of friends. The time never lies heavy upon him: it is impossible for him to be alone. His thoughts and passions are the most busied at such hours when those of other men are the most inactive. He no sooner steps out of the world but his heart burns with devotion, swells with hope, and triumphs in the consciousness of that presence which everywhere surrounds him; or, on the contrary, pours out its fears, its sorrows, its apprehensions to the great Supporter of its existence. —*Addison*, 1672–1719.

III. *ITS REASONABLENESS.*

(4156.) Certainly that which is necessary should be preferred before that which is superfluous. A man would take care to get meat rather than sauce, and would prefer his business before his recreation. It is not necessary that we should be great and rich in the world; within a little while it will not be a pin to choose what part we have acted here. But it is necessary we should be gracious, holy, and acquainted with God in Christ: that is our business.

Again, that which is eternal should be preferred before that which is temporal. You count him a fool who is very exact and careful to get his room in an inn furnished, when he neglects his house where his constant abode is. In the other world—there is our home! and if all our care should be here for the present estate where we tarry but for a night, and neglect eternity, our everlasting happiness, that were a very great folly.

That which is spiritual, which concerns our soul, should be preferred before that which is carnal and corporeal, and only concerns the body: for the better part should have the most care. As, for instance, a man that is wounded, and cut through his clothes and skin and all, will sooner look to have the wound closed up in his body, than the rent made up in his garment. So the distempers of the inward man should be first cured before we look after the outward man, which is as it were the garment and clothing, for these outward things shall be added. Here is your work—to please God, not to satisfy the flesh. This is that which concerns us not only for a little while, but for ever, and concerns the inward man. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4157.) It may be made out to be reasonable to embrace and voluntarily to submit to present and grievous sufferings, in hopes of future happiness and reward; concerning which we have not, nor perhaps are capable of having, the same certainty and assurance, which we have of the evils and sufferings of this present life.

Now, granting that we have not the same certainty concerning our future happiness, that we have of our present sufferings which we feel, or see just ready to come upon us; yet prudence making it necessary for men to run this hazard, does justify the reasonableness of it. This I take to be a known and ruled case in the common affairs of life, and in matters of temporal concernment; and men act upon this principle every day. The husbandman parts with his corn, and casts it into the earth, in confidence that it will spring up again, and at the time of harvest bring him in a considerable return and advantage. He parts with a certainty in hope only of a great future benefit. And though he have no demonstration for the infallible success of his labour and hazard, yet he acts very reasonably; because if he does not take this course, he runs a greater and more certain hazard of perishing by famine at last, when his present stock is spent. The case of the merchant is the same, who parts with a present estate in hopes of a future improvement, which yet is not so certain as what he parts withal.

And if this be reasonable in these cases, then the hazard which men run with greater assurance than either the husbandman or the merchant have, is much more reasonable. When we part with this life in hopes of one infinitely better, that is in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life; and when we submit to present sufferings to avoid an eternity of misery, which is much more to be dreaded than temporal want, this is reasonable; because here is a much greater advantage in view, and a more pressing necessity in the case,—nothing being so desirable to one that must live for ever, as to be happy for ever; and nothing to be avoided by him with so much care as everlasting misery and ruin. And for our security of obtaining the one and escaping the other we have the promise of God who cannot lie; which is all the certainty and security that things future and invisible are capable of. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4158.) He that will allow exquisite and endless happiness to be but the possible consequence of a good life here, and the contrary state the possible reward of a bad one, must own himself to judge very much amiss if he does not conclude that a virtuous life, with the certain expectation of everlasting bliss which may come, is to be preferred to a vicious one, with the fear of that dreadful state of misery which it is very possible may overtake the guilty, or at best the terrible uncertain hope of annihilation. This is evidently so, though the virtuous life here had nothing but pain, and the vicious, continual pleasure; which yet is for the most part quite otherwise, and wicked men have not much the odds to brag of, even in their present possession; nay, all things rightly considered, have, I think, the worst part here. But when infinite happiness is put in one scale against infinite misery in the other,—if the worst that comes to the pious man, if he mistakes, be the best that the wicked attain to, if he be in the right,—who can without madness run the venture? Who in his wits would choose to come within a possibility of infinite misery, which if he miss there is yet nothing to be got by that hazard? Whereas, on the other side, the sober man ventures nothing against infinite happiness to be got, if his expectation comes to pass. If the good man be in the right, he is eternally happy; if he mistakes, he is not miserable; he feels nothing. On the other side, if the wicked be in the right, he is not happy; if he mistakes, he is infinitely miserable. Must it not be a most

wrong judgment that does not presently see to which side in this case the preference is to be given? —*Locke*, 1632–1704.

IV. *ITS VALUE.*

1. Cannot well be overstated.

(4159.) Religion is like the firmament; the more it is examined the greater the number of stars will be discovered; like the sea, the more it is observed the more it appears to be immense; like fine gold, the more it is tried in the furnace the greater will be its lustre. —*Rays of Light.*

2. Is manifest in the dignity it gives to our life.

(4160.) It is a peculiar advantage of piety that it furnisheth employment fit for us, worthy of us, hugely grateful, and highly beneficial to us. Man is a very busy and active creature, which cannot live and do nothing, whose thoughts are in restless motion, whose desires are ever stretching at somewhat, who perpetually will be working either good or evil to himself, wherefore greatly profitable must that thing be which determineth him to act well, to spend his care and pain on that which is truly advantageous to him; and that is religion only. It alone fasteneth our thoughts, affections, and endeavours upon occupations worthy the dignity of our nature, suiting the excellency of our natural capacities and endowments, tending to the perfection and advancement of our reason, to the enriching and ennobling of our souls. Secluding that, we have nothing in the world to study, to affect, to pursue, not very mean and below us, not very base, and misbecoming us, as men of reason and judgment. What have we to do but to eat and drink like horses or like swine; but to sport and play like children or apes; but to bicker and scuffle about trifles and impertinences like idiots? What but to scrape or scramble for useless pelf, to hunt after empty shows and shadows of honour, or the vain fancies and dreams of men? What, but to wallow or bask in sordid pleasures, the which soon degenerate into remorse and bitterness? To which sort of employments were a man confined, what a pitiful thing would he be, and how inconsiderable were his life! Were a man designed only, like a fly, to buzz about here for a time, sucking in the air and licking the dew, then soon to vanish back into nothing, or to be transformed into worms, how sorry and despicable a thing were he! And such without religion we should be. But it supplieth us with business of a most worthy nature and lofty importance; it setteth us upon doing things great and noble as can be; it engageth us to free our minds from all fond conceits, and cleanse our hearts from all corrupt affections, to curb our brutish appetites, to tame our wild passions, to correct our perverse inclinations, to conform the dispositions of our souls and the actions of life to the eternal laws of righteousness and goodness; it putteth us, upon the imitation of God, upon obtaining a friendship and maintaining a correspondence with the High and Holy One, upon fitting our minds for conversation and society with the wisest and purest spirits above, upon providing for an immortal state, upon the acquisition of joy and glory everlasting. It employeth us in the divinest actions, promoting virtue, performing beneficence, serving the public, and doing good to all; the being exercised in which things doth indeed render a man highly considerable, and his life excellently valuable. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

3. Is manifest in its influence on individual happiness.

(4161.) There are no principles but those of religion to be depended upon in cases of real distress; and these are able to bear us up under all the changes and chances to which our life is subject. —*Sterne*, 1713–1768.

(4162.) Believe me, I speak it deliberately and with full conviction: I have enjoyed many of the comforts of life, none of which I wish to esteem lightly: often have I been charmed with the beauties of nature, and refreshed with her bountiful gifts. I have spent many an hour in sweet meditation, and in reading the most valuable productions of the wisest men. I have often been delighted with the conversation of ingenious, sensible, and exalted characters: my eyes have been powerfully attracted by the finest productions of human art, and my ears by enchanting melodies. I have found pleasure when calling into activity the powers of my own mind; when residing in my own native land or travelling through foreign parts; when surrounded by large and splendid companies—still more when moving in the small endearing circle of my own family; yet, to speak the truth before God, who is my Judge, I must confess I know not any joy that is so dear to me, that so fully satisfies the inmost desires of my mind, that so enlivens, refines, and elevates my whole nature, as that which I derive from religion, from faith in God; as one who not only is the parent of men, but has condescended as a brother, to clothe Himself with our nature. Nothing affords me greater delight than a solid hope that I partake of His favours, and rely on His never-failing support and protection . . . . He who has been so often my hope, my refuge, my confidence, when I stood upon the brink of an abyss where I could not move one step forward; He who, in answer to my prayer, has helped me when every prospect of help vanished; that God who has safely conducted me, not merely through flowery paths, but likewise across precipices and burning sands;—may this God be thy God, thy comfort, as He has been mine!

—*Lavater*, 1741–1801.

(4163.) On a Sunday afternoon, a working man—a fine, tall fellow, with honest, manly face, and in an easy manner—thus addressed a crowd of hearers, in Regent's Park, London:—

"There is," he said, "nothing like religion for making you truly happy. The other day I was passing by an infidel place, and must needs go in; so when I got in, I heard a man giving an account of a visit which he had paid to one of their number who had just died; and he said that he could assure them, on the word of a gentleman, that he had died very happy. Well, I thought to myself, 'That's very strange;' so when he sat down, I rose and said, 'May I be permitted to speak a word?'

"'By all means,' they answered.

"So I said to them, 'The gentleman who has just sat down has told you that one of your friends, an infidel, who professed to believe that dying is either going nowhere, or else going no one knows where, died very happy. Now, that's the very first infidel I ever heard of who died very happy; but, as your friend declares it on the word of a gentleman, of course it must be so. I am obliged to admit that one infidel has died "very happy."

But then, if he died very happy, I am sure he lived very miserable. For, listen; I've got a dear wife at home; she is the light of my dwelling. When I get home from my work, there she always is, with smiling face, to give me a cup of tea and a warm welcome. If I were going to die, and leave her for ever, to go nowhere, or no one knows where, I couldn't be happy at that moment. I have four dear little children, whose little, bright faces are always looking out for me when I am coming home, and whose pretty prattle and merry laugh I love to hear. If I were going to die, and to look on those dear little faces no more, and felt that I was going nowhere, or no one knows where, I could not be very happy at that moment. If I had lived a cat-and-dog life with my wife, and wished to get rid of her on any terms; if my children had been my curse and torment, and I wished by any means to see the last of them; then, perhaps, I could be happy in the thought of dying, and going nowhere or anywhere; but this would only be, because I had lived so miserably. And so I say that the person whose death has been described, and who died so happy, must have lived very miserable; for if he had lived happy, he could only have been miserable at the thought of dying, and leaving all that made him happy behind.

"'But, my friends, real religion makes us happy while we live, and happy when we die. It is religion that has given me such a happy home; it is that which makes my wife so good a wife, and my children such obedient children, and myself such a happy man; and when I come to die, then, through faith in my blessed Saviour who died to redeem me, I know where I shall go—to my Father's house in heaven. There I shall see my Saviour whom I loved, and have a happy meeting again with those I left behind. I can speak well, then, of real religion; I can warmly recommend it to you. Without delay choose this good part. Give your hearts to the Saviour, and He will make you safe and happy for ever.'"

4. Is manifest in its influence on the national welfare.

(4164.) It is a most important sentiment, and ought to be kept constantly before the public mind, that religion is the most direct and powerful cause of national comfort, prosperity, and security, and that in its absence all their other causes must be limited and transient in their effects. If religion were a mere abstraction of devotion, confined to the closet and the sanctuary, and restricted in its influence to the imagination and the taste, but not having any necessary control over the conscience, the heart, and the life, and not intended to regulate the intercourse of society; if it consisted merely in attendance of the rites and forms of the Church, and began and ended upon the threshold of the house of God, then it would be difficult to point out what connection such a religion had with the welfare of a country. It would, in that case, resemble the ivy, which, though it add a picturesque effect to a venerable fabric, imparts neither stability to its walls, nor convenience to its apartments. But if religion be indeed a principle of the heart, an element of the character, the habit of thinking, feeling, and acting aright in all our social relations, the basis of every virtue, and the main prop of every excellence, if it be indeed the fear of the Lord by which men depart from evil, if it be faith working by love, if it be such a belief in the gospel of Christ as leads to a conformity to His example, religion being such as this must secure the welfare of any country. There is not one single influence, whether of law, of science, of art, of learning, tending to the well-being of society, which true religion does not guard and strengthen. —*James.*

(4165.) Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labour to subvert those pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

—*Washington: Farewell address to the people of the United States.*

(4166.) Human society reposes on religion. Civilisation without it would be like the lights that play in the northern sky—a momentary flash on the face of darkness ere it again settled into eternal night. Wit and wisdom, sublime poetry and lofty philosophy, cannot save a nation, else ancient Greece had never perished. Valour, law, ambition, cannot preserve a people, else Rome had still been mistress of the world. The nation that loses faith in God and man loses not only its most precious jewel, but its most unifying and conserving force; has before it a

"Stygian cave forlorn
Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night raven sings."—*A. M. Fairbairn.*

V. *ITS DIFFICULTIES.*

I. Are often exaggerated.

(4167.) How common it is for men first to throw dirt in the face of religion, and then persuade themselves it is its natural complexion! They represent it to themselves in a shape least pleasing to them, and then bring that as a plea why they give it no better entertainment. —*Stillingfleet*, 1633-1699.

2. Yet they are not to be concealed.

(4168.) It is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest day-drudge kindles into a hero. They wrong man greatly who say he is to be seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death, are the *allurements* that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations. Not happiness, but something higher: one sees this even in the frivolous classes, with their

"point of honour" and the like. Not by flattering our appetites; no: by awakening the heroic that slumbers in every heart, can any religion gain followers. —*Carlyle.*

3. Neither are they to be made unduly prominent.

(4169.) It is wrong to exhibit chiefly, as we are in danger of doing, the negative side of religion, its refusals, its limitations, its pains, its healing processes. Suppose that in attempting to set forth the delights of learning, one should represent the dog-eared spelling-book, a boy stewing in stupefactions, and all the unwelcome tasks and perplexities which are concomitant to an education. These things are no part of the representation of the joy of literature, though it is through them that one must come to it if he experiences it. Suppose that in descanting upon the joys of health, one should set forth all the stages through which he has gone from sickness up to health, describing the sickroom, the disgustful potions, the nursing, the ten thousand things that weary and harass the convalescent? These are not concomitants of health, though they may be necessary to the process of procuring it. Now there are many things in religion that stand connected with the process of education and of healing, which make it necessary for us to bear the cross, to deny ourselves, to suffer more or less pain; but these things belong to the negative side, and it is wrong to put that side in such prominence that men of the world shall take their idea of religion from these instrumental processes. There is also a positive side to religion. There is joy connected with it; joy in God; joy in trust and hope; joy in conscience; joy in love; joy in the Providence which overrules and watches all men's interests; joy in redemption; joy in the Holy Spirit; joy in the anticipation of heaven; joy on every side. These belong to every real Christian in a greater or less measure; and it is the side of religion to which they belong that ought to be exhibited. You do not think it needful to bring all the dross that is in the gold from California to exhibit it. You think it is enough to bring the gold and exhibit that. And it is not needful that you should exhibit all the dross of experience, and make it equal to the real experience of Christian life. The point where the soul catches the light of heaven; the point where the Holy Ghost, resting on the affections, kindles them into responsiveness to God—that is the point where the world should begin to see religion.

—*Beecher.*

4. They are not exceptional.

(4170.) Is religion difficult? and what is not so, that is good for anything? Is not the law a difficult and crabbed study? Does it not require great labour and perpetual drudging to excel in any kind of knowledge, to be master of any art or profession? In a word, is there anything in the world worthy the having that is to be gotten without pains? And is eternal life and glory the only slight and inconsiderable thing that is not worth our care and industry? —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

5. They are transient.

(4171.) An heifer that is not used to the yoke struggles; the yoke pincheth the neck, but after a while she carries it more gently. A new suit, though never so well fitted to a man's body, is not so easy the first day as after it is worn awhile. Two millstones, after they be made fit, do not grind so well at the first as afterwards. As we see it is with a man when he goes to bathe himself in the midst of summer, there is a trembling of his body when he first puts into the water, but after he hath drenched himself all over he is not sensible of any cold at all. So the way of religion is irksome at the first, but after, it gives great comfort and contentment; it is called a yoke, *grave cum tollis, &c.* (grievous when a man takes it up, but, after it is borne awhile, both easy and light). It is a straight way, yet try it; put into it, however: do but patiently bear the difficulty of the entrance, and then thy feet shall not be straitened; thou shalt find more and more enlargement, each day will bring more comfort than the other.

—*Shute*, 1643.

6. How they are to be overcome.

(4172.) "Drink deep, or taste not," is a direction fully as applicable to religion, if we would find it a source of pleasure, as it is to knowledge. A little religion is, it must be confessed, apt to make men gloomy, as a little knowledge is to render them vain: hence the unjust imputation often brought upon religion by those whose degree of religion is just sufficient, by condemning their course of conduct, to render them uneasy; enough merely to impair the sweetness of the pleasures of sin, and not enough to compensate for the relinquishment of them by its own peculiar comforts. Thus then men bring up, as it were, an ill report of that land of promise, which, in truth, abounds with whatever, in our journey through life, can best refresh and strengthen us.

—*Wilberforce*, 1759–1833.

(4173.) God's commands "are not grievous" to those in whose hearts His love is shed abroad. Their actions correspond with inward principles and dispositions; these render them pleasant and delightful. The religion of Jesus will always be a yoke; but His people find it to be an easy one, like the yoke of marriage to that happy pair who daily bless God for the bondage. It is a burden, but always light, because of His grace and love: the burden of a pair of wings to a bird, which gives buoyancy, ascension, and the expanse of the skies.

—*Jay*, 1769–1853.

VI. *ITS PLEASANTNESS.*

(4174.) Religion is not the prophet's roll, sweet as honey when it was in his mouth, but as bitter as gall in his belly. Religion is no sullen Stoicism, no sour Pharisaism: it does not consist in a few melancholy passions, in some dejected looks or depressions of mind; but it consists in freedom, love, peace, life, and power; the more it comes to be digested into our lives, the more sweet and lovely we shall find it to be. Those spots and wrinkles which corrupted minds think they see in the face of religion, are indeed nowhere else but in their own deformed and misshapen apprehensions. It is no wonder when a defiled fancy comes to be the glass if you have an unlovely reflection. —*John Smith*, 1618–1652.

(4175.) Outward things and forms, like glow-worms, may be glistening, but they are not warming; it is the power of religion, like the sun, that brings refreshing light and enlivening heat along with it. "The wicked is snared in his wickedness, but the righteous sing and rejoice." —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4176.) Who are they that say that religion is gloomy? Infidels, profane men. But why should I listen to their testimony about religion? I am not in the habit of listening to the testimony of blind men about the beauties of colour; I am not in the habit of listening to the testimony of deaf men upon the harmonies of sound and the variations of melody; and if I do not listen to blind men about colour, or to deaf men about sounds, why should I listen to infidel men about religion? They never tested it; they never experimented the matter.

—*Beaumont.*

VII. *HOW THE WORLD JUDGES OF IT.*

(4177.) While you are talking about distributing Bibles, really, in men's esteem, you are Bibles yourselves, walking through the streets and in places of business. Do not you know that hundreds of men judge of the truth or falsity of religion by what you are and what you do? Do not you know that men are wont to say, "Oh, the preacher drones and drones about virtue, but just see how his Church lives. As I understand it, virtues are things that are to be looked for in the life. The doctrine that a man preaches is to be judged of by what his people are?" Do not men often make such remarks as this: "Do you go and tell your minister that when he makes A, B, and C, honest men, I will attend to his message"? Do not men say, "Ah! I understand what your religion is; for I have had dealings with one of your members"? You understand what his failings are in the hour of temptation; for there is a great want of charitableness toward bad Christian men, or imperfect Christian men—if those two words may go together. But is it not by living Christians, after all, that the world judges of the Bible and its doctrines?

Give me the men, and I will write a commentary on the Bible that will not need any explanation—for most commentaries are more troublesome than the Bible which they are designed to explain. I will put them, not in the sanctuary on the Sabbath, but at home, in the street, in their neighbourhood, in all the intricacies of business, everywhere; and no matter where they may be, they shall be a savour of Christ, sweet as the odour of blossoms. They shall be garden-men that have some flowers for every month, and that are always fragrant and redolent of blossom and fruit. Give me a hundred such men, and I will defy the infidel world. I will take them and bind them into a living volume, and with them I will make the world believe. It only takes about one man in a hundred years to make the world believe. After a long age of religious corruption, and hollow-heartedness, and outside observance, and sprawling before God, and filling the empty air with empty words, and neglecting the weightier matters of the law, there comes a man like Luther—when all the corruptions of the Church are forgotten, and men, looking on him say, "There is truth in religion, after all." One Luther is enough to qualify a hundred years' growth of infidels and hypocrites. Now give me a hundred men—not men that are glowing while they sing and heavenly while they pray, though I would have them so; but men that are, morning and noon and night, born of God, and that so carry the savour of Christ that men coming into their presence say, "There is a Christian here," as men passing a vintage say, "There are grapes here." Give me a hundred such men, and I will make the world believe. I do not ask to be shown the grape-vine in the woods in June before I will believe it is there. I know that there are grapes near when the air is full of their odour; and the question under such circumstances always is, "Where is the vine?" and never, "What is it that I smell?" You are to be a savour of love, and peace, and gentleness, and gratitude, and thanksgiving, so that wherever you go, the essence of the truth that is in you shall go out to men.

—*Beecher.*

VIII. *ITS RELATION TO OUR DAILY LIFE.*

1. It is to pervade and glorify our whole life.

(4178.) If you would speak with a tradesman, you may meet him in his shop; the farmer's usual walk is in the fields; he that has business with the merchant expects him in his counting-house or amongst his goods: and he that looks for the Christian shall not fail to find him with his God. Whether he be alone or in company, abroad or in his family, buying or selling, feeding himself or visiting others, he does all as in God's presence, and in all aims at His praise. As the sap of a tree rises up from the root, not only to the body, but also to the branches and smallest twigs; so grace in a saint springs up from his heart, and flows out, not only in his spiritual and higher, but also in his civil and lower actions. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4179.) We are not to conceive so of religion, as having to shun the familiar ways of men, as like some flowers flourishing best in the shade, or as being, at least in its finer and more ethereal parts, like a corpse long dead that crumbles into dust when exposed to air; but we are to think of her as the mistress and mother of all things natural and fair and wholesome; as the friend and benefactor of every human faculty and every worldly work; as able to descend to the lowest state and cheer the saddest; as the sun of the soul, first gilding the mountain-heights of reason and conscience, but "shining more and more" until the whole surface of our life reflects its light, and the most humble and hidden places receive and rejoice in its enlivening rays. —*Morris.*

(4180.) Religion is not a thing which it is possible to put off and put on like a Sunday dress. There are certain organs of your body to which you can allow repose, and if they are out of order you may afford to do without them for a season. But there are other organs which do not cease to move and work from the first moment to the last moment of your existence. If these are diseased, impaired, or weary, they must work on, all out of order as they are, or you die. You cannot give a week's, a day's, a moment's rest to your heart or your lungs. The same thing may be said of your religion. It should be the very essence of your whole life,—the spring of all your emotions,—the ceaseless source of all your conduct; if it be not this, you have most certainly been confounding something else with it. You cannot take up and put down, take off and put on, your religion. If you think you are doing so, believe me that as yet it is not a religion, but a web of delusions. —*Reynolds.*

(4181.) There are a good many pious people who are as careful of their religion as of their best service of china, only using it on holy occasions for fear it should get chipped or flawed in working-day wear. —*Douglas Jerrold.*

(4182.) What is religion but a habit? and what is a habit but a state of mind which is always upon us, as a sort of ordinary dress or inseparable garment of the soul. A man cannot really be religious one hour and not religious the next. We might as well say he could be in a state of good health one hour, and in bad health the next. A man who is religious, is religious morning, noon, and night; his religion is a certain character, a mould in which his thoughts, words, and actions are cast, all forming parts of one and the same whole.

—*Newman.*

(4183.) True Christianity is not a nun, to be locked up within cloistered walls; but she is a wife, a mother, the nearest and the dearest in all the walks and vocations of this present life. She is not to be your light only upon Sundays; she is also to be your guide upon week days.

—*Cumming.*

(4184.) Suppose I should urge a man to live an honest life, and he should say, "I am going to set apart from my daily duties an hour in which to be honest." Many persons think of piety in the same way that we might suppose such a man would think of honesty. They regard it as something separated from ordinary life, and to be attended to at intervals. They have an idea that it is something which is lived particularly in the closet. Now it is proper that there should be special hours set apart for devotion; but, after all, a life of piety, like a life of patriotism, or a life of honesty, is connected with, and a part of, common life. —*Beecher.*

(4185.) Men think religion bears the same relation to life that flowers do to trees. The tree must grow through a long period before the blossoming time: so they think religion is to be a blossom just before death, to secure heaven. But the Bible represents religion, not as the latest fruit of life, but as the whole of it—beginning, middle, and end. It is simply *right living.* —*Beecher.*

(4186.) Religion is the Bread of Life. I wish we better appreciated the force of this expression. I remember what bread was to me when I was a boy. I could not wait till I was dressed in the morning, but ran and cut a slice from the loaf—all the way round, too, to keep me until breakfast; and at breakfast, if diligence in eating earned wages, I should have been well paid. And then I could not wait for dinner, but ate again, and then at dinner; and I had to eat again before tea, and at tea; and lucky if I didn't eat again after that. It was bread, bread all the time with me, bread that I lived on and got strength from. Just so religion is the bread of life; but you make it cake—you put it away in your cupboard and never use it but when you have company. You cut it into small pieces and put it on china plates, and pass it daintily round instead of treating it as bread; common, hearty bread, to be used every hour.

—*Beecher.*

(4187.) Religion should not be used as caulking, something to stuff into the cracks and crevices of a man's life; but it should be regarded and used as the very warp and woof of life. —*Beecher.*

2. Yet it is not to engross all our thoughts.

(4188.) "Whatsoever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." But you naturally say, "We shall find next week that we shall be so overwhelmed with the pressure of business, we shall be so busy from early morning to late at night that we can scarcely get time to think about religion." I do not prescribe that when you are making an article of commerce, or summing up your accounts, or prescribing as a physician, or drawing up a case as a solicitor, or pleading at the bar as a barrister, at every moment, and at every step, and continually, you are to feel a sense of God's presence. That cannot be. You are so absorbed, as common sense shows, doing the thing that is given you, that you cannot have the thought of God and religion like a continuous presence. But, nevertheless, you may be doing all to the Lord, and doing it wholly for Him.

For instance, a father goes into a distant land to toil because he cannot get bread for his family at home. He labours in that land: he is busy, perhaps, sowing or ploughing for twelve hours together. He thinks of nothing but of the furrows, the seeds, or the plough, or the harrow, and all the demands of agriculture. But, nevertheless, the reason for his being there, the motive power of his being there, is to find bread for his family. So you may be busy all day in traffic, in commerce, in business, in trade. You may not, from six o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night, have the thoughts of religion, because you are utterly absorbed in the business that is before you. But the reason of your doing that business, when you look back, and the reason why you are engaged in that business, when you look forward, is that you may do God's will in that sphere, place, and province in which His providence has placed you; and while fervent in spirit and diligent in business you are serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or, to take another illustration, a minister of Christ may be anxious to find out the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew word. If you call upon him, he is searching two or three hours in different writers to ascertain the derivation and application of this word. For at least half a dozen hours that minister may have been preparing his sermon, and yet he has been so busy in searching out that word, its derivation, its application, its usages, that he has had no time or spare thought to think of anything but of this one Hebrew or Greek word, and all its applications. Nevertheless, the reason why he makes the search, and his joy when he has concluded the search, arises ultimately from his desire to win souls, and to spread the kingdom of Christ. So with you; you may be in the world, whatever your situation or employment may be in that world, serving Christ, whilst you are utterly absorbed for the hour or two in the business that is before you. And if you were not to attend to that business with all your energy, you would soon lose your business, and the opportunities of doing service to Christ's cause, or good to mankind.

—*Cumming.*

(4189.) To have God and the things of eternity consciously always in mind is impossible. There is no provision, either in nature or grace, for such a state of things. But to have Him in our hearts, as the governing power of our lives, and to carry our love for Him, consciously and unconsciously, as a mother carries the love of her first-born child, is what is our privilege and our duty to do, and our

only safety. The mother thinks of ten thousand things which, for the time, *must* crowd her babe out of her mind; but never does she get free of the influence that her love for him has over her. We must make these natural loves our teachers of how we are to be filled with the love of God.

—*Beecher.*

(4190.) Men who were to treat their social affections as we treat our religious ones would be regarded as fools—and with reason. While we are busied with the pressing affairs of life, we *cannot* feel the glow of religious affection—nor is it expected. If, when the pauses of business come (not when we pause from exhaustion, but in the leisure hours), our soul gladly returns unto its love; or if, when in the hurry of work and trade, a question of *principle* comes up, our thoughts glance quickly Godward, *and we decide as in His presence*, we need not fear that we are in a cold, backslidden state, though we be, indeed, *very* diligent in business. To have the fear of the Lord always before one, it is *not* necessary that one should be always directly thinking of Him, or of spiritual things. This is impossible in those pauses of daily life, where it is our *duty* to concentrate thought upon secular concerns. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" has been perverted to mean that it was unchristian for a man ever to give his whole attention to money-making.

Now the whole attention of a man must be given to study during study hours, or he will never make a scholar; and it must be equally given to business during business hours, or he will never succeed in the proper support of his family or the gospel. When the work and the strain is over, *then* the soul of the Christian will consciously rejoice in the Lord.

What if I, on awaking, were to say—"Now I will love my family with all my heart—nothing shall, this day, interfere with my love for them," and were then to go into a furious fervour about it, embracing and kissing them, and declaring my affection for them. I might *try* to work, with my mind so hotly fixed on them, but I could not do it. I should soon say—"I can't hunt up these texts, I I can't write these sermons; they require my whole attention, and that is not justice to my wife and children; they turn away my thoughts and affections from my family—I will no longer try to work at them." I then impatiently toss books and papers aside, and devoting myself to the declarative form of love for my family, forget all else. How much good shall I do them under such circumstances? The true way to prove my love for them is, to devote myself steadily to some way of supporting them. Then, at the season of relaxation from work, I shall be sure to enjoy them and their love. Just so in spiritual matters; for the family is the best teacher of theology. —*Beecher.*

3. **It is to be exemplified and perfected in daily life.**

(4191.) The Christian must express the power of holiness in his particular calling and worldly employments that therein he is conversant with. Holiness must be writ upon those as well as on his religious duties. He that observes the law of building is as exact in making a kitchen as in making a parlour: so, by the law of Christianity, we must be as exact in our worldly business as in duties of worship. "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. i. 15). We must not leave our religion, as some do their Bibles, at church.

The Christian is not to buy and sell as a mere man, but as a Christian man. Religion is not like that statesman's gown, which, when he went to recreate himself, he would throw off and say, "There lie, Lord Treasurer, awhile."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4192.) Some men's religion is like the electric jar, condensed and charged with electricity. On a Sunday it sparkles in its way, and every one says, "How religious such a one is!" But when we see the same man in the world, we find that his religion is like the same jar discharged, useless, cold.

—*Cumming.*

(4193.) A man is made a Christian that he may Christianise. A candle is lighted just that it may be luminous. We receive just that we may give. The monk, the nun, the anchorite, if lighted at all, which is questionable, goes each into a convent or nunnery, and thus hides his light under a bushel. The Christian, who is lighted, goes forth into the world, and lets his light so shine in daily life, that others seeing his good works may glorify, not him, but his Father who is in heaven. The believer is to be a light, and the light of all the world. And the world shone upon by such light, will cease to be a mere workshop in which man gains his bread, and will rise to the dignity of a porch and a vestibule of heaven, in which he is educated for God and glory.

If we be lights, and if Christians we are so, we are not responsible for the elevation at which we are placed. We are each a light, but God gives the candlestick; in one it may be a very high one, in another it may be a very low one; what we are responsible for is not the place where God in His providence has set us, or the elevation at which God in His wisdom has placed us, but for filling the sphere which we hold with the light we are.

—*Cumming.*

(4194.) We are to employ the world, and put our bodies into it, with the understanding that God has made all secular things as means of grace to us.

I would like to know what use there is in a man's learning navigation from books if he is never allowed to steer a ship. The ship is the place for him to practise the theories he gets in books. What is the use of what a man learns from lectures on organic chemistry and agriculture if he is never allowed to plough a furrow or cultivate a crop? The field is the place for him to practise the knowledge he has acquired in the laboratory. Of what advantage would be the drilling received by the cadet in a military academy if he was never to command a force, was never to lay down a camp, and was never to open a campaign? The campaign is the place for him to put into practice the things he has learned in the rooms of the academy.

God designed the sanctuary, the lecture-room, and the Bible as the places where we are to learn what we are to do and to be, and the world as the place where we are to do it and to be it. You are not to practise patience here—except the patience of sitting still during preaching. The world is the place God has provided in which you are to practise patience, where there are things to vex and try your patience. It is well enough to preach about patience, and pride, and vanity; but here is not the place for you to apply the precepts taught you

concerning these things. You can never practise them till you go out into life; where your vanity is excoriated, your pride is touched, and your patience is taxed. The voice of God says, "Let patience have her perfect work;" but nowhere except in the world, where it is assailed on every hand, can patience have her perfect work. —*Beecher.*

4. The trials and temptations of life may be made helpful to it.

(4195.) We cannot become strong in Christian virtues without being exposed to the temptations and trials of life.

If you want to make a child strong and self-dependent, you push him out into the world to breast its storms; and when he comes back whimpering, and well-nigh discouraged, the father, the mother, the brothers, and the sisters all cry out, "For shame! for shame!" and he is sent forth again to meet the hardships that he dreads. And you ought to treat yourselves, in spiritual things, precisely as you treat your children in worldly things.

Your store, your office, your shop, your family, your neighbourhood, the street—these are not so many things that you must resist for the sake of grace; on the contrary, you must deal with them as the means of grace. I tell you that although there is great blessing in a prayer-meeting, no prayer-meeting on earth is such a means of grace as a man's own store. What do you talk about in prayer-meetings? About the theory of Christian life. The substance of it you must attain in your contact with the world. You come to the prayer-meeting on Friday night, and say, "My mind is obscured. I do not get that peace which I wish;" or something of that sort. It is all general. You go out into the world, and Satan says to you, "Be proud." Your minister says to you, "Be humble." You stand between God and the devil continually. One says, "Be meek;" the other says, "Be haughty." One says, "Forgive;" the other says, "Punish." One says, "Lift up;" the other says, "Sink down." Everywhere, and from morning till night, you have a prepared state of circumstances in which is arising, for evermore, for your adjudication, a question between right and wrong, purity and impurity, holiness and sin. Life itself is God's ordinance, and the world is God's cathedral, and affairs are God's ordained priests, and you are the members of God's great Church; and if you do not grow in grace in secular drill, you will not any way! —*Beecher.*

5. It is not to be divorced from business.

(4196.) The stream of life forks; and religion is apt to run in one channel, and business in another. —*Beecher.*

(4197.) *Religion* is the holiness of right action; and you are religious just in the proportion that you work up every part of your life into the one presiding practice of loving God and loving man. There is no such thing as making religion religion, and business business; there is no such thing as a man's being a holy man in the sanctuary and a cheating man in the store; there is no such thing as a man's being a pure spiritual man in the church, and a tricking politician in the caucus. If you are an impure man in the store, you are an impure man in the sanctuary. If you are without principle in the caucus, you are without principle in the church. When you get an apple that is half rotten, the other half being as good as though the whole were sound, then you can get a Christian that is rotten on one side, who is as good on the other side as if both sides were good. —*Beecher.*

(4198.) The tides come twice a-day in New York harbour, but they only come once in seven days in God's harbour of the sanctuary. They rise on Sunday, but ebb on Monday, and are down and out all the rest of the week. Men write over their store door "Business is business," and over the church door "Religion is religion;" and they say to religion, "Never come in here," and to business, "Never go in there." "Let us have no secular things in the pulpit," they say; "we get enough of them through the week in New York. There all is stringent and biting selfishness, and knives, and probes, and lancets, and hurry, and work, and worry. Here we want repose, and sedatives, and healing balm. All is prose over there; here let us have poetry. We want to sing hymns and to hear about heaven and Calvary; in short, we want the pure gospel, without any worldly intermixture." And so they desire to spend a pious, quiet Sabbath, full of pleasant imaginings and peaceful reflections; but when the day is gone, all is laid aside. They will take by the throat the first debtor whom they meet, and exclaim, "Pay me what thou owest! It is Monday." And when the minister ventures to hint to them something about their duty to their fellowmen, they say, "Oh, you stick to your preaching. You do not know how to collect your own debts, and cannot tell what a man may have to do in his intercourse with the world." God's law is not allowed to go into the week. If the merchant spies it in his store, he throws it over the counter. If the clerk sees it in the bank, he kicks it out at the door. If it is found in the street, the multitude pursue it, pelting it with stones, as if it were a wolf escaped from a menagerie, and shouting, "Back with you! You have got out of Sunday!" There is no religion in all this. It is mere sentimentalism. Religion belongs to every day; to the place of business as much as to the church.

High in an ancient belfry there is a clock, and once a-week the old sexton winds it up; but it has neither dial-plate nor hands. The pendulum swings, and there it goes, ticking, ticking, day in and day out, unnoticed and useless. What the old clock is, in its dark chamber, keeping time to itself, but never showing it, that is the mere sentimentality of religion, high above life, in the region of airy thought; perched up in the top of Sunday, but without dial or pointer to let the week know what o'clock it is, of Time, or of Eternity! —*Beecher.*

6. Is not incompatible with business.

(4199.) There are some who tell us that business and religion are two things that cannot be done together; that men cannot give their mind to the one without taking it from the other. And so, just as the Mohammedan leaves his slippers at the door of the mosque, they leave their religion outside their place of business, and do not take it with them into the office or behind the counter. With many it is simply a matter of periodical recurrence; an intermittent fountain that flows one day in seven, and, as the Lord's day ends, sinks and disappears. Or, perhaps, it is a matter for early morning, before the

business of the day begins; and for the evening, when that business is over; but not for the time of business.

Had Daniel no press of business on his hands? Were the affairs of the vast Persian Empire a small matter? Were the accounts of a hundred and twenty provinces few or simple? Was it an easy task to overlook, and check, and control them, as was Daniel's daily business? and this, too, with men for his associates at the council-board who were bent on hindering and not on helping him, and with the head of every province his jealous, watchful enemy? Yet Daniel, in the midst of all this mass of important and difficult work, found time for daily prayer; and not only at evening and in the morning did he pray to his God, but at midday he got away from his press of work to give thanks to Him and seek the continuance of His help. If, then, Daniel, on whose shoulders the chief weight of the business of an empire rested, could be truly religious, any man can be so too; and business and religion are not incompatible. —*Champneys.*

7. Its function is to sanctify and ennoble business.

(4200.) Piety does not retreat from business, but it seizes business, sanctifies it, and makes it sacred. The gospel of Jesus is not to be a voice crying in the desert, like that of John the Baptist; but if I understand religion, it is to open a shop, it is to freight ships, it is to keep accounts, it is to write up your ledgers, it is to wear an apron till it be as holy as a bishop's sleeve, and to wield a spade as responsibly and devoutly as a monarch sways a sceptre. The true characteristic of religion is to go down into everything, rise up to the highest, till, like the atmosphere, it embraces all in its beneficent and its beautiful folds.

—*Cumming.*

(4201.) The Christian is not to be a worse tradesman because of his religion, but a better; he is not to be a less-skilled mechanic, but he is to be all the more careful in his work. It were a pity indeed if Paul's tents were the worst in the store, and Lydia's purple of the poorest dye.

—*Spurgeon.*

(4202.) It is well known that Havelock's endeavours, when a lieutenant in the 13th regiment, to promote the social and spiritual welfare of the men under his care, brought down upon him showers of ridicule, and that he was jeered at for his "enthusiasm." But it was admitted on all hands that no soldiers were more orderly or steady, or more ready for duty than his. "This," says his biographer, "was singularly exemplified on one occasion. A sudden attack was made on an outpost at night, and Sir Archibald Campbell ordered up some men of another corps to support it. But they had been drinking to excess, and were not prepared. 'Then call out Havelock's saints,' he exclaimed; 'they are always sober, and can be depended on, and Havelock himself is always ready!' The 'saints' got under arms with promptitude, and the enemy were at once repulsed." At a later period, and after he had joined the Baptist denomination, his religious meetings among the men excited both ridicule and enmity among his brother officers. A feeling of opposition to him grew up in his regiment; and when it was reported that one of the "saints" had been found drunk, it was readily made a theme for bitter jest against him. Havelock was ill at the time, but on his recovery he requested an investigation of the case, when it was discovered that there were two men of the same name in different companies, and that the man who was intoxicated neither belonged to his company, nor assembled with his congregation. Havelock was of course gratified and his enemies silenced by this discovery, but still more so by the words of the Colonel, afterwards Sir Robert Sale: "I know nothing about Baptists, but I know I wish the whole regiment were Baptists; for their names are never in the defaulters' roll, and they are never in the lock-up house." Such a testimony was worth winning, nor is it to be wondered at, if such were the results of his religious teaching combined with a strict attention to duty and discipline among his men, that even "worldly men tolerated the saint in their admiration of the soldier."

IX. *IS OF UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION.*

(4203.) Every man is bound to perform the duties which religion requires, and one man as much as another. Many men seem to feel that the obligations of religion are the result of a voluntary covenant, compact, or promise, like a contract for carrying the mail, or for excavating so many miles of a canal. They seem to suppose that there is nothing lying back of a profession of religion to oblige any one to attend to its duties, any more than there is to bind a man to enlist as a soldier, or to enter into a contract for building a bridge. When a profession of religion has been made, they admit it to be binding. They are disposed to hold professors to the most rigid fulfilment of the conditions of that profession; and they resolve that if they themselves ever enter into such a covenant with God, they will be as faithful to that compact as they are to others. Now, Christians do not object to being held to the most faithful performance of the duties of religion, growing out of the voluntary covenant which they have made with God. They believe that God Himself will hold them to it, and that a profession of religion, viewed in this aspect, and in all others, is a most serious matter. But it is not the profession of religion which creates the obligation, for that existed before any such profession was made. The profession of religion only recognises the obligation. To make such a profession is not like making a contract to build a house or to perform the duty of a day-labourer; it pertains to acts similar to the duty which a child owes to a parent, or a man to his country, or which we all owe to the poor and the oppressed. With, or without a covenant, we are bound to the performance of those duties; and though there are advantages in such a voluntary covenant and pledge, as there were in these "times that tried men's souls" in the American revolution, when our fathers pledged to their country "their lives and their fortune," yet the obligation to those duties is not originated by the covenant, but exists whether any such compact has been entered into or not. The worship of God, repentance, faith in the Redeemer, a life of piety, the grateful acknowledgment of mercies,—can any plead exemption from these duties?

—*Barnes*, 1798-1870.

X. *ITS GROWTH IN THE SOUL.*

1. Its feeble beginnings are not to be despised.

(4204.) They lead on to great and glorious attain-

ments. The traveller who has just been journeying amidst the gloom of midnight despises not the little luminous streak above the eastern hills, for he knows that it is the glimmering token of advancing day. The husbandman who has sown the precious grain despises not the downy verdure which first appears just above the clods, for in that he sees the future harvest which is to repay his toil. The mother despises not the helpless babe to which she has given birth, for in that feeble and unconscious child she knows there are the germs of fancy, reason, will, and multiform affections, which shall grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength, and which, by the fruits of their maturity, may bless and astonish the world. So it is in religion; little things advance to great ones. Baxter and Owen, and Howe, and Doddridge were once babes in Christ, and so, indeed, were Paul, and Peter, and John. When the conversion of a sinner takes place, no mind but that which grasps eternity, can foresee the career of usefulness and holiness which a convert may have to run. In every case of real conversion, there will be a progress from a sinner to a penitent; from a penitent to a believer; from a believer to a saint; from a saint to a seraph. He shall "add to his faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." The first dawn of spiritual knowledge in the understanding is the kindling of a holy luminary which shall receive, and reflect, as a satellite, the splendour of the fountain light, infinite ages after the sun is quenched in darkness. The first tasting that the Lord is gracious, is the incipient operation of a capacity for bliss, which shall continue to receive ineffable delight, when all the sources of sensual gratification shall have perished for ever. In the train of even weak grace, if it be real, shall follow all the more mature virtues of Christianity; all that the Father hath prepared for them that love Him; all that the Son hath procured by the agonies of the cross; all the mercies of the covenant of redemption; all the riches of grace; all the exceeding and eternal weight of glory; in short, blessings, infinite and eternal. Let not the commencement of religion, therefore, be treated with neglect.

—*James.*

2. The means by which it is fostered are on no account to be neglected.

(4205.) Were it not strangely absurd and unhandsome to say, I cannot wait on God, because I must speak with a friend; I cannot go to church, although God calleth me thither, because I must haste to market; I cannot stand to pray because I am to receive money, or to make up a bargain; I cannot discharge my duty to God, because a greater obligation than that doth lie upon me? How inconceivable an honour, how invaluable a benefit is it, that the incomprehensibly great and glorious Majesty of heaven doth vouchsafe us the liberty to approach so near unto Him, to converse so freely with Him, to demand and derive from His hand the supply of all our needs and satisfaction of all our reasonable desires! and is it then just or seemly, by such comparisons to disparage His favour, by such pretences to baffle with His goodness?

Put the case: our prince should call for us to speak with him about matters nearly touching his service and our welfare; would it be according unto duty, discretion, or decency, to reply that we are at present busy and have no leisure, and must therefore hold ourselves excused; but that, if he will stay awhile, at another time, when we have less to do we shall be perhaps disposed to wait upon him? The case is propounded by our Lord in that parable wherein God is represented as a great man that had hitherto prepared a feast and invited many guests thereto; but they excused themselves: One said that he had purchased land, and must needs go out to see it; another had bought five yoke of oxen, and must go to prove them; another had married a wife, and therefore could not come. These indeed were affairs considerable as this world hath any; but yet the excuses did not satisfy; for, notwithstanding, the great person was angry, and took the neglect in huge disdain. —*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

REPENTANCE.

I. *ITS NATURE.*

(4206.) Repentance is a true returning unto God; whereby men, forsaking utterly their idolatry and wickedness, do with a lively faith embrace, love, and worship the true, living God only, and give themselves to all manner of good works, which by God's Word they know to be acceptable unto Him. Now there be four parts of repentance (contrition, confession, faith, amendment of life), which, being set together, may be likened to an easy and short ladder, whereby we may climb from the bottomless pit of perdition up into the castle or tower of eternal and endless salvation.

—*Homilies of the English Church.*

(4207.) None know what repentance is but a repentant sinner. All the books in the world cannot inform the heart what sin is or what sorrow is. A sick man knows what a disease is better than all physicians, for he feels it.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(4208.) Repentance is a simple operation of the mind understood by all persons, and in some form practised by all. You cannot find a person who at some time has not exercised repentance. You cannot find a child who needs to be told what is meant by being required to repent when he has done a wrong thing; and in the emotions of a child, when he feels sorry that he has done wrong, and who resolves to make confession of it and to do so no more, you have the elements of all that God requires of man as a condition of salvation.

You have broken the commands of a father. His law was plain, his will was clear. When the deed is performed, you reflect on what you have done. You see that his commands were right; that you have done wrong by breaking his law; and have incurred his just displeasure. He has always treated you kindly; his commands have never been unreasonable; and you cannot justify yourself in what you have done. You see that you have done wrong. By a law of your nature you feel pain or distress that you did the wrong. You resolve that you will go and confess it, and that you will do so no more. This is repentance; and this is the whole of it.

You have a friend. He has a thousand times

and in a thousand ways laid you under obligation. He has helped you in pecuniary distress, shared your losses; attended you in sickness; defended your reputation when attacked. He himself, in turn, suffers. Wicked men blacken and defame his character, and a cloud rolls upon him and overwhelms him. In an evil hour your mind is poisoned, and you forget all that he has done for you, and you join in the prevalent suspicion and error in regard to him, and give increased currency to the slanderous reports. Subsequently you reflect that it was all wrong; that you acted an ungrateful part; that you suffered your mind to be too easily influenced to forget your benefactor, and that you have done him great and lasting injury. You are pained at the heart. You resolve that you will go to him and make confession, and that you will implore forgiveness, and that you will endeavour as far as possible to undo the evil. This is repentance; and this is all. Let these simple elements be transferred to God and to religion, and you have all that is included in repentance.

—*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

(4209.) It is so important that you should rightly understand the nature of repentance that I must tell you of one more fact which seems to illustrate it. It is a part of the history of a good and faithful old servant, who told it to me himself. I will repeat it to you in the shortest and simplest way I can.

Said he: "When I was about sixteen years old, I had one of the kindest and best masters that ever lived. I was his dining-room servant, and attended to all his personal wants. One day, in the hot month of August, my master returned from a ride on the farm, very sick. He called me to help him from his horse, and told me I must put him to bed, and go for the physician. In a few days, my master grew worse, and the family began to be very uneasy about him. I loved my master, and stayed constantly in his room. One morning he turned to me, and said, 'George, I am very sick, I wish you would take that note on the table, and go off to the apothecary's in the village, and bring the medicines the physician has written for.' As I was about going, there were other commissions given me; some from my mistress, some from the young ladies, and some from the servants. In attending to all these, I by some means or other lost the note for the medicine. I was greatly troubled about it, and looked for it a long time. But I was obliged to come back without the medicine. As I was on the way home, I said to myself, 'What shall I tell my master? What excuse shall I give? To tell him that I have lost the note will make him think that I am very careless.' So I determined to say to him that there was no medicine of that kind to be had in the village. When I reached home," said George, "I went into my master's chamber. He turned his eyes toward me, and said in a kind tone, 'Well, George, I am glad you have come; I hope you have brought the medicine.' 'No, sir,' said I, 'the medicine is not to be had in the village. The apothecary said he had none of that kind.' 'I am sorry for it,' said my master, 'the want of that medicine may be the means of laying me in my grave.' That night my master's fever increased. The next morning the physician was sent for again. He gave other medicines. But they did not answer the purpose. It was too late. My master was certainly getting worse. I stood by his bedside," said George, "and watched his pale face, and the big drops of sweat that stood on his brow, and heard his short breathing as he was sinking rapidly into the arms of death. Then I began to see and feel the wickedness of the falsehood I had told him. I shall never forget one scene in my master's dying hour. Once he turned his eyes on me, and said, 'George, be a good boy. Be faithful and affectionate to your mistress, and when I am buried in the earth do not forget me.' My heart felt then as if it would burst with grief. I said to myself, 'I am the cause of my master's death. Had I told the truth, and taken back another note for the medicine, my master might have lived.' I thought of his kindness to me, and of my sin and ingratitude to him. I felt that, if the world were mine, I would give it to take back what I had done. I wanted to fall then on my knees and confess my crime unto him, and beg his forgiveness. But it was too late. He was dead. As I saw his eyes close, my conscience said, 'Your master died for the want of that medicine.' Many years have passed away since that day," said George, "and now I am an old man. But I have never forgotten that day. I never can forget it. I have mourned over it, and will go on to mourn over it. I have ever since hated a lie, and have never wilfully told one. I have tried, in every way, to shun even the appearance of that sin. When I die, I hope I shall meet my master in heaven, that I may there ask his forgiveness for the injury I have done him."

Now this seems to me to be a picture of true repentance. This old man was deeply distressed because he had sinned against a good master. His distress did not arise from the mere fear of punishment, for no one knew that he had told the lie; no one wished to punish him for it. He was grieved because his sin had, probably, been the cause of his master's death. This is just what every sinner feels when he truly repents of his sins.

—*Meade.*

II. *ITS NECESSITY.*

1. To secure us against the judgments of God.

(4210.) There is no other fortification against the judgments of God but repentance. His forces be invisible, invincible; not repelled with sword and target; neither portcullis nor fortress can keep them out; there is nothing in the world that can encounter them but repentance. —*Adams*, 1653.

2. To our restoration to His favour.

(4211.) That man is not fit to be forgiven who is so far from being sorry for his fault that he goes on to offend. He is utterly incapable of mercy who is not sensible that he hath done amiss, and resolved to amend. No prince ever thought a rebellious subject capable of pardon upon lower terms than these. It is in the nature of the thing unfit that an obstinate offender should have any mercy or favour shown to him. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4212.) When wrong has been done among men, the only way to obtain again the favour of those who have been injured, is by repentance. No man who has done evil in any way can be restored to forfeited favour, but by just this process of repentance—by a process involving all the elements of grief, shame, remorse, reformation, confession,

that are demanded in religion. Let us recur to some of the former illustrations. You are a father. A child does wrong. He violates your law, offends you, treats you with disrespect or scorn. He goes abroad and represents your government at home as severe, and gives himself up to unbridled dissipation. Towards that son you cherish still all a father's feelings, but I may appeal to any such unhappy parent to say whether he would admit him to the same degree of confidence and favour as before, without some evidence of repentance.

You have a friend. You thought him sincere, but he betrayed you; and in feeling, and property, in character you have been made to suffer by him. I ask any man whether he can receive such a friend again to his bosom, and press him to his heart, without some evidence of regret at what he has done, and some proof that he will not do it again? You cannot do it. You cannot force your nature to do it. The sea might as well break over the iron-bound shore, or the river flow back, and again climb up the mountain side where it leaped down in cascades, as for you to do it. You will convince yourself, in some way, that he regrets what he has done, and that he will not do it again, or you can never receive him again with the confidence of a friend. Your nature is as firm on this point as the everlasting hills, and is, in this respect, but the counterpart and image of God, who does the same thing.

In like manner it is with those who have committed offences against a community. Of the man who has been guilty of theft, burglary, arson, or forgery, and who has been sentenced and punished for these offences, the community demands evidence that he has repented of the crime, and that he purposes to do so no more, before it will admit him again to its favour. If you go into his cell and find him alone on his knees before God confessing the sin; if you see in him the evidence of regret and sorrow that it was done; if you believe that the reformation is entire and sincere, the community will again receive him to its bosom, and will forgive and forget the past; and he may rise to public confidence, and even to influence and honour. But if none of these things are seen, if he spends the years of his sentence sullen, and hardened, and profane, and without one sigh or tear, he is never forgiven. He may have paid the penalty of the law, but he is not forgiven, and he goes forth to meet the frowns of an indignant community, to be watched with an eagle eye, and to be excluded all his life from the affections and confidence of mankind.

Universally it is true, that where an offence has been committed, and there is evidence of repentance, the offender may be restored to favour, but where there is no regret, shame, the curse of man, and of his Maker, alike rest upon him.

—*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

3. To our reaching heaven.

(4213.) Reader, didst thou never know of any that were in a journey, and coming to some deep, dirty, potchy lane, they thought to avoid it, and broke over the hedge into the field; but when they had rode round and round they could find no way out, but were forced to go out where they got in; and then, notwithstanding their unwillingness, to go through that miry lane, or else not go that journey? Truly so it is in thy journey to heaven; thou art now come to this deep lane of humiliation, through which all must go that will reach that city "whose builder and maker is God." Do not think to avoid it, no, not the least part of it; for this is the narrow way and strait gate that leadeth to life.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

III. *ITS POWER.*

1. It prevails with God.

(4214.) Great is the power of eloquence, but never is it so great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child strayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears.

—*Sterne*, 1713–1786.

(4215.) What man among you can stand against his children's tears? When King Henry II., in the ages gone by, was provoked to take up arms against his ungrateful and rebellious son, he besieged him in one of the French towns, and the son being near to death, desired to see his father, and confess his wrong-doing; but the stern old sire refused to look the rebel in the face. The young man being sorely troubled in his conscience, said to those about him, "I am dying, take me from my bed, and let me lie in sackcloth and ashes, in token of my sorrow for my ingratitude to my father." Thus he died, and when the tidings came to the old man outside the walls, that his boy had died in ashes, repentant for his rebellion, he threw himself upon the earth, like another David, and said, "Would God I had died for him." The thought of his boy's broken heart touched the heart of the father. If ye, being evil, are overcome by your children's tears, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven find in your bemoanings and confessions an argument for the display of His pardoning love through Christ Jesus our Lord? This is the eloquence which God delights in, the broken heart and the contrite spirit.

—*Spurgeon.*

2. It continues to the very end of life.

(4216.) Wretched as must ever be the case of the sinner who is trusting to a death-bed repentance, which too often is no repentance at all; yet, even as he who by one single step outran the avenger of blood, was safe in the City of Refuge; so he who, even in the last struggle of departing life, is truly led to cast himself on the mercy of God in Christ, may take comfort from the thought of the jailer, arrested by infinite grace when on the point of slaying himself, body and soul; and from the recollection of the expiring malefactor, who heard, almost as the last sounds which reached his ears in this world, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." —*Kyle.*

(4217.) With the blood of Christ to wash away the darkest guilt, and the Spirit of God to sanctify the vilest, and strengthen the weakest nature, I despair of none. Too late! It is never too late. Even old age, tottering to the grave beneath the weight of seventy years and a great load of guilt, may retrace its steps, and begin life anew. Hope falls like a sunbeam on the hoary head. I have seen the morning rise cold and gloomy, and the sky grow thicker, and the rain fall faster, as the hours wore on; yet, ere he set in night, the sun, bursting through heavy clouds, has broken out to illumine the landscape and shed a flood of glory on the dying day. —*Guthrie.*

(4218.) If there was no remedy, it you were past redemption, I would no more seek to waken you than I would one who slept to-night and was to be hanged to-morrow. Poor wretch, let him sleep on and take his rest—sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. A boat was once seen sweeping along the rapid that hurries to the Falls of Niagara. To the horror of some that watched it from the shore they saw one aboard, and also asleep. Such a time and place for sleeping! They ran; they shouted; they cried. The sleeper woke; and at one wild, rapid glance took in all his danger. Yet, what won't a man do for his life? To seize the oars and pull the boat's head round to the shore was the work of an instant. With death in the thunders of the cataract, roaring loud and louder, near and nearer in his ear, how he pulled! But unless God had sent down the eagle that sailed in the blue skies overhead to bear him away upon her wings, there was no hope. The water, sweeping onward with resistless power, shot him like an arrow to the brink. It was cruel to waken him. But, as nigh to destruction, near hell as that, you may be saved; plucked from the very edge of ruin —just when you are going over. Jesus can save at the uttermost. He waits now to save; though how much longer He shall wait to hear from your lips the cry, "Save me," I know not. Beware! The patience of God is lasting, but not everlasting.

—*Guthrie.*

3. The folly of "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness."

(4219.) Would any man be so simple as to set his house on fire because he has a great river running by his door, from whence he may have water to quench it; or wound himself, because there is an excellent plaster which has cured several. —*Charnock*, 1620–1680.

(4220.) Satan also emboldeneth the sinner, by telling him how many have repented and sped well, that sinned as bad, or worse than this: he tells him of Noah, and Lot, and David, and Peter, and the thief on the cross, and Paul, a persecutor, yea, and Manasseh, &c.

But consider whether any of those did thus sin, because that others had escaped that sinned before them. And think of the millions that never repented and are condemned, as well as those few that have repented. Is repentance better than sin? why then will you sin? Is sin better than repentance? why then do you purpose to repent? Is it not base ingratitude to offend God willully, because He hath pardoned many offenders, and is ready to forgive the penitent? And should a man of reason willully make work for his own repentance; and do that which he knoweth he shall wish with grief that he had never done? If some have been saved that fell into the sea, or that fell from the top of steeples, or that drunk poison, or that were dangerously wounded, will you therefore cast yourself into the same case, in hope of being saved?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4221.) What would you say yourselves to the man that would not be dissuaded from setting his house on fire, and then would pray and cry importunately to God that He would keep it from being burnt? Or of the man that will not be dissuaded from taking poison, and then when it gripeth him, will cry to God to save his life? Or of the man that will go to sea in a leaky, broken vessel, yea, himself will make those breaches in it that shall let the water in, and when it is sinking will cry to God to save him from being drowned? And will you do this about so great a matter as the everlasting state of your immortal souls? Will you be worldlings, and sensualists, and ungodly, and then cry, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," at the last? What! receive an unholy spirit? Will you not knock till the door is shut? When He telleth you, that "it is not every one that will cry Lord, Lord, that shall enter the kingdom of heaven," but "he that doeth the will of His Father which is in heaven"? —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4222.) It is foolish to lay out money in the purchase of repentance.

—*Benjamin Franklin*, 1706-1790.

(4223.) The seeds of repentance are sown in youth by pleasure, but the harvest is reaped in age by pain. —*Colton*, 1832.

(4224.) Would you indulge yourselves in a course of sin because you hope to be able hereafter to repent of it? Can anything exceed this extravagance of folly? Would any man in his senses continue in a business, because he hoped that at last it would fill him with painful regret and self-abhorrence; because he hoped—before his death to condemn himself for engaging in it, as having acted a part—the most foolish, base, and injurious?

—*Jay*, 1769–1853.

IV. ***IT IS NEITHER EXPIATORY NOR MERITORIOUS.***

(4225.) If a man build a house which doth cost him much labour and great charges, and, not having laid a sure foundation, when a tempest cometh his house doth fall, then will he be very sorry, and repent that he hath so unadvisedly bestowed his money and labour; notwithstanding, his great sorrow and repentance cannot set up his house again: even so, though thou repent never so much, yet that cannot get remission for thy sins that are past, but thou must be pardoned only by the faith of Christ's blood. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4226.) It is strange that any should imagine repentance to be meritorious in the sight of God. Our blessed Lord has told us that obedience itself can lay no claim to merit; and that "when we have done all that is commanded us, we should confess ourselves unprofitable servants." Who does not see that an acknowledgment of a debt is a very different thing from a discharge of that debt; and that, if a condemned criminal be ever so sorry for his offences, and acknowledge ever so sincerely his desert of punishment, his sorrow cannot cancel the debt which he owes to the laws of his country; much less can it give him a claim to great rewards? It is not then on a ground of merit, that God pardons a repenting sinner. Nevertheless there is a connection between repentance and pardon: there is a meetness and suitableness in the exercise of mercy towards the penitent. —*Simeon*, 1758–1836.

(4227.) When murder has been committed, no change in the murderer can recall the murdered man to life; when sentiments of infidelity have been

scattered abroad, no act of the penitent sceptic can gather them up again; when morals and faith have been corrupted, no tears, no efforts of him who has done it, can rescue and restore the victims; when innocence has been ruined, the conversion of the betrayer and the seducer does not recall the seduced and the wronged from the low haunts of vice or from the grave. But the penitent and regenerated man may, in some degree, repair the evil which he has done to society. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

(4228.) Repentance *qualifies* a man for pardon, but it does not—cannot—*entitle* him to it. It is one of the most elementary and obvious truths of morality, that the performance of one duty cannot be any compensation for neglect to perform another duty. But when a sinner is penitent for his sins, he is merely doing what, *as a sinner*, he ought to do; and his feelings of contrition do no more to absolve him from his guilt, than the gratitude a man feels to a doctor who has cured him from a dangerous illness does to discharge the doctor's bill. As in this case, there ought to be both gratitude and payment, so in the case of the sinner there must be both penitence and atonement. The sinner's sorrow for his sin, while in itself a proper thing, is no more an atonement for his sin than is the remorse that fills the breasts of most murderers any atonement for the murders they have committed. Judas was sorry—profoundly and intensely sorry—for having betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ, but did *that* do away with the guilt of that betrayal? Was Peter not to be blamed for his denial of his Master, because afterwards "he went out and wept bitterly"? Did the tears he shed give him any right to say in after years, "Yes, I denied my Lord, but I was sorry for it, and so made it straight"? Do you think that, just as with soap and water you can wash the dirt off your hands, you can with a few tears, or with many tears, wash the guilt of sin from off your soul? No delusion could be more groundless. Oh no! You have the real fact and the true philosophy of the matter in the well-known verse:—

"Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands.
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
THOU must save, and THOU alone."

V. *HOW IT IS PRODUCED.*

(4229.) A stroke, from guilt, from wrath, broke Judas' heart into despair; a look from love, from Christ, broke Peter's into tears. That sap and moisture which in frost and snow lieth hid and buried in the earth, showeth itself pleasantly in the fruits of the trees when it is called forth by the warmth of the sun. Even Saul himself will lift up his voice and weep when he seeth a clear testimony of the love and undeserved kindness of David. Hast thou never beheld a condemned prisoner dissolved in tears upon the unexpected and unmerited receipt of a pardon, who all the time before was as hard as a flint? The hammer of the law may break the icy heart of man with terrors and horror, and yet it may remain ice still, unchanged, but when the fire of love kindly thaweth its ice, it is changed and dissolved into water—it is no longer ice, but of another nature. Where the sun is most predominant, there are the sweetest spices, and richest mines, and the costliest jewels. Do thou therefore meditate much on the love of God and Christ. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4230.) From this incident (Luke vii. 37–50) we see what it is which produces true repentance. If you were going out into the open air on a frosty day, and were you taking a lump of ice, you might pound it with a pestle, but it would still continue ice. You might break it into ten thousand atoms, but so long as you continue in that wintry atmosphere, every fragment, however small, will still be frozen. But come within. Bring in the ice beside your own bright and blazing fire, and soon in that genial glow "the waters flow." A man may try to make himself contrite; he may search out his sins and set them before him, and dwell on all their enormity, and still feel no true repentance. Though pounded with penances in the mortar of fasts and macerations, his heart continues hard and icy still. And as long as you keep in that legal atmosphere it cannot thaw. There may be elaborate confession, a got-up sort of penitence, a voluntary humility, but there is no godly sorrow. But come to Jesus with His words of grace and truth. From the cold winter night of the ascetic come into the summer of the Great Evangelist. Let that flinty frozen spirit bask a little in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Listen for a little to those words which melted this sinner into a penitent—which broke her alabaster box and brimmed over in tears ecstatic sorrow and self-condemning devotion: for, finding that you too have much forgiven, you also will love much. —*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

(4231.) There may be the most bitter and tormenting sense of guilt without any real godly repentance for it. The heart of stone may be crushed and remain stone in its every fragment; it can only be melted when the love of God is suffered to shine on it. —*Ker*.

VI. *MUST NOT BE DELAYED.*

1. Because delay is foolish.

(4232.) If you be still resolved to delay this business, consider well with yourselves how long you intend to delay it. I hope not to the last, nor till sickness come and death make his approaches to you. This is next to madness to venture all upon such an after-game. It is just as if a man should be content to be shipwrecked in hope that he shall afterwards escape by a plank and get safe to shore. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4233.) All delay in this case is dangerous and as senseless as the expectation of the idiot described by the poet, who, being come to the river side, and intending to pass over, stays until all the water in the river be gone by and hath left the channel a dry passage for him:

"At ille
Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum."

But the river runs and runs and will run, and if he should stay a thousand years will never be the nearer being dry. So that if the man should go over, and there be a necessity for it, as there is for repentance, the only wise resolution to be taken in this case is to wade or swim over as well as he can, because the matter will never be amended by tarrying. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4234.) Art thou convinced that thy eternal happiness depends upon following the advice which hath now been given thee? Why then do but behave thyself in this case as all prudent men are wont to do in matters of far less concernment. If a man be travelling to such a place, so soon as he finds himself out of the way, he presently stops and makes towards the right way, and hath no inclination to go wrong any farther. If a man be sick, he will be well presently if he can, and not put it off for the future. Most men will gladly take the first opportunity that presents itself of being rich or great; every man almost catches at the very first offers of a great place or a good purchase, and secures them presently, if he can, lest the opportunity be gone and another snatch these things from him. Do thou thus so much more in matters so much greater. Return from the error of thy way, be wise, save thyself as soon as possibly thou canst. When happiness presents itself to thee, do not turn it off and bid it come again to-morrow. Perhaps thou mayest never be so fairly offered again; perhaps the day of salvation may not come again to-morrow; nay, perhaps, to thee, to-morrow may never come. But if we were sure that happiness would come again, yet why should we put it off? Does any man know how to be safe and happy to-day, and can he find in his heart to tarry until to-morrow.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4235.) There is no greater argument of a man's weakness than irresolution in matters of mighty consequence, when both the importance of the thing and exigency of present circumstances require a speedy resolution. We should account it a strange folly for a man to be unresolved in the clearest and plainest matters that concern his temporal welfare and safety. If a man could not determine himself whether he should eat or starve; if he were dangerously sick and could not determine whether he should take physic or die; or if one that were in prison could not resolve himself whether he should accept of liberty and be content to be released; or if a fair estate were offered to him, he should desire seven years' time to consider whether he should take it or not:—this would be so absurd in the common affairs of life that a man would be thought infatuated. If a man were under the condemnation of the law and liable to be executed upon the least intimation of the prince's pleasure, and a pardon were graciously offered to him, with this intimation that this would probably be the last offer of mercy that ever would be made to him: one would think that in this case a man should soon be determined what to do, or rather that he should not need to deliberate at all about it: because there is no danger of rashness in making haste to save his life.

And yet the case of a sinner is of far greater importance, and much more depends upon it, infinitely more than any temporal concernment whatsoever can amount to, even our happiness or misery to all eternity. And can there be any difficulty for a man to be resolved what is to be done in such a case? No case surely in the world can be plainer than this—whether a man should leave his sins and return to God and his duty or not; that is, whether a man should choose to be happy or miserable, unspeakably and everlastingly happy, or extremely and eternally miserable.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4236.) This is a confidence of all the most ungrounded and irrational. For upon what ground can a man promise himself a future repentance, who cannot promise himself a futurity?

—*South*, 1633–1716.

2. Because delay is dangerous.

(4237.) Whoever delays his repentance does in effect pawn his soul with the devil, and leaves it in his hands, and says, "Here, Satan, keep my soul: if I fetch it not again by such a day, 'tis thine for ever." —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4238.) If you did know but the danger and horrible misery of the life that you now live, you would make as much haste out of it, as a man would do out of a house that was on fire over his head; or as a man that was at sea in a leaking vessel, that if he did not bestir himself as for his life to get it to the shore, would sink and drown him.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4239.) Our common idea is that we are walking towards the precipice of death; and that we can calculate to-day we are so many miles distant, to-morrow so many fewer, the next day so many fewer, till we reach the very edge. But this is not the fact. We do not walk towards the precipice, we are walking along the slippery edge of the precipice, and know not what step may place us where all recovery is beyond our reach, because all is fixed; and all repentance impossible, because no place is found for it, though sought with tears. —*Cumming*.

(4240.) Better stop now. Some years ago, near Princeton, New Jersey, some young men were skating on a pond around an "air-hole," and the ice began to break in. Some of them stopped; but a young man said, "*I am not afraid! Give us one round more!*" He swung nearly round, when the ice broke, and not until next day was his lifeless body found. So men go on in sin. They are warned. They expect soon to stop. But they cry, "*Give us one round more!*" They start, but with wild crash break through into bottomless perdition. Do not risk it any longer. Stop now. God save us from the foolhardiness of the one round more!

—*Talmage*.

3. Because delay multiplies difficulties.

(4241.) If a man take, in the spring, three or four plants, and set them altogether at one time, if he come within a while after he may easily pull up one of them; if he stay a fortnight or a month, he may pull up another, but it will be somewhat harder; if he stay a year or two, till it have taken deep root, then he may pull and pull his heart out, his labour is all in vain, he shall never be able to move it. And thus it is that one sin, one offence, if we labour to pull it up in time, it may be forgiven, it may be taken away; and if we let that one go on to two or three, yet, with unfeigned repentance, with bleeding tears, with incessant outcries to a gracious God, they may be razed out and wiped away, but with greater difficulty; but if a man give up himself unto sin, accustom himself to do evil, so that it take deep root in the heart and be settled in the soul, he shall never be able to pull it up, nor arise from the death of sin, which hath so fast seized on him. —*Simson*, 1629.

(4242.) That which makes men so loth to be brought to reflect upon their past lives, is the uneasiness and trouble they think they shall find in such a work. So a great trader that has good reason to think that he has run much behindhand in the world, of all things hates to look into his books, cannot endure to hear of stating his accounts; and yet the longer he defers this, his accounts will become more intricate, he will still run more in debt, his condition will every day grow worse and worse, till at last it is past all recovery. And thus it is with wicked men. They would fain defer their repentance as long as they can, they would not yet be interrupted with such grave and serious thoughts. But the mischief is, the longer they defer it, the more they have still to repent of; and not only so, but they become more unable and unfit for such a work; they are still more backward and averse, as having been longer used and accustomed to their sins, and as having contracted greater familiarity with and kindness for them; and by such delay their ill habits grow more confirmed, their lusts and passions become stronger and more potent, and even their very natural powers and faculties are by degrees weakened and disabled. —*Calamy*, 1600–1663.

(4243.) The ways of virtue and righteousness are not like two roads that lie nigh or parallel one to the other, so that with ease and in a little time a man may step out of the one into the other; but they are perfectly opposite and directly contrary to each other. Suppose that a man for a great reward be obliged in one day, between sunrising and sunsetting, to travel so many miles northward, and moreover by a solemn oath (as all Christians are to the practice of Christianity) engaged to the performance of it; but that the man, freely presuming he has time enough to do this in, does not set out at the first rising of the sun, but loiters and trifles away all his time, nay, not only so, but that for his pleasure, or some little convenience, he travels quite the contrary way, and goes southward; and finding that road very smooth, broad, and full of company and diversion, is by any little temptations drilled on still further in it, wholly forgetting his bargain, till on a sudden the sun is just ready to set, night comes on apace, and then the wretch begins to consider how much he is out of his way, and finds himself weary and tired and unfit for travel, and curses his own folly, and promises if he were to begin again, he would go directly to the place commanded; but by the time he has thus resolved, the sun is set. Shall this man now obtain the promised reward? Alas! before he can challenge that, he must first return back all the way he has gone, even to the point from whence he first set out, and also after that will have his whole day's journey still to go, and all that task which he first engaged himself to perform. So a wicked man upon his death-bed is not only to unravel all his former works, to break off all his lewd customs, to mortify all his foolish passions and unruly lusts, to forsake all his deadly sins, and to repent of his past ill-spent life; but he is then to live a new life, he is then to accustom himself to the practice of goodness, and to make it habitual to him; his mind is then to be furnished with all Christian virtues and graces, he has his whole race still to run, and his salvation still to work out: and is the least part of this possible to be done on a languishing bed of sickness? —*Calamy*, 1600–1673.

(4244.) By delay of repentance, sin strengthens, and the heart hardens. The longer ice freezeth, the harder it is to be broken: the longer a man freezeth in impenitency, the more difficult it will be to have his heart broken. —*Watson*, 1696.

(4245.) The more we defer, the more difficult and painful our work must needs prove; every day will both enlarge our task and diminish our ability to perform it. Sin is never at a stay; if we do not retreat from it, we shall advance in it, and the further on we go, the more we have to come back; every step we take forward (even before we can return hither, into the state wherein we are at present) must be repeated; all the web we spin must be unravelled.

Vice, as it groweth in age, so it improveth in stature and strength; from a puny child it soon waxeth a lusty stripling, then riseth to be a sturdy man, and after awhile becometh a massy giant, whom we shall scarce dare to encounter, whom we shall be very hardly able to vanquish; especially seeing that as it groweth taller and stouter, so we shall dwindle and prove more impotent, for it feedeth upon our vitals, and thriveth by our decay; it waxeth mighty by stripping us of our best forces, by enfeebling our reason, by perverting our will, by corrupting our temper, by debasing our courage, by seducing all our appetites and passions to a treacherous compliance with itself: every day our mind groweth more blind, our will more rusty, our spirit more faint, our passions more headstrong and untamable; the power and empire of sin do strangely by degrees encroach, and continually get ground upon us, till it hath quite subdued and enthralled us. First we learn to bear it; then we come to like it; by and by we contract a friendship with it; then we dote upon it; at last we become enslaved to it in a bondage, which we shall hardly be able, or willing, to shake off; when not only our necks are fitted to the yoke, our hands are manacled, and our feet shackled thereby, but our heads and hearts do conspire in a base submission thereto, when vice hath made such impression on us, when this pernicious weed hath taken so deep root in our mind, will, and affection, it will demand an extremely toilsome labour to extirpate it.

—*Barrow*, 1630–1677.

(4246.) The longer the heart and sin converse together, the more familiar they will grow; and then the stronger the familiarity, the harder the separation. Does any one think he has his heart so in his hand, as to say, "Thus far will I sin, and there will I leave off"? Such an one shows indeed that he neither understands the nature of sin nor of his heart.

How that which now creeps and begs for entrance, having once got admission, will command and domineer; and like that emperor, though it gets into power like a fox, yet it will manage it, and reign like a lion. Neither does he know those many windings and turnings, the sly excuses and glossing apologies that the heart will suggest to rescue its sin from the summons of repentance, being once endeared and bound fast to it by inveterate continuance.

The commission of sin is like the effusion of

water, easily contained in its bounds, but uncontrollable in its course. We indeed may give it vent, but God alone knows where it will stop. Is not that man, therefore, stupidly ignorant who chooses to encounter his sin by a future repentance? Reason would argue and discourse thus: If I find that I have scarce power enough to resist my sin at present, shall I not have much less when time shall give it growth and strength, and, as it were, knit its joints and render it unconquerable?

It is here as with a man in a combat; every blow his adversary gives him disables him for the very next resistance. A man at first finds the beginnings and little inconveniencies of a disease, but physic is unpleasant; and withal he finds himself in a good competence of strength at present, and therefore he resolves to wear it out: but in the meantime his distemper eats on its way and grows upon him, till at length he has not so much as strength to bear physic, but his disease quickly runs him down, and becomes incurable.

A man at first is strong, and his sin is weak, and he may easily break the neck of it by a mature repentance; but his own deluding heart tells him that he had better repent hereafter; that is, when, on the contrary, he himself is deplorably weak, and his sin invincibly strong.

Commission of sin may indeed wound, but it is continuance of sin that kills. A man by falling to the ground may perhaps get a bruise or a knock; but by lying upon the ground after he is fallen, he may chance to catch his death.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

4. Because delay is itself a grievous sin, and a sign that really we intend never to repent.

(4247.) To neglect God all our lives, and know that we neglect Him; to offend God voluntarily, and know that we offend Him; casting our hopes on the peace which we trust to make at parting, is no other than a rebellious presumption, and even a contemptuous laughing to scorn and deriding of God, His laws and precepts.

—*Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1552–1618.

(4248.) He that resolves to be virtuous, but not till some time hereafter, resolves against being virtuous in the meantime; and as virtue at such a distance is easily resolved on, so it is as easy a matter always to keep it at that distance. "The next week," says the sinner, "I will begin to be sober and temperate, serious and devout;" but the true sense of what he says is this, "I am fully bent to spend this present week in riot and excess, in sensuality and profaneness, or whatever vice it is that I indulge myself in;" and if we do it thus often, if it be our common course to put off our repentance thus from time to time, this is a most shrewd sign that indeed we never intend to repent at all. This is not only a pitiful device and excuse to shift off the duty wholly; and so we should interpret it in any man who should deal with us after the same manner in our worldly affairs.

It is with wicked men in this case, as it is with a bankrupt: when his creditors are loud and clamorous, speak big and threaten high, he gives them many good words and fair promises, appoints them to come another day, entreats their patience but a little longer, and then he will satisfy them all, when yet the man really intends not to pay one farthing, nor ever thinks of compassing the money against the time. Thus do men endeavour to pacify and quiet their consciences, by telling them they will hear them another time; but this is only to delude and cheat their consciences with good words and specious pretences, making them believe they will certainly do what yet they cannot endure to think of, and what they would fain wholly excuse themselves from.

—*Calamy*, 1600–1663.

5. Because repentance is a divine gift.

(4249.) Saving repentance is the gift of God: and is it likely that those who have been insensible to the loud and earnest calls of the Word, that have been inflexible to the gracious methods of Providence leading them to repentance, should at last obtain converting grace? The gales of the Spirit are very transient, and blow where He pleases, and can it be expected that those who have wilfully and often resisted His pure motions, should by an exuberant favour receive afterwards more powerful grace to overrule their stubborn wills and make them obedient? Our Saviour tells us, "To him that hath shall be given," but from him that neglects the improving spiritual treasures, "that which he hath shall be taken away." There are special seasons of grace—as the passing of Christ in the way where the blind man sat—which neglected, are irrecoverably lost. God has threatened that His "Spirit shall not always strive" with rebellious sinners, and then their state is remediless. This may be the case of many even in this life who are insensible of their misery. As consumptive persons decline by degrees, lose their appetite, colour, and strength, till at last they are hopeless; so the withdrawings of the Spirit are gradual, His motions are not so frequent and strong, and upon the continued provocations of sinners finally leaves them under that most fearful doom: "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still," and thus punishes them on this side hell, as He does the damned, by giving them over to sin. Nothing, therefore, is more dangerous than the usual excuses for the delays of repentance. It is written, as with a sunbeam, that God will graciously pardon repenting sinners; but it is nowhere promised that He will give repentance to those who securely break His laws upon a corrupt confidence they will repent at the last.

—*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(4250.) Repentance is entirely in God's disposal. This grace is in the soul from God, as light is in the air from the sun, by continual emanation, so that God may shut or open His hands, contract or diffuse, set forth or suspend the influence of it as He pleases. And if God gives not repenting grace, there will be a hard heart and a dry eye, maugre all the poor frustraneous endeavours of nature. A piece of brass may as easily melt, or a flint bewater itself, as the heart of man by any innate power of its own resolve itself into a penitential humiliation. If God does not, by an immediate blow of His omnipotence, strike the rock, these waters will never gush out. The Spirit blows where it listeth, and if that blows not, these showers can never fall.

And now, if the matter stands so, how does the impenitent sinner know but that God, provoked by his present impenitence, may irreversibly propose within Himself to seal up these fountains, and shut him up under hardness of heart and reprobation of

sense? And then farewell all thoughts of repentance for ever. —*South*, 1633–1716.

6. Because repentance is a task too difficult to be accomplished in the hour of death.

(4251.) Were we to judge of the matter by the conduct of many, we should conclude it to be by no means a difficult thing to be a Christian. They seem to think it almost as easy to wash one's heart as their hands; to change their habits as their dress; to admit the light of divine truth into their souls as the morning into our chamber by opening the shutters;—in short, that it is not more difficult to turn the heart from evil to good, from the world to God, and from sin to Christ, than to turn a ship right round by help of her helm.

How else can we account for many, otherwise sensible people, putting off their salvation to a time confessedly unsuitable for any arduous task whatever—till, reduced to a state of mental and physical prostration, they lie languishing on a bed of sickness, or tossing on a bed of death? It ought to be an easy work that is deferred till then.

—*Guthrie.*

(4252.) Is it because death is a suitable and convenient period for seeking the pardon of sin and salvation of the soul that we propose to delay this matter till then? Suitable, convenient! Does death send us warning of his approach; giving due and timely notice that after so many weeks or days we may look for a visit from the King of Terrors? Like other kings, is he always preceded by messengers to prepare the way, and make all things ready for his reception? No. The robber comes under the cloud of night; steals quietly into your house; treads the floor with muffled feet; and before you wake to seize his hand, has you by the throat, and plants a dagger in your heart So death may come. "I come," says our Lord, "as a thief in the night." "Behold, I come quickly." Coming so, the procrastinating die without hope. And though death should make no such stealthy attack, nor leap on us with the suddenness of a tiger's spring, whoever looked on a dying scene to make resolutions such as these—I will delay seeking the Lord till my body is racked with these pains, my mind reeling in this wild delirium; not till I cannot lift my head from its pillow, not till I cannot read a line of the Bible, not till I can neither pray nor listen to the prayers of others, will I seek the Lord! I venture to say that wherever man made such a resolution, no man in his sober senses ever made it by a dying bed. No. Death has enough to do with itself. It is a time not to seek, but to enjoy the comforts of religion; and if there is one impression which life's closing scene makes most strongly and deeply on the spectator, it is this, Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

—*Guthrie.*

7. Because "death-bed repentances" are always to be suspected.

(4253.) It is much to be feared, that the repentance of a dying sinner is usually but like the sorrow of a malefactor, when he is ready to be turned off; he is not troubled that he has offended the law, but he is troubled that he must die.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4254.) Let us not deceive ourselves; heaven is not an hospital made to receive all sick and aged persons that can but put up a faint request to be admitted there; no, no, they are never like to "see the kingdom of God" who, instead of "seeking it in the first place," make it their "last refuge and retreat;" and when they find the sentence of death upon them, only to avoid present execution, do bethink themselves of getting to heaven, and since there is no other remedy, are contented to petition the great King and Judge of the world that they may be transported thither.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4255.) Whatever stress some may lay upon it, a death-bed repentance is but a weak and slender plank to trust our all upon.

—*Sterne*, 1713–1768.

8. Because a death-bed repentance may be inefficacious.

(4256.) I do not know a more awful part of Scripture than the parable of the ten virgins. We are always fearful of dwelling too strongly on the minuter parts of a parable; but there is something so singular in the fact, that the foolish virgins went to seek oil so soon as they heard of the bridegroom's approach, but were nevertheless excluded, that we dare not pass it by as conveying no lesson. If the parable admit of being applied, as we suppose it must in a modified sense, to the circumstances of our death, does it not seem to say that a repentance, to which we are driven by the approach of dissolution, will not be accepted? The foolish virgins sought not for oil till alarmed by tidings that the bridegroom was at hand; and many think that it will be enough if they give heed to religion when they shall have reason to apprehend that their last day is not distant. But the foolish virgins, although, as it would seem, they obtained oil, were indignantly shut out from the banquet; what, then, is to become of sinners, who, in the day of sickness, compelled by the urgency of their case, and frightened by the nearness of their end, show something like sorrow, and profess something like faith?

I own that nothing makes me think so despondingly of those who wholly neglect God till they feel themselves dying, as this rejection of the virgins, who would not begin to seek oil till they found the bridegroom at hand, and then obtained it in vain. It is as though God said, "If you will not seek Me in health, if you will not think of Me till sickness tells you that you must soon enter My presence, I will surely reject you; when ye knock at the door and say, 'Lord, Lord, open to us,' I will answer from within, 'I never knew you; depart, depart from Me.'" We dare not dwell upon this: we have a hundred other reasons for being suspicious of what is called death-bed repentance; but this seems to make that repentance—ay, though the death be that of consumption, and the patient linger for months with his senses about him, and his time apparently given to the duties of religion—of no avail whatever; for if the man obstinately neglected God till alarmed by the hectic spot on his cheek, that hectic spot was to him what the midnight cry was to the virgins, the signal that the bridegroom was near; and what warrant have we that God will admit him to the feast, if the five virgins were excluded with every

mark of abhorrence, though they sought for oil, and bought it, and brought it?

—*Melvill*, 1798–1871.

9. The case of the penitent thief affords no argument for delay.

(4257.) As a prince sometimes pardoneth a malefactor when he is come to the very place of execution, yet were it not for every malefactor to trust thereupon, for that this is but an extraordinary act of the prince's favour, and neither shown nor promised to all men: even so no man ought to flatter and deceive himself in deferring his conversion by alleging the example of the penitent thief, saved even at the last hour upon the cross, and carried to Paradise that same day with Christ, for this act was a special miracle, reserved for the manifestation of Christ's power and glory at that hour upon the cross; and, besides, this act was upon a most rare confession made by the thief at that instant when almost all the world forsook Christ.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4258.) There is sometimes a tendency to regard the grace vouchsafed to this penitent as exceptional, as not to be brought within the ordinary laws of God's dealings with the children of men. We may sometimes hear it said, that as that moment when the Son of God hung upon the cross was a moment unlike every other in the moral and spiritual history of the world, so there were graces vouchsafed then unlike those of any other moment, larger, freer, more marvellous; such as were proper to that time and no other; the gates of mercy being, so to speak, thrown open more widely than at other times; and that therefore no conclusions can be drawn from what then found place as to what will find place when events have returned to their more ordinary course. This is sometimes urged, and chiefly out of a desire to withdraw the temptation to a deferred and late repentance, which the acceptance of this penitent at the closing moment of his life might else seem to hold out to others. I confess that even the desire to avert such an abuse cannot persuade me to accept this explanation of the grace which he obtained. The laws of God's kingdom, the conditions under which grace may be obtained, are unchangeable. This man was forgiven exactly on the same grounds as those on which any other will find pardon and acceptance, because he repented and believed, and obeyed. Time does not exist for God; and if only this repentance, faith, and obedience of his were genuine, whether they were spread over the forty or fifty years to which his life in the natural course of things might have been prolonged, or concentrated into the few hours upon the cross which he actually did survive, this made and could make no difference in God's sight. I have said "if only these were genuine," which in the present instance we know that certainly they were; for this is the fatal danger of all repentance postponed to the last, and thus withdrawn from all trial and proof, that the man, little as he may guess this, may be deceiving himself; that in all likelihood his repentance is not genuine, is not sincere; that almost certainly it is not so, when it has been deferred on so mean a speculation as this, of giving to God the least and obtaining from Him the most, grinding the corn of life, and, according to the old proverb, giving the flour to the devil, and only the bran to God. It is by the pressing of this, the almost universal self-delusion of death-bed repentances, that we most rescue this scripture from dangerous abuse, from proving a temptation and a snare, not by excepting the dealing of God with this man from the category of His usual dealings in the kingdom of His grace and power.

—*Trench.*

VII. *HOW ITS GENUINENESS IS TO BE TESTED.*

1. Not by intensity of suffering.

(4259.) You must not place the chief part of your religion in humiliation, as if it were a life of mere sorrow that we are called to by the Gospel. But you must make it a servant to your faith, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and other graces. As the use of the needle is but to make way for the thread, and then it is the thread and not the needle that makes the seam; so much of our sorrow is but to prepare for faith and love, and these are they that close the soul with Christ. It is therefore a sore mistake with some that are very apprehensive of their want of sorrow but little of their want of faith or love, and that pray and strive to break their hearts, or weep for sin, but not much for those higher graces which it tendeth to. One must be done, and not the other left undone.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4260.) Wouldst thou know when thou hast been humbled enough for sin?—When thou art willing to let go thy sins. Then the gold hath lain long enough in the furnace when the dross is purged out; so when the love of sin is purged out, a soul is humbled enough to divine acceptation, though not to divine satisfaction. Now if thou art humbled enough (though not so much as others), what needs more? If a needle will let out the imposthume, what needs a lance? Be not more cruel to thyself than God would have thee.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(4261.) It is the sincerity of your sorrow for sin at which God looks, not at the measure of it. If then you are really anxious to know whether you have been sufficiently humbled for sin, ask yourself, Are you so humbled for sin that you are willing to give it up? The refiner does not ask how long has the gold remained in the furnace; he asks, is the dross purged away?—is the baser metal burnt up? If it be so, then does he require nothing further to convince him that the gold has been sufficiently long in the crucible. So if humbling yourselves for sin has, by God's grace, purged away your love for sin, be content on this point, although many of the children of God may have been far more deeply tried, and far more painfully humbled for it than yourselves. —*Salter.*

(4262.) Some well-meaning Christians tremble for their salvation, because they have never gone through that valley of tears and of sorrow, which they have been taught to consider as an ordeal that must be passed through before they can arrive at regeneration: to satisfy such minds it may be observed that the slightest sorrow for sin is sufficient if it produce amendment, and that the greatest is insufficient if it do not. Therefore, by their own fruits let them prove themselves: for some soils

will take the good seed without being watered with tears or harrowed up by affliction.

—*Colton*, 1832.

(4263.) The pains of repentance are only good because there is something wrong in us: we take medicine to recover our health: repentance is a dark road through which we must pass of necessity, but we must not seek to dwell there; after having sincerely repented and made our peace with God, we should rejoice in this peace, for God has not called us to despondency and despair, but to joy and gladness and salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. But by its comprehensiveness and definiteness.

(4264.) Take heed thou prayest not with a reservation, be sure thou renouncest what thou wouldst have God remit. God will never remove the guilt so long as thou entertainest the sin. What prince will pardon his treason that means to continue a traitor? It is desperate folly to desire God to forgive what thou intendest to commit. Thou hadst as good speak out, and ask leave to sin with impunity, for God knows the language of thy heart, and needs not thy tongue to be an interpreter. Some princes have misplaced their high favours to their heavy cost, as the Emperor Leo Armenius, who pardoned that monster of ingratitude Michael Balbus, and was the same night in which he was delivered out of prison murdered by him. But the great God is subject to no mistake in His government; never got hypocrite a pardon in the disguise of a saint. He will call thee by thy own name, though thou comest to Him in the semblance of a penitent; "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam," said the prophet. Hypocrisy is too thin a veil to blind the eyes of the Almighty. Thou mayest put thy own eyes out, so as not to see Him; but thou canst never blind His eyes that He should not see thee.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4265.) True repentance is the conversion of the soul from sin to God, and leaveth not any man in the power of sin. It is not for a man when he hath had all the pleasure that sin will yield him, to wish then that he had not committed it (which he may do then at an easy rate), and yet to keep the rest that are still pleasant and profitable to his flesh, like a man that casts away the bottle which he hath drunk empty, but keeps that which is full; or as men sell off their barren kine, and buy milch ones in their stead. This kind of repentance is a mockery, and not a cure for the soul. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4266.) People who are always lamenting their lack of feeling are, for the most part, those who crave some vague sense of the turpitude of human wrong-doing in general. But John was the most personal of preachers. He pointed out the specific sins of his hearers. He listened to specific confessions. He gave specific exhortations. Repentance of a general sort is not worth the while. If you will regret your sins, drag out your own particular wrong-doing and look at it. Do not weep over Adam's fall, nor repent of the general depravity of man, but turn with loathing and regret from that which defiles your own life. If you are stingy, or greedy, or envious, or lustful, or smally selfish, or ill-tempered, or censorious, or lazy, remember that one tear over your specific sin is better than a thousand shed from a vague sense of general unworthiness. —*Eggleston*.

3. By its continuousness.

(4267.) Repentance has a purifying power, and every tear is of a cleansing virtue; but these penitential clouds must be still dropping; one shower will not suffice, for repentance is not one single action, but a course. We may here compare the soul to a linen cloth; it must be first washed, to take off its native hue and colour and to make it white; and afterwards it must be ever and anon washed to preserve and to keep it white. In like manner the soul must be cleansed, first from a state of sin by converting repentance, and so made pure, and afterwards, by a daily repentance, it must be purged from those actual stains that it contracts, and so be kept pure. It is an enjoyment and a privilege reserved for heaven, "not to need repentance," and the reason of this is, because the cause of it will be taken away. But here this pitch of perfection is not to be hoped for. We cannot expect that God should totally wipe these tears from our eyes till He has taken all sin out of our hearts. Till it be our power and privilege not to sin, it is still our duty to repent. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(4268.) Let me remind you that repentance is a duty of greater extent than many are apt to suppose, who, confining their view on such occasions as these to a few of the grosser disorders of their lives, pay little attention to the heart: they are satisfied with feeling a momentary compunction and attempting a partial reformation, instead of crying with the royal penitent, "*Create in me a clean heart!*" They determine to break off particular vices,—an excellent resolution as far as it goes,—without proposing to themselves a life of habitual devotion, without imploring, under a sense of weakness, that grace which can alone renew the heart, making, in the words of our Lord, the tree good, that the fruit may be good also. —*Robert Hall*, 1764-1831.

4. By its leading to amendment of life.

(4269.) Godly sorrow works a change and alteration to amendment of life; but the hypocrite, though he hangs down his head like a bulrush for a day, and blubbers his face with tears, yet either he leaves not his sin at all, or only as he leaves and puts off his clothes, with a purpose to resume and put them on the next day. —*Downame*, 1644.

(4270.) Repenting is a sorrowful turning of the heart from sin to God. You repent not if you turn not. To mock God with such hypocritical praying and repenting, is itself a heinous sin. Will you take it for repenting if a man that spits in your face and beateth you, shall do it every day, and ask your forgiveness at night, and propose to do it still, because he asked forgiveness?

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4271.) Some mistake a fruitless sorrow for sin to be repentance. And because they do not sit down altogether quiet and contented under sin, but are in motion, they judge that they are going forwards. But let a man put himself in any part of the circumference of a circle, and continue to move in it, it is undeniable that he is in motion, but it is as clear that he makes no progress in advancing forwards. So these men sin and repent, and after

repentance they sin; and walking in a continual circle of repentings and relapsings, take not one step towards heaven. —*Salter.*

(4272.) John did not demand tears. He did not ask that a committee or a church-session should probe the hearts of his hearers to find out how deep their convictions of sin might be. He demanded outward and substantial evidence. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." He did not demand that they should sit every evening for weeks on an anxious seat, or that they should frequent inquiry-meetings for months. If you are sorry, show it by doing better, he said. Let honester, purer, and kindlier lives be proof of the sincerity of your penitence. If you have two coats, give one to some coatless man. That is better than any amount of anguish over sinfulness in general.

—*Eggleston.*

5. By its leading to watchfulness against sin.

(4273.) He that is truly resolved against any sin, is likewise resolved against the occasions and temptations that would draw him to it: otherwise he hath taken up a rash and foolish resolution, which he is not like to keep, because he did not resolve upon that which was necessary to the keeping of it. So he that resolves upon any part of his duty must likewise resolve upon the means which are necessary to the performance of it: he that is resolved to pay his debts must be diligent in his calling, because without this he cannot do the other, for nothing can be more vain than for a man to pretend that he is resolved upon doing his duty, when he neglects anything that is necessary to further him in the discharge of it. This is as if a man should resolve to be well, and yet be careless in observing the rules which are prescribed in order to his health. So for a man to resolve against drunkenness, and yet to run himself upon the temptations which naturally lead to it by frequenting the company of lewd and intemperate persons, this is as if a man should resolve against the plague and run into the pest-house.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

REPROOF.

I. *A CHRISTIAN DUTY.*

(4274.) Who is so kind and gentle as the surgeon with his knife? He that is to be cut cries, yet cut he is; he that is to be cauterised cries, but cauterised he is. This is not cruelty; on no account let that surgeon's treatment be called cruelty. Cruel he is against the wounded part, that the patient may be cured; for if the wound be softly dealt with, the man is lost.

Thus, then, I would advise, that we love our brethren, howsoever they may have sinned against us; that we let not affection toward them depart out of our hearts, and that, when need is, we exercise discipline towards them; lest by relaxation of discipline, wickedness increase.

—*Augustine*, 353–429.

(4275.) As he who seeth a man commit murder, and standeth by without giving forth anything to show the murderer his dislike of the deed, is worthy to be accounted accessory to the murder; or as he that seeth a blind man running into a pit, and neither stays him from running into it nor yet helpeth him out, but letteth him there be drowned, is guilty of his death: even so is he to be accounted who seeth his brother kill his soul by sinning and will not endeavour to do what he can, by rebuking him, to stay him from so doing.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4276.) What love dost thou show to thy neighbour, if thou seest him wounding and piercing his inestimable soul, and thou dost not endeavour (though against his will) to hold his hand? If thou shouldest see him take a knife to stab himself at the heart, thou wouldest not stay to ask his leave, or fear his anger, but do thy utmost to hinder him; and canst thou see him destroying his soul, and not seek to prevent him?

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4277.) There is a special obligement upon friends to be helpful to one another herein. The laws of friendship require a discovery of that which endangers one another. You would count him unworthy the name of a friend who, knowing a thief or an incendiary to lurk in your family with a design to kill, or rob, or burn your house, would conceal it from you, and not acquaint you with it on his own accord. There is no such thief, murderer, incendiary, as sin; it more endangers us and those concernments that are more precious than goods, or house, or life; and that most endangers us by which the Lord's anger is already kindled against us. Silence or concealment in this case is treachery. He is the most faithful friend, and worthy of most esteem and affection, that deals most plainly with us in reference to the discovery of our sin. He that is reserved in this case is but a false friend, a mere pretender to love, whereas, indeed, he hates his brother in his heart (Lev. xix. 17). —*Clarkson*, 1621–1686.

II. *THINGS THAT HINDER MEN FROM PERFORMING IT.*

1. Fear of presuming.

(4278.) In the way of our callings, every good Christian is a teacher, and hath a charge of his neighbour's soul. Let it be only the voice of a Cain to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I would have one of these men, that are so loth that private men should teach them, to tell me, what if a man fall down in a swoon in the streets, though it be your father or superior, would you not take him up presently, and use all means you could to recover him? or would you let him lie and die, and say, "It is the work of the physician, and not mine; I will not invade the physician's calling." In two cases every man is a physician. *First*, in case of necessity, and when a physician cannot be had. And *secondly*, in case the hurt be so small that every man can do as well as the physician. And in the same two cases every man must be a teacher. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

2. Fear of offending our friends.

(4279.) Another hindrance is, a base man-pleasing disposition that is in us. We are so loth to displease men, and so desirous to keep in credit and favour with them, that it makes us most unconscionably neglect our known duty. A foolish physician he is, and a most unfaithful friend, that

will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him; and cruel wretches are we to our friends, that will rather suffer them to go quietly to hell, than we will anger them, or hazard our reputation with them. If they did but fall in a swoon we would rub them and pinch them, and never stick at hurting them. If they were distracted we would bind them with chains, and we should please them in nothing that tended to their hurt; and yet, when they are beside themselves in point of salvation, and in their madness posting on to damnation, we will not stop them for fear of displeasing them.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. A consciousness of personal imperfections.

(4280.) A person who objects to tell a friend of his faults because he has faults of his own, acts as a surgeon would who should refuse to dress another person's wounds because he had a dangerous one himself. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

III. *DEMANDS RECTITUDE IN THE REPROVER.*

(4281.) Nowadays men take upon them to reprove others for committing such things as themselves have practised, and do practise without amendment, notwithstanding their diligence in teaching others their duty. They can teach all the doctrine of Christ, saving three syllables—"Follow Me!" Therefore these are like some tailors, who are busy in decking and tricking up others, but go both bare and beggarly themselves.
—*Henry Smith*, 1592.

(4282.) Before thou reprehend another, take heed thou art not culpable in what thou goest about to reprehend. He that cleanses a blot with blotted fingers makes a greater blur.
—*Quarles*, 1592–1644.

(4283.) The eye which is filled with dust can never see clearly the spot that is in another's face; nor that hand which is besmeared with mire wash any other member clean; nor that man who is corrupted with sin do any good when he reproves his own sin in another. He must needs be clean himself that goes about to cleanse another.
—*G. Williams*, 1589–1672.

(4284.) If my carriage be unblamable, my counsel and reproof will be the more acceptable. Wholesome meat often is distasteful, coming out of nasty hands. A bad liver cannot be a good counsellor or bold reprover; such a man must speak softly for fear of awaking his own guilty conscience. If the bell be cracked, the sound must needs be jarring.
—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4285.) It behoves him that would counsel or reprove another, says Tertullian, to guard his speech, by the authority of his own good walk, lest, wanting that, what he says should put himself to the blush. We do not love one that hath foul breath to come very near us, and truly we count that one comes very near us that reproves us; such, therefore, had need have a sweet-scented life.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4286.) The vicious reproving vice, is the raven chiding blackness. —*Eliza Cook.*

IV. *HOW IT IS TO BE ADMINISTERED.*

1. Seasonably.

(4287.) Use not liberty of reproof in the days of sorrow and affliction; for the calamity itself is enough to chastise the gaieties of sinning persons, and to bring them to repentance: it may be sometimes fit to insinuate the mention of the cause of that sorrow in order to repentance and a cure; but severe and biting language is then out of season, and it is like putting vinegar to an inflamed and smarting eye—it increases the anguish and tempts unto impatience. In the accidents of a sad person, we must do as nurses do to their falling children, snatch them up and still their cryings, and entertain their passion with some delightful avocation; but chide not then, when the sorrowful man needs to be refreshed. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(4288.) Reproof ought to be in season, neither when the brain is misted with arising fumes, nor when the mind is maddened with unreined passions. Certainly, he is drunk himself that profanes reason so as to urge it to a drunken man. Nature unloosed in a flying speed cannot come off with a sudden stop.

"*Quis matrem, nisi mentis inops, in funere nati*
Flere vetat? non hoc ulla monenda loco est:"

"He's mad that dries a mother's eyes' full tide
At her son's grave: there 'tis no time to chide:"

was the opinion of the smoothest poet. To admonish a man in the height of his passion is to call a soldier to counsel in the midst—in the heat of a battle. Let the combat slack, and then thou mayest expect a hearing. All passions are like rapid torrents; they swell the more for meeting with a dam in their violence. He that will hear nothing in the rage and roar of his anger will, after a pause, inquire of you—seem you to forget him, and he will the sooner remember himself. For it often falls out that the end of passion is the beginning of repentance. Then it will be easy to draw back a retiring man; as a boat is rowed with less labour when it has both a wind and tide to drive it. A word seasonably given, like a rudder, sometimes steers a man quite into another course. A blow bestowed in the striking time is better than ten delivered unseasonably. —*Felltham*, 1668.

(4289.) Reprehension is not necessary or convenient at all seasons. Admonition is like physic, rather profitable than pleasant; now the best physic may be thrown away, if a fit time of giving it be not observed. Some unskilful physicians have wronged their patients in administering suitable potions out of season.

Sometimes a sudden reproof, upon the commission of the sin, has reformed the sinner; but this is not always safe. When mens' spirits are hot, and their minds drunk with passion, they are more apt to beat the Christian than to hear his counsel. Abigail would not tell Nabal of his danger till he was sober.

But if there be no probability of a better season, after some ejaculations to heaven for assistance and success, take the present opportunity. Fabius conquered by delaying, but Cæsar overcame by expedition. Though it is not ordinarily so good to sow corn when the wind is high, yet the husband-

man will rather do it in such weather than not at all, or than want his harvest. As the bird often flies away whilst the fowler still seeks to get nearer and nearer to her, so does a season of advantaging our brethren's souls whilst we wait still for a fitter. It is thy duty, therefore, to take hold of the present, where thou hast no likelihood of another; and to improve the first good opportunity, rather than adventure the loss of all by expecting a better.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4290.) When the earth is soft, the plough will enter. Take a man when he is under affliction, or in the house of mourning, or newly stirred by some moving sermon, and then set it home, and you may do him good. Christian faithfulness doth require us, not only to do good when it falls in our way, but to watch for opportunities of doing good.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

2. Privately.

(4291.) A monitor ought, in the first place, to have a regard to the delicacy and sense of shame of the person admonished. For they who are hardened against a blush are incorrigible.

—*Epictetus*, B.C. 60.

(4292.) A reprover is like one that is taking a mote out of his brother's eye; now this must be done very tenderly. For this purpose it would be convenient, where it may be, that reproofs be given privately.

"If thy brother offend thee, tell him his fault between him and thee." The presence of many may make him take up an unjust defence, who in private would have taken upon him a just shame. The open air makes sores to rankle—other's crimes are not to be cried at the market. Private reproof is the best grave to bury private faults in.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4293.) A man may, by a parable or an history pertinent to the purpose, convince a sinner's conscience and not openly injure his credit. Paul, in his sermon to Felix, seemed to shoot at random, not naming any, but his arrow pierced that unrighteous prince to the quick. A wise reprover in this is like a good fencer, who, though he strike one part, yet none that stand by could perceive from his eye, or the carriage of his arm, that he aimed at that more than the rest. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

3. Discreetly.

(1.) *With due regard to the social position of the offender.*

(4294.) It is an excellent example that Paul giveth us (Gal. ii. 2.) He communicateth the gospel to them, yet privately to them of reputation, lest he should run in vain. Some men would take this to be a sinful complying with their corruption, to yield so far to their pride and bashfulness as to teach them only in private, because they would be ashamed to own the truth in public. But Paul knew how great a hindrance men's reputation is to their entertaining of the truth, and that the remedy must not only be fitted to the disease, but also to the strength of the patient, and that in so doing, the physician is not guilty of favouring the disease, but is praiseworthy for taking the right way to cure it; and that learners and young beginners must not be dealt with as open professors.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(2.) *With due regard to the disposition of the offender.*

(4295.) There must not be one uniform proceeding with all men in reprehension; but that must vary according to the disposition of the reproved. I have seen some men as thorns, which easily touched hurt not; but if hard and unwarily, fetch blood of the hand: others as nettles, which if they be nicely handled, sting and prick; but if hard and roughly pressed, are pulled up without harm. Before I take any man in hand, I will know whether he be a thorn or a nettle. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4296.) Some in their fainting fits are recovered easily with throwing some cold water on their faces; others must be beaten and rubbed very hard. "Of some have compassion, making a difference, and others save with fear." Some are like tiled houses, that can admit a brand of fire to fall upon them and not be burned; yet some again are covered with light dry straw, which with the least touch will kindle and flame about your ears. By screwing strings moderately, we may make good music, but if too high, we break them. All the strings of a viol are not of equal strength, nor will endure to be wound up to the same pitch. We may soothe a lion into bondage, but sooner hew him in pieces than beat him into a chain. A difference ought to be observed between party and party; an exhortation will do more with some than a severe commination with others. The sturdy oak will not be so easily bowed as the gentle willow.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(3.) *With due regard to the faults of the offender.*

(4297.) Wise physicians will distinguish between a pimple and a plague-sore. Those that sin of infirmity are to be admonished more mildly than those that sin obstinately. Who would give as great a blow to kill a fly as to kill an ox? Old festered sores must be handled in a rougher manner than green wounds. Ordinary physic will serve for a distemper newly begun, but a chronic disease must have harsher and stronger purges. Some offend ignorantly, others out of contumacy; some offend out of weakness, being overborne by a sudden passion; others of premeditated contrived wickedness and perverseness; some sins are of a lower nature, of lesser moment and influence upon others; other sins overthrow the foundations of Christianity, and devour the vitals of religion. Now, according to the nature of the disease and constitution of the patients must be the prescription for their cure. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4.) *With frank acknowledgment of the excellences of the offender.*

(4298.) I see iron first heated red-hot in the fire, and afterwards beaten and hardened with cold water. Thus will I deal with an offending friend: first heat him with deserved praise of his virtue, and then beat upon him with reprehension. So good nurses, when their children are fallen, first take them up and speak them fair, and chide them afterwards. Gentle speech is a good preparative for rigour. He shall see that I love him by my approbation; and that I love not his faults by my reproof. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4299.) If we would reprove another with success, and convince him that he is in the wrong, we must

observe in what point of view he looks on the affair; because in that way it generally is as he imagines, and acknowledge that he is so far in the right. He will be pleased with this, because it intimates, not that he was mistaken, but only that he had not considered the thing on all sides. For we do not feel it any disgrace not to see everything; but we do not like to acknowledge that we have been deceived; and perhaps the reason of this may be, that the understanding is not deceived in that point of view in which it actually considers the subject, just as the simple perceptions of the senses are always true.

—*Pascal*, 1622–1662.

(4300.) Give the offender his due praise as well as his deserved reproof; this will somewhat allay his passion, and make reproof the more prevalent. The iron when heated red-hot in the fire is bent and beaten afterwards, without breaking, which way the smith pleases. When I have heated him hot with the fire of commendation, I may then beat upon him with reproof in greater hopes of success. We take pills the better when they are well gilt; children lick up their medicines the more freely when they are sprinkled with a little sugar.

Wise commanders, when their soldiers are making a dishonourable retreat, do not presently upbraid them with cowardice, but often, by mentioning their former heroic courage, or their ancestors' noble carriage, inflame them with a desire to continue their repute and credit. Sometimes indirect reprehension has wrought much good.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(5.) *So as not to discourage.*

(4301.) In the lopping of these trees, experience and good husbandry hath taught men to leave one bough still growing in the top, the better to draw up the sap from the root. The like wisdom is fit to be observed in censures, which are intended altogether for reformation, not for destruction. So must they be inflicted, that the patient be not utterly discouraged and stripped of hope and comfort; but that, while he suffereth, he may feel his good tendered, and his amendment both aimed at and expected. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(6.) *The importance of reproving discreetly.*

(4302.) The manner of the application may turn the benefit into an injury; and then it both strengthens error and wounds the giver. Correction is never in vain. Vice is a miry deepness; if thou strivest to help one out, and dost not, thy stirring him sinks him in the further. Fury is the madder for his chain. —*Felltham*, 1668.

(4303.) Reproof must be warily given; for it is like a razor, whose edge is keen, and therefore the sooner rebated. It is dangerous to give a medicine stronger than the disease and constitution of the patient require. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4304.) There is hardly any work of Christianity which requires more wisdom than this of admonition. The temper and quality of the persons, the nature and difference of the crimes, the manner and way of delivering the reproof, the fittest season for it, ought all to be seriously and diligently considered. The rebuke of sin is aptly resembled to the fishing for whales: the mark is big enough, one can hardly miss hitting; but if there be not sea-room enough and line enough, and a dexterity in letting out that line, he that fixes his harping-iron in the whale endangers both himself and his boat. Reproof strikes an iron, as it were, into the conscience of the offender, which makes him struggle and strive to draw the reprover into the sea, to bring him into disgrace and contempt; but if the line be prudently handled, and not pulled too straight nor too quick, the sinner may be drawn to the reprover and saved.

Bone-setters must deal very warily; and physic is given with grave advice, and in dangerous cases not without a consultation. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

4. **Faithfully and seriously.**

(4305.) Severity and sharpness may in some cases well agree with the truest friendliness. "Rebuke them sharply," says Paul to Titus, of some, "that they may be sound in the faith." And, to use a heathen man's comparison; a surgeon had he two persons to cut for the stone, the one his dear friend, the other a mere stranger, would he be so foolish, think you, out of love and favour to his friend, as to cut him with a blunter tool or razor than he would cut the other with?

—*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

(4306.) Reprove seriously. Reproof is an edged tool, and must not be jested with. Cold reproofs are like the noise of cannons a great way off, nothing affrighting us. He that reproves sin merrily, as one that takes a pride to show his wit and to make the company laugh, will destroy the sinner instead of the sin. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4307.) The apostle enjoins Titus to "reprove sharply,"—the word is *cuttingly*,—"that they may be sound in the faith." He that minds his patient's health will not toy or trifle or play with his mortal diseases; the flesh must feel the plaster, or it will never eat up the corruption in it. Shouldest thou apply an healing plaster to skin the wound aloft, when there is need of a corrosive to take away the dead flesh, thou wouldest be false and unfaithful to thy friend. Reproof, like salt, must have in it both sharpness and savouriness.

Admonition without serious application is like an arrow with too many feathers, which, though we level at the mark, is taken by the wind and carried quite away from it.

Some men shoot their reprehensions, like pellets through a trunk, with no more strength than will kill a sparrow. Those make sinners believe that sin is no such dreadful evil, and the wrath of God no such frightful end. He that would hit the mark and recover the sinner, must draw his arrow of reproof home. Reproof must be powerful; the hammer of the Word breaks not the heart, if it be lightly laid on. It must also be so particular, that the offender may think himself concerned. Some in reproof will seem to aim at the sinner, but so order it, that their arrows shall be sure to miss him; as Domitian, when a boy held for a mark afar off his hand spread—with the fingers severed, he shot his arrows so that all hit the empty spaces between his fingers. Be the reproof never so gracious, the plaster so good, it will be ineffectual if not applied to the patient.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4308.) Alas! it is not a few dull words between jest and earnest, between sleep and waking, as it

were, that will waken an ignorant, dead-hearted sinner. When a dull hearer and a dull speaker meet together, a dead heart and a dead exhortation, it is far unlike to have a lively effect. If a man fall down in a swoon, you will not stand trifling with him, but lay hands on him presently, and snatch him up, and rub him, and call aloud to him. If a house be on fire, you will not in a cold affected strain go and tell your neighbour of it, or go and make an oration of the nature and danger of fire; but you will run out, and cry, "Fire! fire!" Matters of moment must be seriously dealt with. To tell a man of his sins as softly as Eli did his sons, reprove him as gently as Jehosaphat did Ahab, "Let not the king say so," doth usually as much harm as good. I am persuaded the very manner of some men's reproof and exhortation hath hardened many a sinner in the way of destruction. To tell them of sin, or of heaven, or hell, in a dull, easy, careless language, doth make men think you are not in good sadness, nor do mean as you speak; but either you scarce think yourselves such things are true, or else you take them in such a slight and indifferent manner. Oh, sirs, deal with sin as sin, and speak of heaven and hell as they are, and not as if you were in jest. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

5. With evident reluctance.

(4309.) Let him that reproves a vice, as much as is possible, do it with words of meekness and commiseration. Let the reprehension come not as a dart shot at the offender's person, but at his crime. Let a man reprehend so that it may appear that he wishes that he had no cause to reprehend. Let him behave himself in the sentence that he passes, as we may imagine a judge would behave himself if he were to condemn his own son, brought as a criminal before him; that is, with the greatest reluctancy and trouble of mind imaginable, that he should be brought under the necessity of such a cruel accident, as to be forced to speak words of death to him whose life he tenders more passionately than his own. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(4310.) The most difficult province in friendship is the letting a man see his faults and errors; which should, if possible, be so contrived that he may perceive our advice is given him not so much to please ourselves as for his own advantage. The reproaches, therefore, of a friend should always be strictly just, and not too frequent.

—*Budgell*, 1685–1736.

6. Affectionately.

(4311.) As physicians with their bitter drugs do mingle sweet spices, that the sick patient may the more willingly receive them: so ought bitter rebukes to be mingled with gentle admonitions, that the offender might be the better brought to amendment.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4312.) If reproof doth not savour of humanity it signifieth nothing; it must be like a bitter pill wrapped in gold and tempered with sugar, otherwise it will not go down or work effectually.

—*Barrow*, 1630–1667.

(4313.) To be plain, argues honesty; but to be pleasing, argues discretion. Sores are not to be anguished with a rustic pressure, but gently stroked with a ladied hand. Physicians fire not their eyes at patients, but calmly minister to their diseases. Let it be so done as the offender may see affection without arrogancy. Who blows out candles with too strong a breath does but make them stink, and blows them light again. —*Felltham*, 1668.

(4314.) Reprove compassionately. Soft words and hard arguments do well together. Passion will heat the sinner's blood, but compassion will heal his conscience. Our reprehension may be sharp, but our spirits must be meek. The probe that searches the wound will put the patient to less pain and do the more good if it be covered with soft lint.

Reproof should be as oils or ointments, rubbed in with the warm fire of love. The surgeon that sets the bone strokes the part. The reprover should have a lion's stout heart, or he will not be faithful, and a lady's soft hand, or he is not like to be successful. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4315.) There is a hard, dry, and repelling mode of reproof which tends rather to shut up the heart than to open it. The tempest may roar and point its hail-shot at the traveller, but he will rather wrap himself closer in his cloak than quit it till the sun breaks out again. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(4316.) Preaching on John xiii. 14.—the duty of disciples to wash one another's feet—Mr. Finlayson of Helmsdale observed, "One way in which disciples wash one another's feet is by reproving one another. But the reproof must not be couched in angry words, so as to destroy the effect; nor in tame, so as to fail of effect. Just as in washing a brother's feet, you must not use boiling water to scald, nor frozen water to freeze them."

—*Spurgeon*.

(4317.) "I remember many years ago," says one, "being struck by a little incident, in a parish where the incumbent, a man of most extraordinary Christian benignity, when in company with a clerical friend, rebuked in very plain terms one of his parishioners for gross misbehaviour on a recent occasion. The reproof was so severe as to astonish his friend, who declared that if he had addressed one of his flock in similar language, he should have expected an irreconcilable breach. The clergyman of the parish answered him with a gentle pat on the shoulder, and with a smile of Christian wisdom, 'Oh, my friend, when there is love in the heart, you may say anything.'"

V. *THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS RECEIVED IS A TEST OF CHARACTER.*

(4318.) A man may know that he truly hates sin if he can endure admonition and reproof for sin. He that hates a venomous plant which troubles the ground, will not be displeased if a man come and tell him that he has such a plant in his ground, and will help him to dig it up; surely he cannot be displeased with the party. So here, if a man do truly hate sin, will he be angry with him that shall tell him he is obnoxious to such an evil, which will hurt him dangerously, and damn his soul if it be not helped? Surely no.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(4319.) Though toads are no sooner touched, but they swell and are ready to spit out their poison in the face of him that handles them, yet sheep

will be felt and shorn, and suffer their sores to be dressed with patience. Though fools hate him that "reproveth in the gate," yet "rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4320.) Iron, which is one of the baser metals, may be hammered, and subjected to the most intense heat of the furnace; but though you may soften it for the time, you can never make it ductile like the precious metals. But gold, which is the most excellent of all, is the most pliant and easy wrought on, being capable of being drawn out to a degree which exceeds belief. So the most excellent tempers are the most easily wrought on by spiritual counsel and godly admonitions, but the viler sort, like the iron, are stubborn, and cannot be made pliant. —*Salter.*

VI. *HOW IT IS TO BE RECEIVED.*

1. With self-distrust.

(4321.) It may be you think that they are censorious in judging you to be unconverted when you are not; and to be worse and in more danger than you are, and speaking harder of you than you deserve. But it is you that should be most suspicious of yourselves, and afraid in so great a matter of being deceived. A stander-by may see more than a player: I am sure he that is awake may see more of you than you of yourselves when you are asleep.

But suppose it were as you imagine; it is his love that mistakenly attempteth your good; he intendeth you no harm: it is your salvation that he desireth; it is your damnation that he would prevent. You have cause to love him, and be thankful for his good-will, and not to be angry with him, and reproach him for his mistakes.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

2. Meekly.

(4322.) Oh, that I might never be so void of love to my fallen brother as not to give him a serious reproof, nor so void of love to myself as not to receive a serious reproof! The nipping frosts, though not so pleasant, are as profitable as the summer sunshine. There is no probable way of curing some diseases but by blisters and cupping glasses and painful medicines; is it not better for me to accept an admonition and amend, than to walk on in a wicked way to my destruction?
—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4323.) Let us as wise men be patient in receiving admonition. The stomach of man naturally rises against this bitter physic, though it conduces so much to his health. Faithful reproof is the awakening a man out of sleep, and such are very apt to be angry. The hedgehog bristles up her prickles, and will pierce, if it be possible, those that come to take hold of her.

There are two things that cause men to rage against reproof.

1. Guilt of the sin objected. Guilt makes men angry when they are searched; and, like horses that are galled, to kick if they be but touched. The easiest medicines and mildest waters are troublesome to sore eyes. There is scarce a more probable sign that the crime objected is true, than wrath and bitterness against the person that charges us with it.

2. Love to sin makes men impatient under reproof. When a person's sin is to him as "the apple of his eye," no wonder if he be offended at any that shall touch it.

But grace will teach a Christian contentedly to take those potions that are wholesome, though they are not toothsome. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4324.) They that are dwarfs in religion may do service to the tallest, if they be willing to accept it. A rush-candle may give me some light if I do not wilfully shut my eyes; a brazen bell may call me to prayers, as well as one of silver, if I do not stop my ears.. The smallest and meanest creatures were serviceable to the great God against the Egyptians; and shall my proud heart refuse the help of mean Christians against the enemies of my salvation? Did a damsel possessed with a devil bring her master much temporal gain, and may not a poor servant, filled with the Spirit, bring me much spiritual gain? What, or who, am I, that none must teach me but those that are eminent in grace and gifts? I am sure I have nothing that is good but what I have received; and this pride of my heart is too great an evidence that I am but poor in holiness. Those branches that are fullest laden bend most downwards. Those trees that abound in clusters of fruit do not disdain to receive sap from the mean earth which every beast tramples on. It is no wonder that a soul declines in strength, that refuses its food because it is not brought by the steward, but by some inferior person of the family. If Satan can keep me in this proud humour, he does not doubt but to keep me in a starving condition, and to hinder the efficacy of all means for my growth in grace. When this dropsy once seizes upon my vitals, I may expect a consumption of my whole body. Lord, it were my duty to hear Thy voice, though it were through the mouth of a Balaam! Thou hast sometimes conveyed the water of life through those pipes of lead, and sent considerable presents to Thy chosen by contemptible messengers. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4325.) Perhaps you think that the preacher, or private admonisher, is too plain with you; but you should consider that self-love is like to make you partial in your own cause, and therefore a more incapable judge than they. And you should consider that God hath commanded them to deal plainly, and told them that else the people's blood shall be required at their hands; and that God best knoweth what medicine and diet is fittest for your disease; and that the case is of such grand importance (whether you shall live in heaven or hell for ever!) that it is scarce possible for a minister to be too plain and serious with you; and that your disease is so obstinate that gentler means have been too long frustrated, and therefore sharper must be tried; else why were you not converted by gentler dealing until now? If you fall down in a swoon, or be ready to be drowned, you will give leave to the standers-by to handle you a little more roughly than at another time, and will not bring your action against them for laying hands on you, or ruffling your silks and bravery; if your house be on fire, you will give men leave to speak to you in another manner than when they modulate their voices into a civil and complimentary tone. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4326.) An angry, passionate disposition, impatient of reproof, deters men from doing the office of friends in a faithful reprehension. For some-

minds are more raging and tumultuous than the sea itself; so that if Christ Himself should rebuke them, instead of being calm, they would rage and roar so much the louder. That admonition that would reclaim others does but chafe and provoke them; as the same breath of wind that cools some things kindles and inflames others.

But few people are able, and fewer willing, to put themselves to so great an inconvenience for another's good, and to raise a storm about their own ears to do an odious, ungrateful piece of service for an ungrateful person; and therefore men usually deal with such currish, sharp natures, as they do with mastiffs, they are fain to stroke them, though they deserved to be cudgelled. They flatter and commend them to keep them quiet.

From the consideration of which we easily see the greater misery and disadvantage of passionate, angry persons; their passion does not only bereave them of their own eyes, but also of the benefit of other men's; which he that is of a gentle and a tractable nature enjoys in the midst of all his errors.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4327.) We may observe of brambles that they always grow crooked; for by reason of their briers and thorns no hand can touch them so as to bend them straight. And so it is with some dispositions: they grow into a confirmed, settled obliquity, because their sharpness makes them unfit to be handled by discipline and admonition. They are a terror and a grievance to those that they converse with; and to attempt to advise them out of their irregularities, is as if a chirurgeon should offer to dress a wounded lion; he must look to perish in the attempt, and to be torn in pieces for his pains.

It was surely of very great importance to Nabal (1 Sam. xxv.) to have been admonished of the rough, unadvised answer that he returned to David's soldiers; for it was like to have brought a ruin upon him and his family and his whole estate, yet none would do him that seasonable kindness, because of the rudeness and churlishness of his manners: for in the 17th verse that character is given of him, that he "was such a son of Belial, that a man could not speak to him."

To be foolish and to be angry too, is for a man first to cast himself into a pit, and then to hinder others from pulling him out.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4328.) It was a maxim of Bishop Griswold—"When censured or accused, to *correct*—not to justify—my error."

A certain minister with more zeal than discretion once became impressed with the thought that the bishop was a mere formalist in religion, and that it was his duty to go and warn him of his danger, and exhort him to "flee from the wrath to come." Accordingly he called upon the bishop, very solemnly made known his errand, and forthwith entered upon his reproof.

The bishop listened in silence till his visitor had closed a severely denunciatory exhortation, and then in substance replied as follows: "My dear friend, I do not wonder that they who witness the inconsistency of my daily conduct, and see how poorly I adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour, should think I have no religion. I often fear for myself that such is the case, and feel very grateful to you for giving me this warning."

The reply was made with such evidently unaffected humility, and with such deep sincerity, that if an audible voice from heaven had attested the genuineness of his Christian character, it could not more effectually have silenced his kindly-intending but misjudging censor, or more completely disabused him of his false impressions. He immediately acknowledged his error, begged the bishop's pardon, and ever afterwards looked upon him as one of the distinguished lights of the Christian world. —*Episcopal Record.*

o. Thankfully.

(4329.) Had I a careful and pleasant companion that should show me my angry face in a glass, I should not at all take it ill. Some are wont to have a looking-glass held to them while they wash, though to little purpose; but to behold a man's self so unnaturally disguised and disordered, will conduce not a little to the impeachment of anger.

—*Plutarch.*

(4330.) Patients are displeased with a physician who doth not prescribe to them, and think he gives them over. And why are none so affected towards a physician of the mind, as to conclude he despairs of their recovery to a right way of thinking, if he tell them nothing which may be for their good? —*Epictetus*, B.C. 60.

(4331.) Oh, it is a blessed thing to have others tell us of our faults, and as it were to pull us out of the fire with violence, as Jude speaks; rather to pull us out with violence, with sharp rebukes, than we should perish in our sins. If a man be to weed his ground, he sees need of the benefit of others; if a man be to demolish his house, he will be thankful to others for their help; so he that is to pull down his corruption, that old house, he should be thankful to others that will tell him, "This is rotten, and this is to blame;" who if he be not thankful for seasonable reproof, he knows not what self-judging means. If any man be so uncivil when a man shows him a spot on his garment to grow choleric, will we not judge him to be an unreasonable man? And so when a man shall be told, "This will hinder your comfort another day;" if men were not spiritually besotted, would they swell and be angry against such a man.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(4332.) We should much esteem the private admonitions and reprehensions of our godly friends; for in nothing more than this, is the saying of the wise man verified: "Two are better than one, for if they fall, the one will help up his fellow: but woe be to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." When men are apt through their drowsy sloth to neglect their weighty business, or to forslow their journey by over-sleeping themselves, they hold it a great kindness in those that will call them up betimes, though it be not pleasant for the instant to be broken of their sleep. But what business so weighty as to make our calling and election sure? what journey more important than to travel towards our heavenly country? and wherein are we more sluggish and apt to lose our best opportunities by over-sleeping ourselves in carnal security, if we be not roused up with the reproofs of faithful friends?

Those that fall into a lethargy, after their recovery think themselves beholden to such about them as by

their pricking and nipping them kept them waking, though it may be for the present it was a thankless office, being so distasteful to their humour and appetite. But we are prone to fall into the spiritual lethargy of carnal security, which is more dangerous and pernicious than ten thousand bodily deaths; and therefore by so much more are we to esteem the kind office of such a faithful friend who, by nips and pricks of admonitions and reproof, keeps from falling into or continuing in this sleep of death.

When our bodily sores begin to fester at the bottom, and to breed dead flesh, and when our bodies abound with hurtful humours, we not only voluntarily send for the surgeon and physician, but thank and reward them, though to our smart and pain they used to cure us corrosives and strong potions: and shall we not be as careful for the recovery of our souls, and as thankful to those who use these good means to effect the cure, although they be distasteful, yea, painful and loathsome to our carnal sense and appetite?

—*Downame*, 1642.

(4333.) Far be it from any here to be like those wicked wretches whom the prophet inveighs against, that hate those that reprove them: to hate their instructors, because they are sometimes also necessarily correctors, to hate them for that for which rather they ought to love them. You must not, as the psalmist speaks, be as the horse or mule without understanding. Horses and mules can well endure, and are wont to take notice of them that feed them, and stroke them, and make much of them; but they cannot endure those that come about to drench them, or bleed them, or to meddle with their sores, though they intend nothing therein but their good; or because they have sense, whereby they perceive some present good in the one, but they have no reason to apprehend any future good in the other. Creatures endued with reason must be wiser than they, and love their teacher as well reproving and correcting, when just occasion is, as speaking fair and commending.

—*Gataker*, 1574-1654.

RESURRECTION.

1. The moral reasonableness of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

(4334.) The body shall be awaked out of its dead sleep, and quickened into a glorious immortal life. The soul and body are the essential parts of man; and though the inequality be great in their operations that respect holiness, yet their concourse is necessary. Good actions are designed by the counsel and resolution of the spirit, but performed by the ministry of the flesh. Every grace expresses itself in visible actions by the body. In the sorrows of repentance it supplies tears, in fastings its appetites are restrained, in thanksgivings the tongue breaks forth into the joyful praises of God. All the victories over sensible pleasure and pain are obtained by the soul in conjunction with the body. Now it is most becoming the Divine goodness not to deal so differently, that the soul should be everlastingly happy, and the body lost in forgetfulness; the one glorified in heaven, the other remain in the dust. From their first setting out in the world to the grave they ran the same race, and shall enjoy the same reward. Here the body is the consort of the soul in obedience and sufferings, hereafter in fruition. When the crown of purity or palm of martyrdom shall be given by the great Judge in the view of all, they shall both partake in the honour. Of this we have an earnest in the resurrection of Christ in His true body, who "is the first-fruits of them that sleep." —*Bates*, 1625-1699.

2. "With what body do they come?"

(4335.) Little would an unbeliever think what a body God will make of this that now is corruptible flesh and blood! It shall then be loathsome and troublesome no more. It shall be hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or cold, or pained no more. As the stars of heaven do differ from a clod of earth, or from a carrion in a ditch, so will our glorified, immortal bodies differ from this mortal corruptible flesh. If a skilful workman can turn a little earth and ashes into such curious transparent glasses as we daily see; and if a little seed that bears no show of such a thing can produce the more beautiful flowers of the earth; and if a little acorn can bring forth the greatest oak; why should we once doubt whether the seed of everlasting life and glory, which is now in the blessed souls with Christ, can by Him communicate a perfection to the flesh that is dissolved into its elements? There is no true beauty but that which is there received from the face of God; and if a glimpse made Moses' face to shine, what glory will God's glory communicate to us, when we have the fullest, endless intuition of it? There only is the strength, and there is the riches, and there is the honour, and there is the pleasure; and here are but the shadows, and dreams, and names, and images of these precious things.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4336.) "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." This is God's law concerning the seed. It must be dead, or it cannot be made alive. This is evidently true. So is it with the body. It must die, in order that it may be made alive.

Then, too, in the process of making the seed alive, there is also a resemblance to the way in which the body is to be made alive. "As for that which thou sowest," as to the seed, St. Paul says, "Thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain." You do not sow the very grain that shall rise. That seed which you sow is dissolved. It melts and disappears. And yet out of that seed, out of the substance of it, out of the particles of matter of which it was formed, God, by His mysterious and almighty power brings forth a body like the other, and belonging to the same class: for "to every seed" He gives "its own body." No one ever heard of a man sowing wheat and having barley spring up. The crop always follows the seed. So is it with the body of man. Like the seed, "thou sowest not that body that shall be." That body which thou sowest melts and disappears. Yet out of that body, out of the materials of which it was made, will God by His mysterious and almighty power raise up another of the same kind; just as the grain of wheat which springs out of the earth is like that which was sown in it, and as truly formed out of the other as that is: so that the

risen man himself will know that he is the same man, and all who loved him will know it too.

—*Champneys.*

(4337.) We may find it difficult to explain how the identity of the body can be preserved while the matter composing it is changed; we may be left to conjecture whether it is by sameness in the chemical composition, or by a germ of the matter of the old body forming the basis or groundwork of the new; but our difficulty in explaining can present no reason for denying the fact, for we meet with virtual exemplifications of it every day.

It is a well-known fact that we lose something like a seventh part of the matter of our bodies, and acquire a seventh of new matter, every year; or, in other words, that the matter of our bodies undergoes an entire change every seven years. That of which they are now composed was not connected with them ten years ago; that of which they were composed then has now passed away into other combinations; but while the matter has been changed the identity has been preserved. The body as it exists now is responsible for all that was done by the body as it existed then. A man in this country twenty years since, let us say, committed the crime of murder; shortly afterwards he escaped to Australia, and has contrived hitherto to elude the vigilance of the law. Suppose, however, that he is discovered and arraigned for the crime committed so long ago. It may be urged that the matter of his body has undergone several changes since then; that the hand which committed the murder, as regards the particles of matter composing it, has now no existence; that that hand of his is composed of matter entirely new, and so with his whole material system; that, therefore, the man cannot be held responsible for the crime committed by a different body; and that it would be absurd and unjust to punish this body for that which was done by another. Would the plea be deemed valid in any court of law? Certainly not; for though the matter of the body has been so entirely changed, the body is the same.

And so will it be in the resurrection of the dead: though the matter of the body be changed, its identity will be preserved, and the body raised will be responsible for all that was done by that which lived and was laid in the grave.

Or take another illustration. Look at a child in the playfulness of infancy; then trace in imagination that child's growth until it has attained the strength and stature of manhood; then follow it onward until it reaches the decrepitude of old age. How different it is in its different stages! How the full-grown man contrasts with the playful child, and the feeble old man with both! How different, both in the matter composing, and the form which it assumes, is the body in its infancy from the body in its manhood! how different in its vigorous manhood from its old age! And yet, as regards identity it is throughout the same body. That which age has withered is the same which in manhood was full of strength; that which in manhood was full of strength is the same which lay once in the feebleness of infancy. So the body raised from the dead, though differing in the matter composing it, and in the form which it assumes, will, as regards identity, be the same with that which lived and died.

—*Landels.*

(4338.) "*Some man may say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?*" How can the same body which falls into dust be raised again, to become anew the tabernacle of the immortal spirit? The particles of which it is composed may be scattered to the four winds, they may assume new forms, they may be made to contribute to the formation of other beings—of plants, of animals, of men. How can each several particle be disentangled, how shall each be brought together again to constitute the same body which was dissolved at death?

Now we presume to put no limits upon the almighty power of God. We do not doubt that amid all the ceaseless infinite fluctuations of the material particles, His eye could trace each grain of dust, and His hand collect it, and bring it back to reconstitute the body. But we contend that any such process is as unnecessary as it is improbable. We maintain that the same body which has been laid in the grave may be raised at the last day; though not one single material particle which went to constitute the one body, shall be found in the other.

For what is it that is necessary to the identity of the body? The identity of the body does not depend on the identity of the material particles of which it is composed. These are in a state of perpetual flux. The body of our childhood is not the body of our youth, nor the body of our youth that of our manhood, nor the body of our manhood that of our old age. Every particle has changed, and yet it is the same body: the person to whom it belongs still continues the same person.

If you insist upon it that every particle of matter of which my body is built must be brought together to form my new resurrection body, then I ask, What body during this present life is my true body? Is it the body of my childhood, or of my youth, or of my old age? The body in which I die is no more truly mine than the body with which I came into the world. Both are mine, both are in some sense the same, and yet they have not a single material particle in common. What possible reason is there, then, for contending that the body which is laid in the grave must be brought together again, particle for particle, at the resurrection, when it is no more essentially a part of myself, than my body at any other stage of existence.

The only thing of which we need to be assured is, that the principle of identity which governs the formation of the body in this life, shall govern its formation at the resurrection. In the ever-flowing torrent of life, as wave after wave passes through our bodily frame, bringing with it growth and variety in the structure, there is some principle, or law, or specific form, call it what you will, which remains ever the same. The organism is essentially one, despite the modifications of size, of form, of inward constitution.

This holds in every reign of nature where there is life. From the acorn buried in the earth there springs first the little slender stalk, the germinant shoot hidden between its two cotyledons, then the sapling, then the monarch of the forest. But the oak and the germinant shoot are one and the same vegetable existence. The butterfly which unfolds its wings of purple and gold in the summer's sun is the same creature which was but lately a chrysalis, and before that a crawling worm, and before that

an embryo in a tiny egg. And is it not the same with man? Is not the human embryo the same individual when it becomes child, youth, old man? And yet does there remain in the oak, in the butterfly, in the man, a single one of the ponderable molecules which existed in the germ, the egg, the embryo? What physiologist would venture to affirm there is? And still we repeat, it is the same vegetable, the same insect, the same man.

What, then, is this thing which remains ever the same, the same in the vegetable in all its developments, the same in the insect in all its metamorphoses, the same in the human body in every phase of its existence? What is this, which never perishes, is never destroyed, in all the changes and fluctuations of the material organism? It escapes all our investigations; we see it only in its manifestations, in the phenomena of life; but that it is a reality all observation goes to show: and if through all the changes of the body during this life, this principle continues in all its force, why may it not survive the shock of death? Why may not this specific form, as Gregory of Nyssa terms it, remain united to the soul, as he conjectured (and as other thinkers like Leibnitz have supposed), after its separation from the body, and thus become at length the agent in the resurrection, by reconstituting, though in a new and transfigured condition, the body which was dissolved at death? Why may not the same body, which was sown in corruption, be raised to incorruption, and that which was sown a natural body, be raised a spiritual body? There is at least nothing improbable in such a supposition; there is everything in the analogies of Nature to confirm it; and when Revelation is silent, we may be thankful for such glimpses of probability as come to us in aid of our faith. —*Perowne.*

3. Is less inexplicable than the creation of the body.

(4339.) Creation is more inexplicable than resurrection. For it is not the same thing to rekindle an extinguished lamp, and to show fire that has never yet appeared. It is not the same thing to raise up again a house that has fallen down, and to produce one which has never at all had an existence. —*Chrysostom*, 347-407.

[Modern preachers will probably prefer to use this argument, drawn from the *creation* of the body, as an illustration of the fact that our inability to explain the method of the *resurrection* of the body is no reason for refusing to believe in it.]

4. Analogies in nature and art.

[*See next section of this article:* "5. *A necessary caution as to the use of the foregoing illustrations.*"]

(4340.) Trees, in the winter-time, appear to the view of all men as if they were withered and quite dead, yet, when the spring-time comes, they become alive again, and, as before, do bring forth their buds, blossoms, leaves, and fruit. The reason is, because the body, grain, and arms of the tree are all joined and fastened to the root, where the sap lies all the winter-time, and from thence, by reason of so near conjunction, it is derived in the spring-time to all the parts of the tree. Even so the bodies of men have their winter also, and that is in death, in which time they are turned into dust and so remain for a time dead and rotten; yet, in the spring-time, that is, in the last day, at the resurrection of all flesh, then, by means of the mystical union with Christ, His divine and quickening virtue shall stream from thence to all the bodies of His members, and cause them to live again, and that to life eternal. —*Strode.*

(4341.) Let us not be like them without faith, that think the bodies are lost for ever that are cast into the grave; like children seeing the silver cast into the furnace, think it utterly cast away, till they see it come out again a pure vessel.

—*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

(4342.) I have stood in a smith's forge, and seen him put a rusty, cold, dull piece of iron into the fire, and after a while he has taken the very same individual piece of iron out of the fire, hot, bright, sparkling: and thus it is with our bodies; they are laid down in the grave dead, heavy, earthly, but at the resurrection this mortal shall put on immortality; at the general conflagration this dead, heavy, earthly body, shall arise living, lightsome, glorious: which made Job so confident, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, . . . and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." —*Fuller*, 1608-1661.

(4343.) Paper—that article so useful in human life, that repository of all the arts and sciences, that minister of all governments, that broker in all trade and commerce, that second memory of the human mind, that stable pillar of an immortal name—takes its origin from vile rags. The rag-dealer trudges on foot, or drives his cart through the towns and villages, and his arrival is the signal for searching every corner, and gathering every old and useless shred. These he takes to the mill, and there they are picked, washed, mashed, shaped, and sized, in short, formed into a fabric beautiful enough to venture unabashed even into the presence of monarchs and princes.

This reminds me of the resurrection of my mortal body. When deserted by the soul, I know not what better the body is than a worn and rejected rag. Accordingly it is buried in the earth, and there gnawed by worms, and reduced to dust and ashes. If, however, man's art and device can produce so pure and white a fabric as paper from filthy rags, what should hinder God by His mighty power to raise this vile body of mine from the grave, and refine and fashion it like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ?

—*Scriver*, 1629-1693.

(4344.) There are things in nature which suggest a resurrection of the dead.

Such is the well-known analogy presented by the changes which many creatures undergo. The insect, at first a creeping worm, crawls on the earth, its home the ground, or some humble plant or decaying matter, which feeds its voracious appetite. The time of its first change arrives. It weaves itself a shroud; it makes itself a coffin; and under the soil, in some cranny of the wall, in a convenient fissure of rock or tree, as in a catacomb, it finds a quiet grave. There, shrouded and coffined and buried, and to all appearance dead, it lies till its appointed change. The hour arrives. It bursts these cerements; and a pure, winged, beautiful creature, it leaves them to roam henceforth in sunny skies, and find its bed in the soft bosom, and its food in the nectar of odorous flowers.

Paul saw our grave in the furrow of the plough;

our burial in the corn dropped into the soil; our decay in the change undergone by the seed; and our resurrection, when, bursting its sheath and pushing aside the clod, it rises green and beautiful, to wave its head in summer days, high above the ground that was once its grave. —*Guthrie.*

(4345.) Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead? The power required for this is not greater, after all, than is exercised in the productions and changes which are constantly taking place. Natural processes and phenomena do not prove the fact, but they may certainly illustrate the possibility of a resurrection. You see the oak springing from the acorn—the plant from the seed which perhaps has lain in a state of death for many centuries—the worm leaving the chrysalis state, and emerging from it a "creature aerial, winged, glorious, radiant with beauty, endowed with new senses and new faculties, to seek in a higher element purer food and nobler enjoyments." Is not the power requisite to produce these changes competent to raise the dead? They are not the less wonderful that they are so common, and their very commonness should rather strengthen our faith in the doctrine of the resurrection; for if such exercises of power are frequent, why should we find it hard to believe that one may be added to the many for the purpose of recalling the dead to life?

It is true, that if we take the popular view of the resurrection, or more correctly the view which was at one time popular—that the body raised from the dead will be composed of the very same matter as the body which was laid in the grave;—if we take this view of the resurrection, I say, the objections which are brought against it cannot be so summarily disposed of. It is in vain that we appeal to the power of God; for the objectors will tell us that such a resurrection involves a contradiction—what is absolutely impossible—impossible even to God. The body, they say, and say truly, mingles with the soil in which it is laid; it is drawn up into the plant which grows on the surface; the plant is soon devoured by some animal, and affords nutriment to its system; that animal, and the plant also, it may be, become food for man. Thus, the matter of one man's body becomes long afterwards part of another man's, so that, at death, the body of the two may have been composed of precisely the same matter. Now it is impossible that in the resurrection the same matter can be in two bodies at the same time; hence the resurrection of the body cannot take place.

To this objection we need only reply, that the resurrection you describe is not the resurrection of Scripture. In so far as the Bible gives an explanation of the event, it discountenances the supposition that the body which rises from the grave will be composed of the very same matter as the body which was laid there. "*Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be.*" —*Landels.*

(4346.) I see before me an old and battered cup which many a black lip hath touched, out of which many a villain's throat has received moisture. It is battered and covered with filth. Who could tell what metal it is? It is brought in and given to the silversmith; he no sooner receives it than he begins to break it into pieces; he dashes it into shivers again and again; he pounds it until he has broken it, then he puts it into his fining pot and melts it. Now you begin to see it sparkle again, and by and by he beats it out and fashions it into a goodly chalice out of which a king may drink. Is this the same? the very same thing. This glorious cup; is this the old battered silver we saw just now? silver, did I say, it looked like battered filth. Yes, it is the same, and we who are here below like vessels, alas! too unfit for the Master's use; vessels which have even given comfort to the evil ones, and helped to do the work of Satan, we shall be put into the furnace of the grave, and be there melted down and fused and fashioned into a glorious wine-cup, that shall stand upon the banqueting table of the Son of God. —*Spurgeon.*

5. A necessary caution as to the use of the foregoing illustrations.

(4347.) We are accustomed in our arguments on this subject to appeal to natural phenomena; but these are by no means such as to afford *proof* of the event. The apostle introduces into his argument on the resurrection the grain of wheat, which is not quickened except it die; but he does not introduce it as a *proof* (he was too good a logician for that), but only *to illustrate what he had otherwise proved*, and to obviate a supposed objection.

The plant springs from the grain of seed, and the oak from the acorn, but these are by no means analogous to the resurrection of the body. The points of discrepancy are numerous and striking. In these cases, one oak or one plant proceeds from another very much as men are propagated by natural generation, not as when the identical body is raised from the dead. Then the plant or the oak does not decay, and another plant or oak spring out of its ashes, as the resurrection body rises out of the ashes of the body which was laid in the tomb. Even the acorn does not become dust before it germinates, like as the dead body is dissolved. And, moreover, there is not that identity between the oak which produced the acorn and the oak which sprang out of it, that there is between the body which is buried and the body which comes forth from the grave.

Take another case: the worm enters the chrysalis state, remains apparently dead for a time, then emerges a winged insect, glorious as compared with what it was; the repulsive has become beautiful, the weak comparatively strong: doomed to crawl slowly along before, it now flutters in the sunbeam, and floats on the breeze; is susceptible of new sensations, and endowed with new powers. It is a wonderful transition, certainly, and may well *illustrate the possibility of a resurrection*, but still they are not analogous. The identity between the butterfly and the worm is preserved, and the chrysalis state somewhat resembles the state of death, but there is no corruption or dissolution, as in the case of the body.

Again: the earth during winter, frost-bound and covered with snow, is often said to resemble the state of death; and we know how in spring it again teems with life, how plants spring up in the place of, and of the same species as others which have decayed; but neither in this case is the analogy complete. The reanimated earth has not been dissolved like the body; and though the new plants are of the same species as their decayed predeces-

sors, they are not identical. Thus, in all the phenomena of nature you can find nothing strictly analogous to the resurrection of the dead; and though you could, I need not tell you that analogy is not proof, and that, though it could be found in nature, it would afford no reason for the conclusion that the body will be raised. —*Landels.*

6. Replies to objections.

(4348.) There are some who, observing that the spirit is parted from the flesh, that the flesh is turned into corruption, that its corruption is reduced to dust, that this dust is so dissolved into elementary parts that it is incapable of being seen by the eyes of man, despair of the possibility of the resurrection being brought to pass, and whilst they gaze upon the dry bones, they distrust its being possible for these to be clothed with flesh, and again flushing into life; which persons, if they do not hold the resurrection of the body on the principle of obedience, ought certainly to hold it on the principle of reason.

For what does the universe every day but imitate in its elements our resurrection? Thus, by the lapse of the minutes of the day, the temporal light itself, as it were, dies, when, the shade of night coming on, that light which was beheld is withdrawn from sight, and it daily rises again, as it were, when the light that was withdrawn from our eyes, upon the night being suppressed, is renewed afresh.

From the progress of the seasons, too, we see the shrubs lose the greenness of their foliage and cease from putting forth fruit; and on a sudden, as if from dried-up wood, by a kind of resurrection coming, we see the leaves burst forth, the fruit grow big, and the whole tree clothed with renewed beauty.

—*Gregory*, 354-604.

(4349.) We unceasingly behold the small seeds of trees committed to the moistness of the ground, wherefrom not long afterwards we behold large trees arise, and bring forth leaves and fruit. Let us then consider the little seed of any tree whatever, which is thrown into the ground, for a tree to be produced therefrom, and let us take in, if we are capable of it, where in that exceeding littleness of the seed that most enormous tree was buried which proceeded from it? Where was the wood? where was the bark? where the verdure of the foliage? where the abundance of the fruit? Was there anything of the kind perceived in the seed when it was thrown into the ground? And yet, by the secret Artificer of all things ordering all in a wonderful manner, both in the softness of the seed there lay buried the roughness of the bark, and in its tenderness there was hidden the strength of its timber, and in its dryness, fertility of productiveness.

What wonder, then, if that finest dust which to our eyes is resolved into the elements, He, when He is minded, fashions again into the human being, who from the finest seeds resuscitates the largest trees? And so, seeing that we have been created reasoning beings, we ought to collect the hope of our own resurrection from the mere aspect and contemplation of the objects of nature.

—*Gregory*, 354-604.

(4350.) What is the wise argument of the gainsayers; rather, I should say, their exceeding simple one? "Why, how, when the body is mixed up with the earth, and is become earth, and this again is removed elsewhere, how," say they, "shall it rise again?" For to thee this seems impossible, but not to the unsleeping Eye. For unto that all things are clear. And thou in that confusion seest no distinction of parts; but He knows them all. Since also the heart of thy neighbour thou knowest not, nor the things in it; but He knows all. If, then, because of thy not knowing how God raises men up, thou believest not that He does raise them, wilt thou disbelieve that He knows also what is in thy mind? for neither is that obvious to view. And yet in the body it is visible matter, though it be dissolved; but those thoughts are invisible. Shall He, then, who knows with all certainty the invisible things, not see the things which be visible, and easily detach the scattered parts of the body?

Chrysostom, 347-407.

(4351.) It is objected that the resurrection of these numerical bodies, when they are devoured and turned into the substance of other bodies, is a thing incredible.

Answers:— 1. If it be neither against the power, the wisdom, or the will of God, it is not incredible at all; but it is not against any of these. Who can say that God is unable to raise the dead, who seeth so much greater things performed by Him in the daily motion of the sun, or earth, and in the support and course of the whole frame of nature? He that can every spring give a kind of resurrection to plants and flowers and fruits of the earth, can easily raise our bodies from the dust; and no man can prove that the wisdom of God, nor yet His will, are against our resurrection; but that both are, for it may be proved by His promises. Shall that which is beyond the power of man be, therefore, objected as a difficulty to God?

2. Yea, it is congruous to the wisdom and governing justice of God, that the same body which was partaker with the soul in sin and duty should be partaker with it in suffering or felicity.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ did purposely die and rise again in His human body, to put the resurrection out of doubt, by undeniable, ocular demonstration, and by the certainty of belief.

4. There is some natural reason for the resurrection in the soul's inclination to its body. As it is unwilling to lay it down, it will be willing to reassume it when God shall say the time is come. As we may conclude at night when they are going to bed, that the people of city or country will rise the next morning and put on their clothes, and not go naked about the streets, because there is in them a natural inclination to rising and to clothes, and a natural averseness to lie still, or to go unclothed; so may we conclude, from the soul's natural inclination to its body, that it will reassume it as soon as God consenteth.

5. And all our objections, which reason from supposed contradictions, vanish, because none of us all have so much skill in physics as to know what it is which individualeth this numerical body, and so what it is which is to be restored; but we all confess that it is not the present mass of flesh and humours which, being in a continual flux, is not the same this year which it was the last, and may vanish long before we die.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4352.) Some have said, "But when men's

bodies are dead, and are committed to the grave, they are often digged up, and the careless sexton mixes them up with common mould; nay, it sometimes happens that they are carted away from the churchyard, and strewn over the fields, to become a rich manure for wheat, so that the particles of the body are absorbed into the corn that is growing, and they travel round in a circle until they become the food of man. So that the particle which man have been in the body of one man enters into the body of another. Now," say they, "how can all these particles be traced?" Our answer is, If it were necessary, every atom could be traced. Omnipotence and Omniscience could do it. If it were needful that God should search out and find out every individual atom that ever existed, He would be able to detect the present abode of every single particle. The astronomer is able to tell the position of one star by the aberration of the motion of the other; by his calculation, apart from observation, he can discover an unknown orb; its hugeness puts it within his reach. But to God there is nothing little or great; He can find out the orbit of one atom by the aberration in the orbit of another atom, He can pursue and overtake each separate particle. But recollect this is not necessary at all, for the identity may be preserved without their being the same atoms. Just go back to the excellent illustration of our text. The wheat is just the same, but in the new wheat that has grown up there may not be one solitary particle of that matter which was in the seed cast into the ground. A little seed that shall not weigh the hundredth part of an ounce falls into the earth, and springs up and produces a forest tree that shall weigh two tons. Now, if there be any part of the original seed in the tree, it must be but in the proportion of a millionth part, or something less than that. And yet is the tree positively identical with the seed—it is the same thing. And so there may be only a millionth part of the particles of my body in the new body which I shall wear, but yet it may be still the same. It is not the identity of the matter that will make positive identity. —*Spurgeon.*

7. Its diverse issues.

(4353.) When the archangel's trumpet sounds, then the saints shall sing; the bodies of believers shall come out of the grave to be made happy, as the chief butler came out of the prison, and was restored to all his dignity at the court; but the bodies of the wicked shall come out of the grave, as the chief baker out of prison, to be executed (Gen. xl. 22). —*Watson*, 1696.

8. Easter Sunday.

(4354.) Surely, even the angels in heaven keep these pascal solemnities with joy: the glory of that victorious Lion who hath triumphed over death and hell is even to them matter of rejoicing. It is the Sabbath of the new world, our passover from everlasting death to life; our true jubilee, the first day of our week, and the chief in our calendar. Herein our Phœnix rose from His ashes, our Eagle renewed His feathers, the First-begotten of the dead was born from the womb of the earth. Christ, like the sun eclipsed by the moon, got Himself out by His resurrection; and, as the sun by the moon, He was darkened by them to whom He gave light. His death did justify us, His resurrection did justify His death. He buried the law with Himself, and both with honour; He raised up the gospel with Himself, and both with glory. His resurrection was the first stone of the foundation, "In Christ shall all be made alive," and the last stone of the roof, for God assures us He shall come to judgment, by this token, that He raised Him up from the dead (Acts xvii. 31). Satan danced on His grave for joy; when he had Him there once, he thought Him sure enough; but He rose again and trampled on the devil's throne with triumph. This is the faith peculiar to Christians: the Jews believe Him dead, not living; we believe that He is risen, and sits at the right hand of God. As Moses led the people to Canaan through the wilderness, so Christ leads us to heaven through the grave. His resurrection is not only the object of our faith, but the example of our hope. We all carry mortality about us, and the strongest man is but like Nebuchadnezzar's image; though his head be of gold, and his ribs of brass, yet his feet are of clay: a stone thrown at the feet overturns this great image, and down falls man. But, "O death, I will be thy death." Durst death kill Christ? Christ therefore shall kill death. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." But, as one saith, the hope of life immortal is the life of our life mortal. Death and the grave swallow all, and then burst; as crammed covetousness disgorgeth itself by a prodigal heir.

The Jews craved a sign, and had it (Matt. xii. 38, 39); yet then spake against it, or wondered at it. To us it shall be more than a sign, it shall have wonder, and wonder enough; but we will not lose our fruit or part therein for a world. Him, that this day rose from the clods, we expect from the clouds, to raise our bodies, to perform His promises, to finish our faith, to perfect our glory, and to draw us unto Himself. I do not say, Come, see the place where they laid Him, that is empty; but, Come, see the place where He is; here is the Lord. I say not with Mary, They have taken away the Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him; He is personally in heaven, He is mystically, sacramentally, yea, in a spiritual sense, He is really here. Himself said, I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you: let us earnestly desire to eat this sacrament with Him. God said once, Take and eat of every tree but one; but man then mistook the fruit, he did eat and fell. He now says again, Take and eat; this is My body, which is given for you: let us not mistake, but eat and live for ever. And the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for us, preserves our bodies and souls into everlasting life.

As God spake to the fish, and it cast up Jonah, commanded the earth, and it delivered up Jesus; so He will speak to all creatures, and they shall not detain one dust of our bodies. There shall be a dry ground for this valley of tears, a land of the living for this Golgotha of the dead, a settled mansion for this movable pavilion. Christ had His Easter-day by Himself; there shall be one general Easter-day for us all, when the wicked shall rise to contempt, the faithful to eternity of days. Here shall be no terror to affright us, no sorrow to afflict us, no sickness to distemper us, no death to dissolve us, no sin to endanger, for evermore. —*Adams*, 1654.

RICHES.

1. Riches and virtue are not incompatible.

(4355.) The declaimers on the incompatibility of wealth and virtue are mere declaimers, and nothing more. For you will often find them, in the next breath, applauding or condemning every measure or institution according to its supposed tendency to increase or diminish wealth. You will find them not only readily accepting wealth themselves from any honourable source, and anxious to secure from poverty their children and all most dear to them (for this might be referred to the prevalence of passion over principle), but even offering up solemn prayers to heaven for the prosperity of their native country, and contemplating with joy a flourishing condition of her agriculture, manufactures, or commerce,—in short, of the sources of her wealth. Seneca's discourses in praise of poverty would, I have no doubt, be rivalled by many writers of this island, if one-half of the revenues he drew from the then inhabitants of it, by lending them money at high interest, were proposed as a prize. Such declaimers against wealth resemble the Harpies of Virgil, seeking to excite disgust at the banquet of which they are themselves eager to partake.

—*Whately*, 1787–1863.

(4356.) In each successive age Christians have, as a matter of fact, risen, on the whole, in the possibility of wielding secular elements by their spiritual power; and all reasonings and analogies point to a day when humility, purity, justice, love, faith, and devotion, shall be just as possible with secular wealth and worldly power as without them; nay, more possible. I believe that when the time of ripeness comes, it will be found that beauty and power are the only appropriate garments of piety, of moral excellence. They have been stolen by the passions and the appetites; but they are to be worn in their fullest glory only by the highest sentiments that are in man. I do not believe, except as a temporary thing, as an expedient, that men are appointed to suffering and limitation. A man that is travelling home may submit to the necessity of sleeping under trees, without thinking that it is best always to sleep under trees. A man may feed himself out of a wallet while he is in a wilderness seeking a city of refuge, without thinking that every man ought to live from hand to mouth. And although it is true that, regarded as a wayfarer, man is, in the whole line of development, subject to cross-bearing and exclusion; yet, I believe that characteristically he is a creature that was made to be rich, and wise, and influential, and active; and that all the powers of nature are to be his, and that he is to rule them; and that we come near to the millennial glory in proportion as multitudes of men know how to govern all things, and not to be governed by them. In other words, amplitude is my conception of the Christian man—not poverty. Joy is the key-note of Christian experience—not sorrow. Sorrow is the medicine by which we come to it.

Did you never hear, when the harpist was preparing for sweet melodies, how he took the chords that were out of tune, and commenced screwing them and fingering them, and how a wail went up from them, till, one by one, they had all been brought to the right key, and how then he swept his hands over them, and brought exquisite harmonies forth from them? The process of chording was one of hideous sounds; but the sounds that were produced after the instrument was put in order were sweet and agreeable to the ear. And I believe that the proper condition of man is one in which his soul gives forth music, and an abundance of it.

—*Beecher.*

2. Are in themselves desirable.

(4357.) Riches are the stairs whereby men climb up into the height of dignity, the fortification that defends it, the food it lives upon, the oil that keeps the lamp of honour from going out. Honour is a bare robe if riches do not lace and flourish it, and riches a dull lump till honour give a soul to quicken it. —*Adams*, 1654.

3. Yet they are not to be too earnestly desired.

(4358.) When a man is to travel into a far country, a great burthen at his back will but hinder him in his journey; one staff in his hand may comfortably support him, but a bundle of staves would be troublesome. Thus a competency of these outward things may happily help us in the way to heaven, whereas abundance may be hurtful, and, like long garments to a man that walks on in the way, will trip up our heels too, if we look not well about us.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(4359.) Abundance of wealth is the foundation and ground of many dangerous temptations, whereby Satan chokes in us the seed of God's Word, weans us from the love of heavenly things, puffs us up with pride, and makes us forgetful of God and of all duties which we owe unto Him. So that like as our bodies when they excessively abound in any humour, though it be never so good in itself, are thereby cast into separate diseases, if it be not abated and purged; so it fares with us in respect of our states—for when they abound with superfluity of these good things which are earthly and temporal, and are not abated by employing them to good uses, they make our souls dangerously sick in sin, and betray them to be overcome by the temptations of the devil. And therefore as the discreet merchant, though his wares be never so good, fits his burden to his ship, not overloading it with more than it can well carry, for fear lest all should sink; and if a storm happen, is ready to lighten his ship by casting out a part of this also, that so the residue with himself may escape the danger: so we are to use the like wisdom, and not overburden our souls and minds with a greater load of these earthly things than they can well bear, but allow unto them only a fit and competent proportion; and if Satan, taking advantage of our plenty, do endanger us with the storms of his temptations, we are to ease ourselves by giving part of that, which otherwise we might well use, to the poor, to preserve our souls from suffering shipwreck, and so shall we not only save the rest for our own use, but casting our wares upon the face of these waters, we shall after many days find them, with no small advantage. (Eccles. xi. 1.) —*Downame*, 1644.

(4360.) In an artichoke there is a little picking meat, not so wholesome as delicious, and nothing to that it shows for; more than the tenth part is unprofitable leaves; and besides, there is a core in the midst of it, that will choke a man if he take not good heed. Such a thing is wealth that men so covetously desire; it is like some kind of fish, so

full of bones, and unseen, that no man can eat of them without danger. The rich man's wealth is very troublesome to the outward man, like a long garment that is too wide, if he tread upon it he may chance to catch a fall, a fall into much discontent and envy of the world; but to the soul, riches, if not well employed, prove very pernicious, making a man vainly confident; thinking that he is so walled and moated about that he is out of all gunshot, when he is more open to danger than a poorer man; then they make him proud, and pride, says St. Bernard, is the rich man's coffin; it blows him like a bladder with a quill, then he grows secure, and so falls into sudden ruin. —*Otes.*

(4361.) As the children of Israel passing along the wilderness, marched forward on their way when the cloud went that conducted them, but there stood still where it stayed; so may our affections walk on while God's hand goes before them: but look where God stays His hand and ceases to give, there should our heart stay likewise, and we cease to desire. —*Gataker*, 1574-1656.

(4362.) Since "Riches are not for ever, nor doth the crown endure to every generation;" yea, since they must be left very soon, nor is there any certainty of keeping them any time; that one day may consume them, one night may dispossess us of them and our life together with them, there can be no reason why we should be so solicitous about them; no account given of our setting so high a rate upon them. For who would much regard the having custody of a rich treasure for a day or two, then to be stripped of all, and left bare? To be to-day invested in large domains, and to-morrow to be dispossessed of them? No man surely would be so fond, as much to affect the condition. Yet this is our case; whatever we call ours, we are but guardians thereof for a few days. This consideration, therefore, may serve to repress or moderate in us all covetous desires, proud conceits, vain confidences and satisfactions in respect to worldly wealth. —*Barrow*, 1630-1677.

(4363.) You desire not the biggest shoes or clothes, but the meetest; so do by your dignity and estate. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4364.) Plutarch tells us, that when Cæsar passed by a smoky, nasty village at the foot of the Alps, some of his commanders merrily asked him whether there was such a stir for commands and dignities and honours among those cottages as there was at Rome? The answer is easy. Do you think that an Antony, a Mark, a Jerome, or such other of the ancient retired Christians, were not wiser and happier men than a Nero or a Caligula, yea, or a Julius or Augustus Cæsar? Is it a desirable thing to be a lord or ruler, before we turn to common earth; and as Marius that was one day made emperor, and reigned the next, and was slain by a soldier the next; so to be worshipped to-day, and laid in the dust, if not in hell, to-morrow? It was the saying of the Emperor Severus, "*Omnia fui, sed nihil expedit;*" and of King David, "I have seen an end of all perfection." Oh, value these things but as they deserve. Speak impartially. Are not those that are striving to get up the ladder foolish and ridiculous, when those that are at the top have attained but danger, trouble, and envy, and those that fall down are accounted miserable? There are more draughts of poison given in golden than in earthen vessels, saith the poet. The Scythian, therefore, was no fool, who, when the Emperor Mich. Paleologus sent him precious ornaments and jewels, asked what they were good for; whether they would preserve him from calamity, sickness, or death, and sent them home when he heard they were of no more use. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4365.) Do not be over-anxious about riches. Get as much of true wisdom and goodness as you can; but be satisfied with a very moderate portion of this world's good. Riches may prove a curse as well as a blessing.

I was walking through an orchard, looking about me, when I saw a low tree laden more heavily with fruit than the rest. On a nearer examination, it appeared that the tree had been dragged to the very earth, and broken by the weight of its treasures. "Oh!" said I, gazing on the tree, "here lies one who has been ruined by his riches."

In another part of my walk, I came up with a shepherd, who was lamenting the loss of a sheep that lay mangled and dead at his feet. On inquiry about the matter, he told me that a strange dog had attacked the flock, that the rest of the sheep had got away through a hole in the hedge, but that the ram now dead had more wool on his back than the rest, and the thorns of the hedge held him fast till the dog had worried him. "Here is another," said I, "ruined by his riches."

At the close of my ramble, I met a man hobbling along on two wooden legs, leaning on two sticks. "Tell me," said I, "my poor fellow, how you came to lose your legs?" "Why, sir," said he, "in my younger days I was a soldier. With a few comrades I attacked a party of the enemy, and overcame them, and we began to load ourselves with spoil. My comrades were satisfied with little, but I burdened myself with as much as I could carry. We were pursued; my companions escaped, but I was overtaken and so cruelly wounded, that I only saved my life afterwards by losing my legs. It was a bad affair, sir; but it is too late to repent of it now." "Ah, friend," thought I, "like the fruit tree and the mangled sheep, you may date your downfall to your possessions. It was your riches that ruined you."

When I see so many rich people, as I do, caring so much for their bodies and so little for their souls, I pity them from the bottom of my heart, and sometimes think there are as many ruined by riches as by poverty. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." The prayer will suit you, perhaps, as well as it does me, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." —*Old Humphrey.*

4. Insatiability of the desire for them.

(4366.) The second evil which attends the possession of riches is an insatiable desire of getting more (Eccles. v. 10). "He who loves money shall not be satisfied with it," says Solomon. And I believe it would be no hard matter to assign more instances of such as riches have made covetous, than of such as covetousness has made rich. Upon which account a man can never truly enjoy what he

actually has through the eager pursuit of what he has not; his heart is still running out; still upon the chase of a new game, and so never thinks of using what it has already acquired. And must it not now be one of the greatest miseries for a man to have a perpetual hunger upon him, and to have his appetite grow fiercer and sharper amidst the very objects and opportunities of satisfaction? Yet so it is usually with men hugely rich. They have, and they covet; riches flow in upon them, and yet riches are the only things they are still looking after. Their desires are answered, and while they are answered they are enlarged; they grow wider and stronger, and bring such a dropsy upon the soul, that the more it takes in, the more it may; just like some drunkards, who even drink themselves athirst, and have no reason in the world for their drinking more but their having drank too much already.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

5. Are not to be too ardently loved.

(4367.) A garment that hangs loose about a man is put off with ease; but so is not the skin that sticks fast to the flesh, nor the shirt that cleaves fast to the ulcerous leper; a tooth if it be loose, it comes out with ease, but if it stick fast in the head it is not pulled out but with pain, yea, many times it brings away some piece of the gum or jaw with it. So here, a man is content willingly to part with his riches, when his heart is not set upon his wealth; but if his heart be glued to it, it even rends his heart in two to part with it. And that is the reason why Job blessed God, when He took away all that ever he had from Him; whereas most men, if God take from them but a small pittance of that they have, are ready, as the devil untruly said that Job would do, even to curse Him to His face.

—*Gataker*, 1574-1654.

(4368.) Riches are like a rose in a man's hand: if he use it gently, it will preserve its savour and its scent and colour a great while; but if he crush it and handle it roughly, it loseth both its colour and sweetness. Thus, if a rich man employ his wealth well, he will possess it the longer; but if he set his heart too much upon it, he will quickly lose it: he may possess it, but by no means must he let his wealth possess him. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(4369.) As the kingdoms and glory of the world were contemned by Christ in the hour of His temptation, so they are inconsiderable to procure His approbation. Trust not, therefore, to uncertain riches; value them but as they will prove at last. As you stand on higher ground than others, it is meet that you should see further. The greater are your advantages, the wiser and better you should be; and therefore should better perceive the difference between things temporal and eternal. It is always dark where these glowworms shine, and where a rotten post doth seem a fire.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

6. Are loved by many who flatter themselves that they are free from avarice.

(4370.) As sick men use to love health better than those that never felt the want of it; so it is too common with poor men to love riches better than the rich that never needed. And yet, poor souls, they deceive themselves, and cry out against the rich, as if they were the only lovers of the world, when they love it more themselves though they cannot get it. —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

7. Reasons for which they are sought.

(4371.) The devil spins silk as well as hemp or flax; and when he wants to catch a trout that will not bite where it can see the line, he spins a line so small that it cannot be seen, and puts the bait upon it, and the fish is caught. And if ever there is an invisible line with bait at the end of it, and with the devil at the end of the rod, it is when a man is going to make money for the sake of using it to do good with. If there is ever a time when Satan laughs, and says, "I have caught a gudgeon!" it is then. —*Beecher*.

8. Do not of themselves make us honourable.

(4372.) As fair tapestry covereth foul and broken walls; even so riches may well make a man more honourable in the sight of the world.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4373.) Prize not thyself by what thou hast, but by what thou art. He that values a jewel by its golden frame, or a book by its silver clasps, or a man by his vast estate, errs. If thou art not worth more than the world can make thee, thy Redeemer had a bad pennyworth, or thou an uncurious Redeemer. —*Quarles*, 1592-1644.

(4374.) It is against reason, indeed, that metals should make difference of men; against religion that it should make such a difference of Christian men. Yet commonly reputation is measured by the acre, and the altitude of the countenance is taken by the pole of advancement. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4375.) Gold and silver are heavy metals, and sink down in the balance; yet, by a preposterous inversion, they lift the heart of a man upwards, as the plummet of a clock, which, while itself passeth downwards, lifts up the striking hammer.

—*Adams*, 1654.

(4376.) It is poor to love a man for that is about him: he must be loved for that is within him. If we should account of men as we do of bags, prize them that weigh heaviest; and measure out our love by the subsidy-book, honouring a man because he is well clothed; I see then no reason but we should do greater reverence to the basin and ewer on the stall, than to the goldsmith in the shop, and most humbly salute satin and velvet in whole pieces, because their virgin-glory was never yet ravished and abused into fashion.

—*Adams*, 1654.

9. Do not necessarily secure happiness.

(4377.) Many rich men understand their own riches no more than the oaks of the forest do their own acorns. —*Donne*, 1573-1631.

(4378.) A man diseased in body can have little joy of his wealth, be it never so much. A golden crown cannot cure the headache, nor a velvet slipper give ease of the gout, nor a purple robe fray away a burning fever. A sick man is alike sick wheresoever you lay him, on a bed of gold or on a pad of straw, with a silk quilt or a sorry rag on him. So no more can riches, gold or silver, land and livings, had a man much more than ever any man had, minister unto him much joy—yea, or any true or sound joy at all—where the mind is distract and

discontent. Without contentment there is no joy of aught; there is no profit, no pleasure, in anything. —*Gataker*, 1574-1654.

(4379.) As poverty and a mean estate are never without a train of fretful sorrows and cares, likewise riches and honour are never without fears and disturbances. And as there is no flame ever so pure but sends up a smoke, nor a rose so beautiful but has its prickles; so there is no condition so splendid or glorious, nor any prosperity so flourishing, but has its troubles or sharp thorns. Every man upon earth without exception bears his cross, or has a grievous thorn in his side. The moth sticks to the richest stuffs, the worm gets into the heart of the fairest flowers and fruits, and the thunderbolt strikes down the loftiest oaks, the highest steeples, and the most magnificent palaces: likewise care and grief commonly eat up the flower of the greatest prosperities, and the noblest dignities are often subject to the strangest alterations and to the most terrible downfalls. The richest crowns cast all their splendour and glory outwardly, but inwardly they are felt to be weighty upon the heads of such as bear them. —*Drelincourt*, 1666.

(4380.) A man who has true benevolence, and has the means of gratifying it, is, or may be, one of the most happy men in the world. His riches make him happy—and they ought to. But when I look at rich men as a class, I find that they are not the happiest of men by any means. They do not enjoy home more than other men, nor as much as other men.

I tell you, there are two things which go to make fine playing on a violin. The first is a master's hand. The second is a good violin; and the quality of the instrument is fully as important as the player's touch. If you take a violin and first break the highest string, and by and by snap the next one, and finally break the next one, leaving the bass string, and that only, and that a great deal the worse for wear, Paganini himself could not bring very much out of that instrument except for surprise. Men take their hearts, which are musical instruments, and snap this cord, and that, and that, reducing themselves to one or two points of sentient enjoyment, and then expect, because they are rich, that they shall be happy. What you are in yourself is to determine whether you are happy or not. You will not be made happy by external things. It is inside that happiness lives. It is that which is fresh and fruitful in you that is to make you happy. I would rather be a man with a sanguine temperament, with average good health, and in moderate business, who sees everything on the bright side, and has a quiet hope of immortality through Jesus Christ—I would rather be such a man than many a rich man. Inconspicuous as he is, and small as his material resources are, he will shake more blossoms and more fruit off from the boughs of the tree of happiness in one year than you will, old curmudgeon, probably in your whole life. And yet you and he are living for the same general end—to be happy. He is happy because he keeps strong and fresh those notes which vibrate joy; and you are unhappy because you despoil yourself of all power of enjoyment for the sake of that arch-deceiver, riches, which glozes, and whispers, and promises, and betrays you. —*Beecher.*

10. Render it difficult for us to discern our friends.

(4381.) The great one bristles up himself, and conceits himself higher by the head than all the rest, and is proud of many friends. Alas! these dogs do but hunt the bird of paradise for his feathers. These wasps do but hover about the gallipot because there is honey in it. The proud fly, sitting upon the chariot wheel, which, hurried with violence, huffed up the sand, gave out that it was she which made all that glorious dust. The ass, carrying the Egyptian goddess, swelled with an opinion that all those crouches, cringes, and obeisances were made to him. But it is the case, not the carcass, they gape for. So may the chased stag boast how many hounds he hath attending him. They attend, indeed, as ravens a dying beast. Actæon found the truth of their kind attendance. They run away as spiders from a decaying house; or, as the cuckoo, they sing a sorry note for a month in summer, and are gone in June or July; sure enough before the fall. —*Adams*, 1654.

11. How little they can do for us.

(4382.) What is there that the rich man hopes not to do? He can buy honours and offices, he can buy out faults and offences; yea, foolish Magus thought the Holy Ghost Himself might be had for money; and Satan presumed that this bait would even catch the Son of God. Yet what can riches do? Can they put off the gout, assuage grief, thrust out cares, suspend death, prevent hell, or bribe Satan? A satin sleeve can as well heal a broken arm. Indeed this they can do; they can anger God, hurt men, bar the gates of heaven, open the gates of hell, and forward souls to confusion. They are false friends, that will be sure never to fail men but when they have need of them. Sickness will besiege thee, death will summon thee, God will pass His doom on thee: in all this, what can riches avail thee? our manifold receipts shall but greaten our accounts; and the moderate estate will have the easier reckoning. Riches are a pit whereinto we soon slip, but can hardly scramble out. Æsop hath a fable of the two frogs that, in the time of drought, when the marches were dry, consulted what was best to be done. One advised to go down into a deep well, because it was likely the water would not fail there. The other answered, But if it do fail, how shall we get up again? Small puddles, light gains, will not serve some; they must plunge into deep wells, excessive profits; but they do not consider how they should get out again. So it comes to pass that either they are famished for want of grace, or drowned in a deluge of riches. If this world be a sea over which we must swim to the land of promise, I do not see what use there is of this abundant luggage, unless it be to sink us in the waters. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4383.) What security is in money. Doth the devil balk a lordly house as if he were afraid to come in? Dares he not tempt a rich man to lewdness? Let experience witness whether he dares not bring the highest gallant both to sin and shame. Let his food be never so delicate, he will be a guest at his table; and perhaps thrust in one dish to his feast—drunkenness. Be his attendance never so complete, yet Satan will wait on him too. Wealth is no charm to conjure away the devil; such an amulet and the Pope's holy water are both of a force.

Inward vexations forbear not their stings in awe of riches. An evil conscience dares perplex a Saul in his throne, and a Judas with his purse full of money. Can a silken sleeve keep a broken arm from aching? Then may full barns keep an evil conscience from vexing. And doth hell-fire favour the rich man's limbs more than the poor's? Hath he any servant there to fan cold air upon his tormented joints? Nay, the nameless Dives goes from soft linen to sheets of fire; from purple robes to flames of the same colour, purple flames; from delicate morsels to want a drop of water. Herod, though a king on earth, when he comes to that smoky vault hath not a cushion to sit on, more than the meanest parasite in his court. So poor a defence are they for an oppressed soul.

—*Adams*, 1654.

(4384.) Let us consider the miseries which affect the body, and we shall find that the greatest pleasure, arising from any degree of wealth or plenty whatsoever, is so far from reaching the soul that it scarce pierces the skin. What would a man give to purchase a release, nay, but a small respite, from the extreme pains of the gout or stone? And yet if he could fee his physician with both the Indies, neither art nor money can redeem, or but reprieve him from his misery. No man feels the pangs and tortures of his present distemper (be it what it will) at all the less for his being rich. His riches indeed may have occasioned, but they cannot allay them. No man's fever burns the gentler for drinking his juleps in a golden cup. Nor could Alexander himself, at the price of all his conquests, antidote or recall the poisonous draught when it had once got into his veins.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

(4385.) Heaps of silver and gold may intercept the rich man's sight of death, but they can neither intercept death's sight of the rich man, nor prevent his forcing the feeble entrenchments in which he may attempt to hide himself. —*Saurin.*

(4386.) Money, no doubt, is a power; but a power of well-defined and narrow limits. It will purchase plenty, but not peace; it will furnish your table with luxuries, but not you with an appetite to enjoy them; it will surround your sick-bed with physicians, but not restore health to your sickly frame; it will encompass you with a cloud of flatterers, but never procure you one true friend; it will bribe into silence the tongues of accusing men, but not an accusing conscience; it will pay some debts, but not the least one of all, your debts to the law of God; it will relieve many fears, but not those of guilt—the terrors that crown the brows of Death. He stands as grim and terrible by the dying bed of wealth as by the pallet of the poorest beggar whom pitiless riches has thrust from her door. —*Guthrie.*

12. Expose us to the envy and hostility of our fellow-men.

(4387.) We hope wealth can stop the invasion of these miseries. Nothing less: it rather mounts a man, as a wrestler does his combatant, that it may give him the greater fall. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4388.) So long as malice and envy lodge in the breasts of mankind, it is impossible for a man in a wealthy, flourishing condition not to feel the stroke of men's tongues, and of their hands, too, if occasion serves. The fuller the branches are, the more shall the tree be flung at. What impeached Naboth of treason and blasphemy but his spacious vineyard, too convenient for his potent neighbour to let the owner enjoy it long? What made the king of Babylon invade Judea, but the royal stores and treasures displayed and boasted of by Hezekiah before the Chaldean ambassadors, to the supplanting of his crown and miserable captivity of his posterity? In Sylla's bloody proscription matters came to that pass in Rome, that if a man had but a fair garden, a rich jewel, or but a ring of value, it was enough to get his name posted up in the cut-throat roll, and to cost him his life, for having anything worth the taking from him. Seldom do armies invade poor day-labouring countries; they are not the thin weatherbeaten cottages, but the opulent trading cities which invite the plunderer; and war goes on but heavily where there is no prospect of spoil to enliven it. So that, whether we look upon societies or single persons, still we shall find them both owing this to their great wealth, that it gives them the honour to be thought worth ruining, and a fit prey for those who shall think they deserve that wealth better than themselves; as, they may be sure, enough will. —*South*, 1633-1716.

13. Are perilous to the soul.

(4389.) As those mountains that contain mines of gold and silver are otherwise barren: so they that have riches and veins of gold and silver are, for the most part, in their hearts, made unprofitable to the service of God and man. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4390.) Thorns are the shelter for serpents, and riches the den of many sins. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4391.) Riches is a warm nest where lust securely sits to hatch all her unclean brood.

—*Adams*, 1654.

(4392.) Christ telleth us "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Our Saviour, indeed, doth not speak of an impossibility, but of the difficulty of it and the rareness of it. Job unfolded the riddle, and got through the needle's eye with three thousand camels. But it is hard to be wealthy, and not wanton: too often are riches, like bird-lime, hindering the soul in its flight towards heaven. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4393.) To the love of money we trace the melancholy apostasy of Demas, the awful perfidy of Judas, the fatal lie of Ananias and Sapphira—all, and some of them distinguished, professors of religion. Be on your guard. Watch and pray. Their history is written for our instruction. Nor need any of His people who allow the love of money to entwine itself around their hearts, expect that in saving them God will do otherwise than the woodman who, seeking to save a tree, applies his knife to the canker that eats into its heart, or the ivy that has climbed its trunk and is choking it in its close embraces. —*Guthrie.*

(4394.) Though, as these cases prove, money may be found in the hand where the love of it is not eating, like a cancer, into the heart, there is danger of gold stealing our affections from God. The larger and more sudden the accession of wealth, the greater the danger,—it being with riches as with rain. When showers fall slow and

soft, they penetrate the soil and refresh the ground without disturbing it; but, falling in waterspouts, descending in a deluge from the loaded air, they fill the river to the brim, and, bursting its banks, carry havoc and destruction along their tumultuous course. —*Guthrie.*

(4395.) A holy woman was wont to say of the rich—"They are hemmed round with no common misery; they go down to hell without thinking of it, because their staircase thither is of gold and porphyry." —*Spurgeon.*

(4396.) Many of you are in imminent peril. God is multiplying the sources of your power. Your resources are becoming numerous as the sands of the sea. I am not sorry: I am glad; but I am anxious that you should rise up in the midst of these things, and show yourselves greater than prosperity, and stronger and better on account of it. I dread to see a man smothered under his wealth.

When a man, driving from the meadow, sits and sings cheerily upon his vast load of fragrant hay, how every one, looking upon him, thinks of his happiness and content! But by and by, at an unlucky jog, down goes the wheel, and over goes the load, and the man is at the bottom with all the hay on him. And now he cannot halloo so that you can hear him. And if somebody does not extricate him he will be smothered.

Just in that way rich men are in danger of being smothered. The whole wain of your prosperity may capsize, and the superincumbent mass may hide you from the air and sun of a true life.

—*Beecher.*

(4397.) The ship "Britannia," which struck on the rocks off the coast of Brazil, had on board a large consignment of Spanish dollars. In the hope of saving some of them, a number of barrels were brought on deck, but the vessel was sinking so fast that the only hope for life was in taking at once to the boats. The last boat was about to push off, when a midshipman rushed back to see if any one was still on board. To his surprise, there sat a man on deck with a hatchet in his hand, with which he had broken open several of the casks, the contents of which he was now heaping up about him.

"What are you doing?" shouted the youth. "Escape for your life! Don't you know the ship is fast going to pieces?"

"The ship may," said the man. "I have lived a poor wretch all my life, and I am determined to die rich."

His remonstrances were answered only by another flourish of the hatchet; and he was left to his fate. In a few minutes the ship was engulfed in the waves.

We count such a sailor a madman; but he has too many imitators. Many men seem determined to die rich at all hazards. Least of all risks do they count the chance of losing the soul in the struggle.

14. Often debase the character.

(4398.) Nothing is so hard for those who abound in riches, as to conceive how others can be in want. —*Swift*, 1667–1745.

(4399.) See yonder lake! The bigger the stream that runs into it—lying so beautiful and peaceful in the bosom of the shaggy mountains—the bigger the stream it discharges to water the plains, and, like the path of a Christian, wend its bright and blissful way on to its parent sea. But in sad contrast with that, the more money some men gain, the less they give; in proportion as their wealth increases, their charities diminish. Have we not met it, mourned over it, and seen how a man, setting his heart on gold, and hasting to be rich, came to resemble a vessel with a narrow, contracted neck, out of which water flows less freely when it is full than when it is nearly empty? As there is a law in physics to explain that fact, there is a law in morals to explain this. So long as a man has no hope of becoming rich; so long as in enough of bread to eat, of raiment to put on, of health and strength to do his work and fight his honest way on in the world, he has all man really needs. Having that, he does not set his heart on riches. He is a noble, unselfish, generous, large-hearted, and, for his circumstances, an open-handed man. But by success in business, or otherwise, let a fortune come within his reach, and he clutches at it—grasps it. Then what a change! His eye, and ear, and hand close; his sympathies grow dull and blunt; his heart contracts and petrifies. Strange to say, plenty in such cases feeds not poverty but penuriousness; and the ambition of riches opens a door to the meanest avarice.

—*Guthrie.*

15. The vanity of heaping up riches.

(4400.) It is a great deal of care and pains that the spider takes in weaving her web: she runneth much, and often up and down; she fetcheth a compass this way and that way and returneth often to the same point; she spendeth herself in multitudes of fine threads to make herself a round cabinet; she exenterateth herself, and worketh out her own bowels, to make an artificial and curious piece of work which, when it is made, is apt to be blown away with every puff of wind; she hangeth it up aloft, she fasteneth it to the roof of the house, she strengtheneth it with many a thread, wheeling often round about, not sparing her own bowels, but spending them willingly upon her work; and when she hath done all this—spun her fine threads, weaved them one within another, wrought herself a fine canopy, hanged it aloft, and thinks all is sure—on a sudden, in the twinkling of an eye, with a little sweep of a besom all falls to the ground, and so her labour perisheth. But here is not all. Poor spider! she is killed, either in her own web, or else she is taken in her own snare, haled to death, and trodden under foot. Thus the silly insect may be truly said either to weave her own winding sheet, or to make a snare to hang herself. Just so do many men waste and consume themselves to get preferment, to enjoy pleasures, to heap up riches, and increase them; and to that end they spend all their wit, and oftentimes the health of their bodies, running up and down, labouring and sweating, carking and caring: and, when they have done all this, they have but weaved the spider's web to catch flies; yea, oftentimes are caught in their own nets, are made instruments of their own destruction. They take a great deal of pains with little success, to no end or purpose. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4401.) Of great riches there is no real use, except it be in the distribution; the rest is but conceit; so

saith Solomon, "Where much is there are many to consume it; and what hath the owner but the sight of it with his eyes?" The personal fruition in any man cannot reach to feel great riches: there is a custody of them, or a power of dole and donative of them, or a fame of them, but no solid use to the owner. —*Lord Bacon*, 1560–1626.

(4402.) Whosoever shall look heedfully upon those who are eminent for their riches, will not think their condition such as that he should hazard his quiet, and much less his virtue, to obtain it. For all that great wealth generally gives above a moderate fortune is more room for the freaks of caprice, and more privilege for ignorance and vice, a quicker succession of flatteries, and a larger circle of voluptuousness.

—*Dr. S. Johnson*, 1709–1784.

16. Their uncertainty.

(4403.) He that sees a flock of birds sitting on his ground cannot make himself any assurance that, therefore, they are his own, and that he may take them at his pleasure. Thus he that hath riches, and thinks himself fully possessed of them, may be deceived, and soon deprived of them; a small spark of fire may set them flying, a thief may steal them, an unfaithful servant may embezzle them, a soldier, a wreck at sea, a bad debtor at land: there's a hundred ways to set them packing: they have wings, and hop from branch to branch, from one man to another; seldom to him that is the true owner of them. —*John Davenport*, 1617.

(4404.) They are *uncertain*, yea uncertainty itself. Were our wealth tied to our life, it were uncertain enough: what is that but a flower, a vapour, a tale, a dream, a shadow, a thought, a nothing? What are great men but like hail-stones, that leap up on the tiles, and straight fall down again, and lie still, and melt away? But now, as we are certain that our riches determine with our uncertain life, for goods and life are both in a bottom, both are cast away at once; so we cannot be certain they will hold so long: our life flies hastily away; but, many times, our riches have longer wings, and outfly it. It was a witty observation of Basil, that "wealth rolls along by a man, like as an heady stream glides by the banks." Time will moulder away the very bank it washeth; but the current stays not for that, but speeds forward from one elbow of earth into another: so doth our wealth; even while we stay, it is gone. In our penal laws there are more ways to forfeit our goods than our lives. On our highways, how many favourable thieves take the purse, and save the life! And, generally, our life is the tree; our wealth is the leaves or fruit. If, therefore, life and wealth strive which is more uncertain, wealth will sure carry it away. Job was yesterday the richest man in the East; to-day he is so needy that he is gone into a proverb, "As poor as Job." Belisarius, the great and famous commander to whom Rome owed her life twice at least, came to *Date obolum Belisario;* "One halfpenny to Belisarius." —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4405.) Trust not in riches; they have their wanes as well as increases. They rise sometimes like a torrent and flow in upon men; but resemble also a torrent in as sudden a fall and departure, and leave nothing but slime behind them.

—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(4406.) How often have I thought of riches, when, intruding on their lone domain, I have seen a covey of wild fowl, from the reeds of the lake or the heather of the hill-side, rise clamorous on the wing, and fly away! Has not many a man who hasted to be rich, and made gold his god, lived to become a bankrupt, and die a beggar!—buried among the ruins of his ambitious schemes.

—*Guthrie.*

17. Must soon be relinquished.

(4407.) Saladin, a Turkish emperor, he that first of that nation conquered Jerusalem, lying at the point of death after many glorious victories, commanded that a white sheet should be borne before him to his grave upon the point of a spear, with this proclamation, "These are the rich spoils which Saladin carrieth away with him of all his triumphs and victories. Of all the riches and realms that he had, now nothing at all is left but this sheet." —*Woodnoth.*

(4408.) When we are bidden to a great man's table, where the meat is served up in silver dishes, and the wine in bowls of gold, we may eat the viands, and drink the precious liquors; but if through simplicity we should offer to carry away the vessels, the porter would stay us at the gate, and tell us plainly they are none of ours. The Divine bounty affords the use of riches, for the comfort and sustentation of our bodies; but when we rise up from His table, and think to bear away the riches themselves, death is a severe porter at the gate of life: he will examine our going out; we shall carry none of them with us.

—*Adams*, 1654.

(4409.) All our pieces of gold are but current to the grave; none of them will pass in the future world. Therefore as merchants when they travel make over their monies here, to receive them by bills of exchange in another country; let us do good with our goods while we live, that when we die, by a blessed bill of exchange, we may receive them again in the kingdom of heaven (Luke xvi. 9). To part with that we cannot keep, that we may get that we cannot lose, is a good bargain. Wealth can do us no good, unless it help us toward heaven.

—*Adams*, 1654.

(4410.) Jonah had a gourd that was to him an arbour: he sat under it secure; but suddenly there was a worm that bit it, and it died. Compare, secretly in your hearts, your riches to that gourd; your pleasure to the greenness of it; your pomp, attendance, vanities, to the leaves of it: your sudden increase of wealth, to the growing and shooting up of it. But, withal, forget not the worm and the wind. The worm that shall kill your root is death, and the wind that shall blow upon you is calamity. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4411.) "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry away nothing: his glory shall not descend after him." I remember an eastern legend, which I have always thought furnished a remarkable, though unconscious commentary on these words of the Psalmist. Alexander

the Great, we are there told, being upon his death-bed commanded that, when he was carried forth to the grave, his hands should not be wrapped, as was usual, in the serecloths, but should be left outside the bier, so that all men might see them, and might see that they were *empty;* that there was nothing in them; that he, born to one empire, and the conqueror of another, the possessor, while he lived, of two worlds, of the East, and of the West, and of the treasures of both, yet now when he was dead could retain no smallest portion of those treasures; that in this matter the poorest beggar and he were at length upon equal terms. This was his comment, or the comment of those who may have devised this legend, on the text of the Psalmist. "He shall carry nothing away with him, when he dieth; neither shall his pomp follow him." This was his anticipation of the declaration of the Apostle, "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." And we may here fitly ask with Solomon, "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" If it was thus with that mightiest king, shall it not, by much stronger reason, be thus with meaner men? —*Trench.*

18. For what purpose they are intrusted to us.

(4412.) God bids a great and rich person rise and shine, as He bids the sun, that is, not for himself, but for the necessities of the world; and none is so honourable in his own person as he who is helpful to others. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(4413.) If any man is rich and powerful, he comes under that law of God by which the higher branches must take the burnings of the sun, and shade those that are lower; by which the tall trees must protect the weak plants beneath them.

—*Beecher.*

19. Are useless to many.

(4414.) As musical instruments are of no use to him that cannot play upon them: so are riches unprofitable to him that cannot use them rightly.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

20. How they are to be used.

(4415.) "Ye are not your own, and ye are bought with a price." For all things are God's. When then He calls, and chooses to take, let us not, like grudging servants, fly from the reckoning, nor purloin our Master's goods. Thy soul is not thine, and how can thy wealth be thine? How is it, then, that thou spendest on what is unnecessary the things that are not thine? Knowest thou not that for this we are soon to be put on our trial, that is, if we have used them badly? But seeing that they are not ours but our Master's, it were right to expend them upon our fellow-servants. It is worth considering that this was the charge against that rich man (Luke xvi. 21), and against those also who had not given food to the Lord (Matt. xxv. 42).

Say not, then, "I am but spending mine own, and of mine own I live delicately." It is not thine own, but of other men's. Other men's, I say, because such is thine own choice; for God's will is that those things should be thine, which have been intrusted to thee on behalf of thy brethren. Now the things which are not thine own become thine, if thou spend them upon others; but if thou spend on thyself unsparingly, thine own things become no longer thine. For since thou usest them cruelly, and sayest, "That my own things should be altogether spent on my own enjoyment, is fair:" therefore I call them not thine own. For they are common to thee and thy fellow-servants; just as the sun is common, the air, the earth, and all the rest. For as in the case of the body, each ministration belongs both to the whole body and to each several member; but when it is applied to the single member only, it destroys the proper function of that very member! So also it comes to pass in the case of wealth. And that what I say may be made plainer, the food of the body which is given in common to the members, should it pass into one member, even to that it turns out alien in the end. For when it cannot be digested, nor afford nourishment, even to that part, I say, it turns out alien. But if it be made common, both that part and all the rest have it as their own.

So also in regard of wealth. If you enjoy it alone, you too have lost it; for you will not reap its reward. But if you possess it jointly with the rest, then it will be more your own, and then you reap the benefit of it. Seest thou not that the hands minister, and the mouth softens, and the stomach receives? Does the stomach say, "Since I have received, I ought to keep it all?" Then do not thou, I pray, in regard to riches, use this language. For it belongs to the receiver to impart. As then it is a vice in the stomach to retain the food and not to distribute it (for it is injurious to the whole body), so it is a vice in those that are rich to keep to themselves what they have. For this destroys both themselves and others.

Again, the eye receives all the light; but it does not itself alone retain it, but enlightens the entire body. For it is not its nature to keep it to itself, so long as it is an eye. Again, the nostrils are sensitive of perfume; but they do not keep it all to themselves, but transmit it to the brain, and affect the stomach with a sweet savour, and by their means refresh the whole man. The feet alone walk; but they move not themselves only, but transfer also the whole body. In like manner do thou, whatsoever thou hast been intrusted withal, keep it not to thyself alone, since thou art doing harm to the whole, and to thyself more than all.

And not in the case of the limbs only may we see this occurring. For the smith also, if he chose to impart of his craft to no one, ruins both himself and all other craft. Likewise the cordwainer, the husbandman, the baker, and every one of those who pursue any mercenary calling; if he chose not to communicate to any one of the results of his arts, will ruin, not the others only, but himself also with them.

In everything to give and receive is the principle of numerous blessings: in seeds, in scholars, in arts. For if any one desire to keep his art to himself, he subverts both himself and the whole course of things. And the husbandman, if he bury and keep the seeds in his house, will bring about a grievous famine. So also the rich man, if he fails thus in regard of his wealth, will destroy himself before the poor, heaping up the fire of hell more grievous upon his own head.

Therefore, as teachers, however many scholars they have, impart some of their love unto each: so let thy possession be — many to whom thou hast done good. —*Chrysostom*, 347–407.

(4416.) As the moon doth show her light to the

world which she receiveth from the sun: so we ought to bestow the benefits received of God to the profit and commodity (advantage) of our neighbour. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4417.) When a man taketh a heavy trunk, full of plate or money, upon his shoulders, it maketh him stoop, and boweth him towards the ground; but if the same weight be put under his feet, it lifteth him up from the ground. In like manner, if we put our wealth and riches above us, preferring them to our salvation, they will press us down to the ground, if not to hell with their very weight; but if we put them under our feet, and tread upon them as slaves and vassals to us, and quite contemn them in respect of heavenly treasure, they will raise us up towards heaven. —*Thomas Taylor*, 1631.

(4418.) Look but upon a fly coming to a platter full of sweet and pleasant honey: if she thrust not herself altogether into it, but only touch and taste it with her mouth, and take no more than is needful, she may safely take wing and fly to another place; but if she wallow in the honey, then is she limed in it, she is not able to fly away, she doth there lose her life. Thus, if a man take only so much of his riches as may maintain his estate, bestowing the rest in a Christian manner, then they cannot hold him back or bar him from the kingdom of heaven; but if covetousness shall bewitch him, and prick him to scrape and rake together more and more, then he shall never be satisfied, but fall into many snares and temptations. —*Pintus.*

(4419.) Let us make the poor our friends by our alms, not our enemies by our scorns. We had better have the ears of God full of their prayers, than heaps of money in our own coffers with their curses. Worldly men think themselves wise in getting wealth, and the Scriptures folly; therefore throughout the Scriptures God calls them fools for their labour: "Thou fool." There is a tale of an abbot who gave his fool a painted staff, willing him to bestow it on the veriest fool he could meet. This abbot fell mortally sick; the fool was a visitant among the rest; and hearing him say, I must leave all and be gone, asked him whither he would go. The abbot answers, Into another country. But I hope, replies the fool, you will carry all your gold, and jewels, and treasure with you. No, I must leave all. But sure you have sent great store of preparation, as rich hangings, coverings, beds, plate, and furniture before you. No, I must leave all behind. All? I hope at least you have sent enough to furnish your own room, provision enough for yourself. No, not the least pillow. Hold, saith he, take your staff again, you are the veriest fool that ever I met. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4420.) As bodies inclined to be fat had need of most exercise: so men that have the world coming too fast upon them, and are in great danger to be rich, should be most busy in the works of charity. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4421.) If thou art rich, then show the greatness of thy fortune, or, what is better, the greatness of thy soul in the meekness of thy conversation; condescend to men of low estate, support the distressed, and patronise the neglected. Be great: but let it be in considering riches as they are, as talents committed to an earthen vessel; that thou art but the receiver, and that to be obliged and to be vain too is but the old solecism of pride and beggary, which, though they often meet, yet ever make but an absurd society. —*Sterne*, 1713–1768.

21. Are worthless without godliness.

(4422.) Godliness may do a man good without gain, but worldly gain can do a man no good without godliness. As the heathen orator says of bodily might, that strength of body joined with discretion and wisdom may do a man much good; but without it, it is but as a sword in a child or a man's hand, rather a means to mischief a man's self than otherwise; as we see an example in Milo Crotoniates, the strongest man of his time, who unwarily assaying on trust of his strength to rive a piece of timber with his hands, which some others with wedge and beetle could not cleave, was caught fast by the fists, and so devoured by wolves. So riches, joined with godliness and good conscience, are the good blessings of God, a means of good to ourselves, and of doing good unto others; but being severed from godliness and the true fear of God are rather occasion of evil than otherwise, rather an instrument of vice than any furtherance to virtue, a means to make as our sins the greater here, so our condemnation accordingly the more grievous hereafter. —*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

I. *ITS RARITY.*

(4423.) Easy and ordinary is it for men to be others' physicians, rather than their own; statesmen in foreign commonwealths, not looking into their own doors; sometimes putting on Aaron's robes, and teaching him to teach; and often scalding their lips in their neighbours' pottage. They can weed others' gardens, whiles their own is overrun with nettles; like that soldier that digged a fountain for Cæsar, and perished himself in a voluntary thirst. But charity begins at home; and he that loves not his own soul, I will hardly trust him with mine. The usurer blames his son's pride, sees not his own extortion; and whiles the hypocrite is helping the dissolute out of the mire, he sticks in deeper himself. The Pharisees are on the disciples' jacket for eating with unwashen hands, whiles themselves are not blameworthy that eat with unwashen hearts. No marvel if, when we fix both our eyes on others' wants, we lack a third to see our own. If two blind men rush one upon another in the way, either complains of other's blindness, neither of his own. Thus, like mannerly guests, when a good morsel is carved us, we lay it liberally on another's trencher, and fast ourselves. How much better were it for us to feed on our own portion! —*Adams*, 1654.

II. *WHY IT IS NECESSARY.*

1. Because we are naturally averse to it.

(4424.) The sovereign excellency and necessity of this duty needs no other nor greater proof of it than this one consideration, that nothing in nature can be more grievous and offensive to a sinner than to look into himself; and generally what grace requires nature is most averse to. It is indeed as offensive as to rake into a dunghill; as grievous as for one to read over his debts, when he is not able to pay them; or for a bankrupt to

examine and look into his accounts, which at the same time that they acquaint must needs also upbraid him with his condition.

But as irksome as the work is it is absolutely necessary. Nothing can well be imagined more painful than to probe and search a purulent old sore to the bottom; but for all that the pain must be endured, or no cure expected.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

2. That we may know if we are in the right way.

(4425.) Another reason that should move you to examine whether you be indeed converted or not, is because the want of this is one of the greatest causes why so few come to be converted and to be saved. Nothing doth more keep a man from turning back again, when he hath lost his way, than when he doth not know that he hath lost it: and how can he know, that wandereth in the night, and will not inquire and ask the way, or that is so wilful and self-conceited that he will not believe any man that telleth him he hath lost his way? As long as he is of this mind he will never turn again. So is it with most of the careless world: they are going into the way of worldliness or vainglory, and live to the flesh, which is clean contrary to the way to heaven, and yet they will not seriously ask a minister, or ask any one that can inform them, whether that be the way or not? or whether they shall ever come to heaven in that way? But they trudge on after their fleshly business, as if they had no tongue in their heads; or as if it were not worth the asking, to know whether they are in the way to heaven or hell. Surely, if men will not so much as inquire, or consider with themselves, and examine their way by the Word of God, to see whether they are right or wrong, they are never like to be saved.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. That we may ascertain if our graces are real and our hope well-founded.

(4426.) Must the soul's armour be of God's make? then look narrowly whether the armour ye wear be the workmanship of God or no. Many are like children that cry for a knife or dagger, and are pleased as well with a bone knife or wooden dagger as with the best of all; so they have armour it matters not what. Pray they must, but little care how it is performed. Believe in God! yes, they hope they are not infidels; but what their faith is, how they came by it, or whether it will hold in an evil day, this they never question.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4427.) If you die in your sins, you will rise in your sins, and stand at the tribunal of God in your sins; you can never receive remission of the guilt of sin, nor redemption from the power of sin, so long as you have not received Christ; and therefore reflect solemnly upon this matter, man, whether you have received Christ or not. If all that you are worth in the world lay in one precious stone, and that stone was to be tried by a skilful jeweller whether it were true or false, surely your thoughts could not be unconcerned about the issue of such a trial. Why, man, woman, all that you are worth in this world and in the world to come depends upon the truth of your faith, which now we call you to try, whether it will fly or endure the trying stroke of the hammer of God's Word. Have you no concern in this matter? You would be loath to put to sea, though it were but to cross a short ferry, in a rotten, leaky bottom; and will you dare to venture into the ocean of eternity in a false, rotten faith?

—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(4428.) There is an obvious propriety for honest self-examination. The necessity of this is urged upon us all by the worth of the undying soul; by all the value of the blood of Christ; by all the apprehensions of a dreadful hell. On this of all subjects we should be most honest with ourselves; and yet on this of all subjects we are prone to take up with slightest evidences. The solicitude of the merchant to save his affairs from bankruptcy is untiring; the advocate toils to gain his cause, and the physician to save his patient; the farmer has no rest till the title to his land is without a flaw. Yet that merchant, perhaps, will feel no solicitude that his eternal interests may not be bankrupt; nor that professional man feel any concern that he is in danger of losing his soul, nor the farmer that his title to heaven is insecure. On the very point where we should suppose there would be most interest felt, there is often the least; and the last thing to which immortal man, in the church or out of it, can be roused, is the worth of his own soul.

Were it thus in other cases we should be impressed with the folly. Let a man be seized with disease, though not immediately alarming, and let it be suffered to run on without care or anxiety until death shall lay its cold hand on him, and we do not doubt its folly. Yet how many are under the influence of sin who allow themselves to be deceived, who listen to no language of entreaty to examine; and who will soon find that their hopes of heaven have been founded on the sand! Once more I may be permitted, not in form, but in the soberness of sincerity and in love, to entreat you to be willing to know the worst of the case. If deceived, be willing to know it, and to seek mercy before it shall be too late. If we are Christians, let us know it, and let our lives testify accordingly.

—*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

4. That we may ascertain the hindrances to our reception of grace.

(4429.) They who have water running home in conduit pipes to their houses, as soon as they find a want of that which their neighbours have in abundance by and by they search into the cause, run to the conduit head, or take up the pipes, to see where they may be stopped, or what is the defect, that so they be supplied accordingly. Even so must every man do when he finds that the grace of repentance flows into other men's hearts and has no recourse or access to his soul; by and by sit down and search himself, what the cause should be, where the *remora* is that stays his course, where the rub lies which stops the grace of repentance in him; seeing they that live (it may be) in the same house, sit at the same table, lie in the same bed, can be penitent for their sins, sorry that they have offended God, and so complain in bitterness of soul for their sins; but he that had the same means, the same occasions, more sins to be humbled for, more time to repent in, and more motives to draw him to the duty, is not yet moved with the same, not any way affected with the sense of sin; this must needs be matter of high concernment to look about him.

—*Rogers*, 1594–1660.

5. That we may be saved from spiritual bankruptcy.

(4430.) Was there ever a successful merchant who did not balance his books year by year? I have noticed, in reading the details of courts of bankruptcy, that fortunes are as surely wrecked by indolence or carelessness, as by wild speculations, or boundless extravagance. Here is a trader, bankrupt. Sober, honest, industrious, anxious to pay every one their own, not living in splendour at other men's expense, he should have thriven. Yet this honest man has to take a place beside rogues —he, and others, throwing all the blame on fortune; imputing his misfortunes to the blind goddess, her capricious temper and unsteady wheel. But the examination comes, like that day of a greater judgment which shall reveal the true and unsuspected causes that have wrought the ruin of many souls. The debtor's books are produced; and now it appears that last year, and the year before, and for many years, there has been no balance struck. Fancying that all was right, too careless to think of it, too busy to spare time for taking stock, or too indolent to go through its irksome labour, from year to year he has put off striking a balance, till now he strikes on the rock ahead. The crash comes. He opens his eyes on ruin; and finds, too late, that for years he has been driving a losing trade. He is a bankrupt for want of a balance. And the general practice of men of business, their custom of year by year taking stock, examining their books and striking a balance to know how they stand, is a lesson of the highest value. Our everlasting salvation may turn on it. People go on dreaming that all is right when all is wrong; nor wake to the dreadful truth till they open their eyes in torment. What pains ought we to take to avoid the remotest chance of such a calamity! If men take such care of their earthly fortunes, how much greater our need to see how we stand with God; and do with our spiritual what all wise merchants do with their earthly interests—review the transactions of every year! Let us judge ourselves that we be not judged; and, holding a court of conscience, in the words of the text, "Look on all the things that my hands have wrought, and on the labours that I have laboured to do." —*Guthrie.*

(4431.) Every man should use his understanding to discover the true character of his actual course of life. If, when a tradesman finds his way into the bankruptcy court, it comes out that for years he has never taken stock, or has taken it carelessly, he is very severely censured, and most justly. Every sensible man of business spends several days every year in learning his financial position, and the result of the trade of the previous twelvemonth. He weighs, he measures all his goods. He allows for the deterioration of stock and for the wear and tear of his premises. He reckons up his bad debts; he forms a rough estimate of the debts likely to prove bad. He works night and day. He is restlessly anxious to see how the balance-sheet will show. He uses his understanding to learn whether his business is working *profitably*. Would it not be possible, is it not necessary, to have an examination equally rigorous into the *moral* character of all his transactions? If he is an honest man—above all, if he is a Christian man—he will think *that* by far the most important thing. But is there any necessity for such a serious and elaborate inquiry? There is. If a tradesman does not get out an accurate balance-sheet every year, he may be going wrong financially without knowing it; his trade expenses may be eating up all his profit; he may be paying too heavy a rent; spending too much on his premises; employing too many hands; people he trusts may be robbing him; he may seem to have a flourishing business, and yet may be getting into a worse condition every Christmas. I believe that many men, from never investigating the moral character of what they are doing, get wrong morally without knowing it.

—*R. W. Dale.*

6. That we may spare ourselves after-regrets.

(4432.) What a deal of sorrow and after-complaining might this small labour prevent! How many miles travel, besides the vexation, may a traveller save by inquiring of the way!

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

7. Because our hearts are so apt to deceive us.

(4433.) "The heart is a grand impostor." It is like a cheating tradesman, which will put one off with bad wares; the heart will put a man off with seeming grace, instead of saving. A tear or two shed is repentance, a few lazy desires is faith; blue and red flowers that grow among the corn look like good flowers, but they are but beautiful weeds. The foolish virgins' lamps looked as if they had had oil in them, but they had none. Therefore to prevent a cheat, that we may not take false grace instead of true, we had need make a thorough disquisition and search of our hearts.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(4434.) How shall we bring home to ourselves the dangerousness of trusting, without due examination, to the verdict of our own hearts? We will do so by supposing a parallel case in a matter, where we are all peculiarly apt to be cautious and suspicious,—the goods of this world.

Suppose then (and in a commercial country like this the supposition has not been unfrequently realised) that the chief agent in some great speculation is a man who, though most untrustworthy, has all the art of conciliating trust. Suppose him to be fluent, fair-spoken, prepossessing in manners and appearance, and to be especially plausible in glossing over a financial difficulty. Advance one more step in the hypothesis and suppose him to be a private friend of many of those who are embarked with him in the speculation; allied to some of them by marriage, and more or less in habits of intimacy with all. If such a person is at the head of affairs, and intrusted with the administration of the funds contributed by all, it is evident that he might impose upon the contributors to almost any extent. His artful representations would quiet their little panics, when such arose; and he would have it in his power to keep them still while embezzling their resources, until the great crash comes, which announces to many of them, as with a clap of thunder, that they are bankrupts.

Now the peril of such trust in worldly matters supplies a very fair image of the peril of a still more foolish and groundless trust in spiritual things. Our hearts are notoriously most untrustworthy informants in any case where we are ourselves interested. It is not only Scripture which asserts this. We confess it ourselves, and re-echo the

verdict of Scripture, when we say of any slight matter with which we happen to be mixed up, "I am an interested party, and therefore I had better not be a judge." But while our hearts are thus, by our own confession, untrustworthy, there is no one in whose assertions we habitually place more trust. We think we cannot be deceived respecting ourselves; we know at all events our own motives and intentions, if we know anything. The unkind, the insincere, the ungenerous, the ungrateful, never, we think, had any affinity with our nature. Faults there may have been, no doubt, in our temper and our conduct—feelings and transactions, too—for which we feel that we are in account with God; but we have our own heart to manage and superintend the account; and it soothes us with the assurance that we never had any very bad intention, and so the whole affair will turn out well in the end, —we need not fear the ultimate exposure. Self-love conspires with trust in our own hearts to make dupes of us as regards our spiritual account. Proverbially, and in the verdict of all experience, love is blind; and if love be blind, self-love being the strongest, the most subtle, the most changeless, the most ineradicable of all loves, is blinder still. Self-love will not see, as self-trust cannot see, anything against us. With these strong partialities to self in our own heart ever operative within us, and never probably capable, even in the best men, of being entirely detached from us, to what an extent may we be imposed upon, in that which most vitally and nearly concerns us, if we do not from time to time call in and examine the accounts! What frightful arrears may we be running up, unawares to ourselves, if we do not sharply check and suspiciously watch this heart, who administers for us the account between us and God! And how may these accumulated arrears of guilt burst upon our minds with an overwhelming force when God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel,— when the divine sentence unmasks our sin of those excuses with which we have been palliating it, and brings it home to us with a "Thou art the man!"

—*Goulburn.*

8. Because there are so many unsuspected influences that tend to cause us to go astray.

(4435.) A sailor remarks:—"Sailing from Cuba, we thought we had gained sixty miles one day in our course; but at the next observation we found we had lost more than thirty. It was an undercurrent. The ship had been going forward by the wind, but going back by a current." So a man's course may often seem to be right, but the stream beneath is driving him the very contrary way to what he thinks. —*Cheever.*

9. Because the tendency of evil is to increase.

(4436.) Take heed of the first decays, and look often into the state of your hearts. A man that never casts up his state is undone insensibly; therefore look often into the state of your hearts, whether you go forward, in the power of holiness, or whether you go backward.

It is the devil's policy, when once we are declining, to humble us further and further still, as a stone that runs down the hill; therefore take heed to the first declinings.

A gap once made in the conscience grows wider and wider every day: and the first declinings are the cause of all the rest.

Evil is best stopped in the beginning; and therefore when we begin to be cold, careless in the profession of godliness, and not to have the like savour as you were wont to have, take heed. A heavy body moving downward still gets more strength, it goes down, and moves faster still. Oh, therefore, stay at first. The first remitting of your watch and spiritual fervour is that which is the cause of all the mischief that comes upon many; so that they are given up to vile affections and errors.

It is easier to crush the egg than kill the serpent. He that keeps his house in constant repair prevents the fall of it. Therefore look to your hearts still. *Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4437.) Examination will help the Christian that has fallen and bruised himself to heal the wound whilst it is fresh, before it is festered. This one advantage, if there were no more, is extraordinary. As the sting of sin, though the bee be fled, works itself into the flesh deeper, and diffuses its venom more strongly, causing the greater pain, that every man, unless foolish, will speedily pull it out, lest he increase his own anguish; truly so does sin,— though the honey, the pleasure of it be gone, yet the sting remains; and the longer it is before it is pulled out by faith and repentance, the deeper it works itself into the soul, and the more sorrow it will put us to in this or the other world.

When sin is admitted into the soul, and as a thief in the night stolen in unawares, when the eye of the soul's watchfulness was fallen asleep, examination will light the candle of the word, and search the house narrowly, and find out this ill guest; and before it has done so much mischief as it intended, apprehend it, indict, condemn, and execute it. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4438.) An enemy may much sooner be forced out of his holds when he has newly taken possession, than when he has continued so long as to cast up his banks, make his ditches, placed his guns, and fortified them. After we have been foiled by our spiritual enemies, and by examination find out the cause, it will make us more watchful at that gate at which they entered, and careful of that particular wherein they got the advantage of us. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4439.) Examination is a special preservative against sin. Examination will help the Christian, if not to hinder a coming disease, yet to prevent its growing and increase. It is observed of the Dutchmen that they keep their banks, notwithstanding the threats of the insulting ocean, with little cost and labour, because they look narrowly to them, and stop them up in time; if there be but a small breach, they stop it presently, and hereby save much charge and trouble. Frequent examination will do this courtesy for the Christian, it will maintain his peace with little charge and trouble comparatively.

The ship that leaks is more easily emptied at the beginning than afterwards. The bird is easily killed in the egg, but when once hatched and fledged, we may kill it when we can catch it. A frequent reckoning with ourselves will pluck sin up before it is rooted in the soul.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

III. *SHOULD BE MADE FREQUENTLY.*

1. Yearly.

(4440.) As there is no watch, be it ever so good, but must be daily wound up, and now and then taken asunder to remove the rust and dirt, and mend or repair what may be broken or out of order, so he that is careful of his soul ought to wind it up daily to God by the foregoing exercises, and at least once a year take it asunder to redress, rectify, and examine diligently all its affections and passions, that all its defects may be repaired; and as the watchmaker anoints the wheels, the springs, and all the movements with some delicate oils, that the motions of the wheels may be more easy, and the whole of the watch less subject to rust, so a devout person, after taking this review of his heart, in order to renew it, must anoint it with the sacraments. —*Francis de Sales.*

2. Daily.

(4441.) By a daily examination of our actions, we shall the easier cure a great sin, and prevent its arrival to become habitual; for to examine we suppose to be a relative duty, and instrumental to something else. We examine ourselves, that we may find out our failings and cure them; and therefore if we use our remedy when the wound is fresh and bleeding, we shall find the cure more certain and less painful. For so a taper, when its crown of flame is newly blown off, retains a nature so symbolical to light, that it will with greediness rekindle and snatch a ray from the neighbouring fire. So is the soul of man when it is newly fallen into sin: although God be angry with it, and the state of God's favour and its own graciousness is interrupted, yet the habit is not naturally changed; and still God leaves some roots of virtue standing, and the man is modest, or apt to be made ashamed, and he is not grown a bold sinner; but if he sleeps on it, and returns again to the same sin, and by degrees grows in love with it and gets the custom, and the strangeness of it is taken away, then it is his master, and is swelled into a heap, and is abetted by use, and corroborated by newly-entertained principles, and is insinuated into his nature, and hath possessed his affections, and tainted the will and the understanding, and by this time a man is in the state of a decaying merchant—his accounts are so great and so intricate, and so much in arrears, that to examine it will be but to represent the particulars of his calamity; therefore they think it better to pull the napkin before their eyes, than to stare on the circumstances of their death.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(4442.) Often reflect upon thyself in a day, and observe what company is with thy heart. We may know by the noise in the school that the master is not there; much of the misrule in our bosom arises from the neglect of visiting our hearts.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4443.) Make up your spiritual accounts daily; see how matters stand between God and your souls (Ps. lxxvii. 6). Often reckonings keep God and conscience friends. Do with your hearts as you do with your watches, wind them up every morning by prayer, and at night examine whether your hearts have gone true all that day, whether the wheels of your affections have moved swiftly toward heaven. Oh, call yourselves often to account; keep your reckonings even, and that is the way to keep your peace. —*Watson*, 1696.

(4444.) Housekeepers, by frequent inspections and attention, preserve the brightness of their furniture and utensils. Because of this daily carefulness, the house does not need often to be "turned out of windows." So must we keep our habits and principles bright and serviceable, if the house of our spirit is to be a comfortable home, and its furnishings beautiful and dear to us. We shall not need great and frequent disturbance of our inward life, if we practise daily order and self-revision. —*Lynch*, 1818–1871.

(4445.) "Let a man examine himself." Alas! that in the use of such a precaution the children of this world should be so much wiser than the children of light! It is a part of every merchant's education to learn that art; and it is his only safety to practise it. Neglecting to balance his books, he may launch out into expenses quite unsuitable to his circumstances; persevere in branches of business which are not to his profit, but loss; fancy he is making money when he is driving on ruin. No other fate awaits the reckless adventurer than that of the emigrant ship which some weeks ago, with hundreds on board of her, full of hopes of happiness and fortune in the New World, ran headlong on Cape Race to break in pieces, and, whelming its living freight into the devouring waves, give them a grave on the shores where they expected a happy home! They took no soundings, and so they found no safety. The wise merchant takes stock, balances his books, and, in some businesses at least, strikes a balance on every day's transactions.

In this, as in the energy and toil and self-denial and resolution of worldly, how much is there worthy of the imitation of Christian men? Why should not we, at the close of each day, recall all its transactions to see how our accounts stand with conscience and with God—what duties had been neglected, and what done—what temptations had been resisted, and what yielded to; how far we had indulged evil passions, how far mortified them—how like or how unlike to Christ our demeanour had been?

This were a scrutiny which, though often painful and humbling, would be attended with the happiest results:—

How many sins would it extinguish in the spark from which Christians have afterwards to be saved by being pulled out of the roaring fire?

How often would it check a deviation at the beginning which ends in our going far astray, and losing a peace which in this world we may never fully recover?

In how many cases would it, by early sending us to the balm of Gilead, heal wounds that, neglected, fester into deep, running sores?

And as I have seen the workman, ere he retired to rest, throw himself into stream or sea to wash away the sweat and dust of his daily toil, from such a review the Christian would repair each evening to the fountain of Jesus' blood to be cleansed of the guilt of daily sins; and rise each morning to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit to do his work, to keep his watch, to bear his burden, to fight his battle, better.

If balancing our accounts with God, if reviewing the day's transactions, showed no progress in the

divine life, what earnestness and liveliness it would impart to our evening prayers?

If, on the contrary, it showed some good done, some sin crucified, some progress made, what a comfort, as we laid our head on the pillow, to think that we were nearer heaven than when we first believed, and that, with Jesus standing by the helm, our bark, whether gliding smoothly over calm, or tossed in tempestuous seas, was approaching the shores of the happy land—the home and haven of our eternal rest! —*Guthrie.*

IV. *HOW THIS DUTY IS TO BE PERFORMED.*

1. The inquiry must be comprehensive.

(4446.) If any man skill not what examining means, the very word *examine* is so pregnant that it prompts us how we should examine: for it signifies to put ourselves unto the touch-stone, as if we would try gold from copper. Therefore one says that examination is the eye of the soul, whereby she sees herself, and her safety, and her danger, and the way which she walks, and her pace which she holds, and the end to which she tends. She looks into her glass, and spies every spot in her face, how all her graces are stained. Then she takes the water of life, and washes her blots away. After she looks again, and beholds all her gifts—her faith, fear, love, patience, meekness, and marks how every one doth flourish or wither. If they fade and decay, that she feels a consumption, then she takes preservatives and restoratives of prayer and counsel and repentance before the sickness grow. Thus every day she lets down a bucket into her heart, to see what water it brings up, lest she should corrupt within, and perish suddenly. —*Henry Smith*, 1560–1591.

(4447.) A man is known by his custom, and the course of his endeavours, what is his business. If a man be constantly, easily, frequently carried away to sin, it discovers a habit of soul, and the temper of his heart. Meadows may be overflown, but marsh-ground is drowned with the return of every tide. A child of God may be carried away, and act contrary to the bent of the new nature; but when men are overcome with every temptation, it argues a habit of sin. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4448.) Some men, when they attempt to reform their lives, reform those things for which they do not much care. They take the torch of God's Word, and enter some indifferent chamber, and the light blazes in, and they see that they are very sinful there; and then they look into another room, where they do not often stay, and are willing to admit that they are very sinful there; but they leave unexplored some cupboards and secret apartments where their life really is, and where they have stored up the things which are dearest to them, and which they will neither part from, nor suffer rebuke for. —*Beecher.*

(4449.) You will see in the many men who, while they are living sensual lives, are yet kind in their disposition. In a thousand small things they are good, but their appetites are the end of their being. These are what they live for. Their goodness is well enough, is right enough; but they put an inordinate value upon it, and they deceive themselves by reason of it.

There is a field of ten acres, and it is full of thistles, and burdock, and all manner of noisome weeds; but toward the middle of it there is one single stalk of wheat springing up; and you say to the man who owns it, "Why are you such a lazy and careless husbandman? Look there, and see the weeds that have grown up and choked out everything else." "Sir," says the man, "Do you not see that stalk of wheat?" One stalk of wheat in ten acres! Ten acres of weeds, and one stalk of wheat! And that stalk of wheat is thought to be an offset to all these weeds!

So, frequently, when I talk to men, they parry my appeals to them. I urge upon them the necessity of attending to their soul's salvation, the necessity of repentance, of reformation, of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the power of the Holy Ghost both to stimulate and to cleanse them; and they commence saying to me, "I am not so bad as you take me to be," and they rehearse the few little things that are good in them.

Suppose I should say to a sluggard, "The winter draws near, and you have no house, and no provision for one;" and he should pull out a solitary shingle, and say, "I have no house, it is true, but I have something to cover me with!" One shingle!

Many men have no house, and no furnished apartments in their character, but they have some little shingle-quality of good, and that they make an offset for all that is bad in them. —*Beecher.*

(4450.) The very common device of worldly men may be exposed, by which they keep a few show-qualities, as it were, as an offset to a whole career of moral unworthiness. A man may habitually seek ends that are worldly from very sordid motives, and yet maintain a kind of external conformity to custom, so that he shall not offend needlessly. His external conduct may adapt him to slide smoothly along among men, and he may have an occasional flash of generosity, while, after all, the central flow of his nature is selfish—yea, so selfish, that the bottom of it, being mud, is sordid. Though a man's tendencies are wrong, though the currents of his being are wrong, though the substance of his life is wrong, yet he may so delude himself that a few right things shall seem more to him than the multitude of wrong ones which stand over against them; that the bubbles which dance on the surface of the turbid stream shall seem more to him than the stream itself. I have seen men whose life was a perpetual selfishness. I have seen men whose life was a perpetual crushing of their fellow-men; and yet, the occasional kindnesses and generosities which they manifested they hung in their memory as you would hang a picture in your room, to be looked at, and praised, and admired, and to serve as an argument to themselves and others that they were not so bad after all. They do not make many long prayers—nor any prayers, for that matter; they sometimes swear a little; they drink occasionally; they are pretty hard in a bargain; they give their time and strength to their own selfish plans; but they would not see a widow destitute of a cow without giving a five dollars to her! And they never forget that five dollars; and they never forget to tell you that they came forward and gave their money for a benevolent object, and made no pretensions about it! They do not profess to be so very good, but they have a few shining traits—generosities and kindness—and these they keep to glitter

before men; and they laud themselves, and think that they are very good. Why? Because they have three or four show-qualities that they set in opposition to the whole life that flows like a stream toward damnation. All the foundations of their character are wrong, and the whole superstructure which is going up is wrong; but they have hung on the cold and slimy stone which composes the prison-house of their nature one little bright vine; and that they remember, and that they think worth more than all besides. Have you not seen such men? Have you had to go a great way to see them, some of you?

Now, would I undervalue an occasional kindness or generosity? No. That sympathy for the poor, that relief of the widow in distress, that succour of your sick neighbour was good—so good that you ought to have repeated it; so good that it ought not to have been left without company; so good that you ought to have added other noble deeds to it; so good that your character ought to be filled with such deeds. But still, you are proud; you are envious; you are jealous; you are selfish; you are profane; you are ungodly; you violate the laws of God in nature, and in your own soul; and that solitary good thing, though it is not less than good, is not valid as against the whole tendency of your life.

I owe you a thousand dollars, and I bring you one poor, battered cent. You say, "That is no offset to your debt." I say, "Do not you undervalue that money? is it not good for something?" You say, "Yes, it is good for one cent, and no more." And do I tread under foot your good deeds because I say that they do not make you a man? They do not build you up. They do not establish your character. They do not even mark the outlines of it. They are in contrast with it. They are only a light that glows in the prison-house of your nature to show how dark that prison-house is. And by the good that you do I rebuke you, and warn you. Do not think that you are going into the kingdom of God because here and there you have a shining buckle on the harness of the chariot of damnation! —*Beecher.*

2. It must be particular and searching.

(1.) *Taking note of our imperfections as well as of our sins.*

(4451.) Our daily infirmities and imperfections must not be passed over. Some have died of very slight wounds. Small drops of rain make the earth miry and dirty. Vain thoughts, spending time idly, omission of doing good when a price has been in our hands, are counted by us small sins, but such small drops will pollute our consciences to purpose, if not bewailed timely. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(2.) *Taking note of the things from which we seek comfort in distress.*

(4452.) Observe what your hearts have their ordinary recourse unto in case of distress. Men's expectations are often disappointed, and then their hearts fail. And look, as in fears, or in a swoon, men's vital spirits run to the heart to comfort it; so in distress the heart runs out to something else, which it is inured unto, to comfort it. And as the otter, when in times of frost it is kept under by the ice, yet by its breath keeps open some hole as a breathing hole, so does the heart. Now watch and observe the haunts and breathing holes which in distress thy soul keeps open to thyself, to fetch in fresh air from; or look, as if you should see a company of rabbits grazing in a sunshiny day, and a man come by whom they fear, or a storm, you shall see them all instantly run into their several burrows, which are proper to them; and by the place whither each of them does run, you may discern which is proper to each: now thus in distress does the heart run to its holes.

—*Goodwin*, 1600-1679.

(3.) *Taking note especially of the motives and principles by which we are actuated.*

(4453.) There be many things that move, and yet their motion is not an argument of life. A windmill when the wind serveth, moveth, and moveth very nimbly too; yet this cannot be said to be a living creature. No; it moveth only by an external cause, by an artificial contrivance. So it is also if a man see another man move, and move very fast, in those things which of themselves are the ways of God: you shall see him move as fast to hear a sermon as his neighbour doth; is as forward and hasty to thrust himself and bid himself a guest to the Lord's table (when God hath not bid him) as any. Now, the question is, what principle sets him a-work? If it be an inward principle of life, out of a sincere affection and love to God and His ordinances, it argueth that man hath some life of grace; but if it be some wind that bloweth on him—the wind of state, the wind of law, the wind of danger, of penalty, the wind of fashion or custom—to do as his neighbours do; if these or the like be the things that draw him thither, this is no argument of life at all: it is a cheap thing, it is a counterfeit and dead piece of service. —*Day*, 1619.

(4454.) It especially concerns thee to search out the pollutions of thy spirit, of thy understanding, judgment, and will; how far they are guilty in the commission of sin, which will serve to aggravate or lessen the sin so much the more as they are found to have a greater or a lesser hand in it. For as the sins of princes are greater than those of other men, because they are their rulers, so are the sins of these superior faculties of a higher guilt, because it is their duty, and they are placed to guide the rest. And it concerns thee to be the more strictly inquisitive into these sins, because of all others they most conceal themselves, and as their operations are more strong, so with less noise, as poison works more strongly in the head than in the stomach, though it be perceived more there than in the head. Inquire thou into the sins of these ringleaders in thee; and as in case of treason, the government inquires most after the contrivers of it, so look not thou so much to the members of the body, and the lusts which war in them, as unto that corrupted judgment and will in thee that devised the means to satisfy those lusts, which fed them with thoughts and fancies, which were privy to the first contrivance of the treason, and gave way, and consented to it. The lusts which war in the members are but weapons, instruments (Rom. vi. 19). You must therefore look to the higher powers of sin in the soul, to the throne of unrighteousness there, whose agents those lusts are.

If a man would rightly understand a state or a commonwealth, it is not enough to know and view what proclamations come out, what decrees

and orders are made, what factions are in it, what transactions of affairs, what armies raised, &c., for this all in a kingdom know; but he who would be an exact statesman must also know what passes at council board, what the consults and deliberations are, what was the design of such acts and proclamations, and to what end they were made, what ends such or such a potent faction has, with what colours they hide their secret intents, and into what principles of state all may be resolved. This is so to understand a state as few do, and for want of this knowledge how amiss do vulgar capacities judge of public actions. Thus also if you would understand the state of your souls, you must diligently and especially mark what passes at council board in the understanding, the sight of which is enough to amaze us, if we saw but by what devilish principles and atheistical consultations all is guided and swayed, and into which our actions may be resolved, what most base and filthy ends rule us, and what petty, slight, foolish motives we have, what ungodly reasons and deliberations pass through us, and how contrary to the rules of conscience, which notes all, as God's sworn secretary. and how all is overruled by our corrupt reasonings, let conscience say what it will in opposition; I say, if we saw all this, it would amaze any of us. This is indeed to search a man's heart, and to know it, for the wickedness of it lies especially in deceitfulness, and that deceitfulness consists in the juggling tricks of the mind, which are least discerned by us. —*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(4.) *Because only thus can the exercise be made a reality.*

(4455.) "Examine yourselves:" a metaphor from metal, that is pierced thorough, to see if it be gold within. Self-examination is a spiritual inquisition set up in one's soul: a man must search his heart for sin, as one would search a house for a traitor: or, as Israel sought for leaven to burn it.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(5.) *Because there may be the form of godliness without the power.*

(4456.) The devil may be within, though he stand not at the door to be seen. The fox keeps his den close when he knows that God's huntsmen be abroad to seek him. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4457.) In God's sight the whole human family is divisible into two classes, and only two — the good and bad, the converted and the unconverted—those that, still at enmity with God, lie under condemnation, and such as, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and reconciled to Him by the blood of His Son, are in a state of grace.

But, like those great orders of plants or animals which we meet with in the sciences of botany and zoology, these two classes are divisible into numerous subdivisions, differing apparently, though not radically, so much from each other that some sinners seem to stand more nearly related to saints than to many of their own class; just as, for instance, the sponge or branching coral, fixed to the rocks and belonging to the animal kingdom, looks more allied to the tangle that sways than to the fishes that swim in the flowing tide.

Let no man, therefore, conclude that he must be converted because there are broad outward marks of difference between him and many who are certainly not. People have gone down to hell, as the Pharisee did to his house, thanking God they are not as others. The difference between them has been more apparent than real, being no greater than that between two nights—one where the bark seems to sail in the moonshine on a silver sea, and the other so pitchy dark that her outlook can see neither coast nor reef, though he hears the roar of breakers; or between two bodies both dead—one still beautiful in death, and the other a horrid spectacle of loathsome and ghastly decay. In such circumstances how necessary it is to remember our Saviour's warning: "Take heed that ye be not deceived." —*Guthrie.*

(6.) *Because one habitual fault may vitiate the whole life.*

(4458.) When a clock is out of order, we take it to pieces and search where the fault lies, knowing that one wheel amiss may hinder the going of the whole clock. Our hearts are every day out of order; our work must be to take them to pieces by examination, and to see where the great fault is.
—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(7.) *Because thus only can our sincerity be proved.*

(4459.) "*Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.*" The thief must be found before he can be tried, and tried before he is condemned and executed. Some sins, no doubt, may be apprehended with little pains, but if thou beest true to God and thy own soul, thou wouldst not willingly let any of the company escape. How canst thou expect pardon for any, that desirest not justice on all? and how canst thou say, thou desirest justice on those sins, which thou endeavourest not to apprehend? That constable that having a hue-and-cry brought him for a pack of thieves, and lets any get away rather than he will rise to search for them, shows his zeal to justice is little. I do not say, thou wilt be able to find all; it is enough if by thy diligence thou givest proof of thy sincerity, that thou wouldst not conceal any. Set thyself, therefore, in good earnest to the work; beset thy heart and life round, as men would do a wood where murderers are lodged; hunt back to the several stages of thy life, youth, and riper years, all the capacities and relations thou hast stood in; thy calling general and particular, every place where thou hast lived, and thy behaviour in them. Bid memory bring in its old records, and read over what passages are there written; call conscience in to depose what it knows concerning thee, and encourage it to speak freely without mincing the matter. And take heed thou dost not snib this witness, as some corrupt judges use, when they would favour a bad cause, or give it secret instructions, as David did Joab, to deal gently with thee. Be willing to have thy conditions opened fully, and all thy coverings turned up.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

3. It must extend to the outward life.

(4460.) Suppose a man should sail, all the boiling and blazing day, round and round an old Dutch ship in the harbour, and the next day you should see him, like a magnified fly, creeping up and down the masts and spars, and examining the rigging, and you should ask him what he was doing, and he should answer, "I have heard that this ship is a dull sailer, and I want to look at it

and see." Could he ever find out in this way? No. Let him weigh anchor and spread the canvas, and take the wind and bear away, if he would know how she sails.

So, if a Christian would learn his true state, let him not row round and round the hull of his self-consciousness, and creep up and down the masts and spars of his feelings and affections; but let him spread the sails of resolution, and bear away on the ocean of duty. Then he shall know whether he be a dull or a fast sailer. —*Beecher.*

(4461.) As a man who is ignorant of the workmanship of a watch tries to examine it, and after several bungling attempts succeeds in opening it, and then does not know where to find the mainspring or the hairspring, or why the wheels play into each other, and at last shuts it again; so many men attempt self-examination. In the first place, they find it very hard to fix their thoughts. They cannot define their reason; they do not understand the play of their affections, or their moral powers, and so, after a weary hour they shut themselves up again, and hope that in some mysterious way God will bless to them the effort at self-examination. A man might as reasonably look into a well to see the sun rise, as to look thus into his heart with the expectation of good.

Other men examine themselves on this wise. They sit down and try to recall all their thoughts, and feelings, and actions during the day, and then they question themselves, "Do you enjoy reading the Bible?" Yes, they believe they do. "Do you like Sunday?" Yes, on the whole, what with the music and all the rest, they think they do like Sunday. "Are you fond of religious conversation?" Yes, if they can have their choice of people, they think they are fond of religious conversation. A vine would never be so stupid as to examine itself thus, but suppose it should, and should call out, "Roots, do you enjoy being down there in the soil?" "Yes, we enjoy being here in the soil." "Stem, do you like to be out there in summer?" "Yes, I like to be out here in summer." "Leaves, are you fond of waving in the sun and air?" "Yes, we are fond of the sun and air;" and, satisfied, it says, "I am an excellent vine." But the gardener, standing near, exclaims, "The useless thing! I paid ten dollars for the cutting, and I have pruned and cultivated it, and for years looked for the black Hamburg grapes it was to bear, but it has yielded only leaves." He does not care that the roots love the soil and the stem the summer. It makes no difference to him though every leaf spread itself broad as Sahara in its barrenness. It is fruit that he wants. Now, reading the Bible is like the roots in the soil, and liking Sunday is like the stem in summer, and being fond of religious conversation is like the leaves in the sun and air. If religion does not bring forth fruit in the life, all these things are as worthless in the sight of God, as is the barren vine in the thought of the gardener.

Around the *chefs-d'œuvre* in the galleries of Europe, artists are always congregated. You may see them standing before Raphael's Transfiguration, copying with the nicest care every line and tint of that matchless work; glancing constantly from their canvas to the picture, that even in the minutest parts they may reproduce the original. But if at one side you saw an artist who only looked up occasionally from his work, and drew a line, but filled in here a tree or a waterfall, and there a deer or a cottage, just as his fancy suggested, what kind of a copyist would you call him? Now, true self-examination lies in ascertaining how nearly we are reproducing Christ. He is painted for us in no gallery, but His life glows, fourfold, in the Gospels, and our hearts are the canvas upon which we are to copy it. Let us not take occasional glimpses, and work, meanwhile, upon earthly designs; but let us look long and earnestly till our lives reflect the whole Divine image.

—*Beecher.*

4. It must be made with Scriptural intelligence.

(4462.) It is inconceivable how a man should rationally judge of his own condition, when he knows not what to inquire after; or that he should clearly know his sincerity, who knows not what sincerity is. Yet I doubt not but, by an internal feeling, a strong, sound Christian, who hath his faith and love of other graces in action, may comfortably perceive the sincerity of his graces, though he be so ignorant as not clearly and distinctly to know the nature of sincerity, or to give any just description of it; even as an unlearned man, that is of a sound and healthful body, may feel what health is when he cannot describe it, nor tell distinctly wherein it doth consist. But yet, as he hath a general knowledge of it, so hath this ignorant, sincere Christian, of the nature of sincerity. And, withal, this is a more dangerous ground to stand on, because our sense is so uncertain in this case more than in the welfare of the body; and the assurance of such a soul will be more defective and imperfect, and very inconstant, who goes by mere feeling, without knowing the nature of what he feeleth, even as the forementioned unlearned man, in case of bodily health, if he have no knowledge, but mere feeling of the nature of health, he will be cast down with a toothache, or some harmless disease, if it be painful, as if he should presently die, when a knowing man could tell that there is no danger; and he would make light of a hectic, or other mortal disease, till it be incurable, because he feels no great pain in it. It is, therefore, a matter of necessity to open, most clearly and distinctly, the nature of sincerity or truth, so far as concerns the case in hand.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

5. The right standard must be employed.

(4463.) Let us not commend our graces to the eye of our deluded judgments, as shopkeepers do their coarse wares, by setting coarser by them, or by setting in our sight the examples of others who come short of us; but let us compare our little sparks of grace with those bright flames which have shone in the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, yea, in our Saviour, Christ Himself. And so we shall not be proud of our progress, but ashamed rather of our small proficiency; and with the apostle, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before," we shall "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

—*Downame*, 1644.

(4464.) This duty of examining and proving supposes that there is some sure standard, which, if we go by, we are sure not to be deceived. Now that rule is the Word of God; but as in matters of

doctrine men have left the Scriptures, the sure rule, and taken up antiquity, universality, tradition, and the like for their guide, and by this means have fallen into the ditch; so in matters of godliness, when we should try ourselves according to the characters and signs that the Scripture deciphers, we take up principles in the world, the applause of others, the conversation of most in the world. And thus it is with us as men in an hospital, because every one is either wounded or lame, or some way diseased, therefore none are offensive to each other.

—*Burgess.*

(4465.) Men compare themselves with men, and readily with the worst, and flatter themselves with that comparative betterness. This is not the way to see spots, to look into the muddy streams of profane men's lives; but look into the clear fountain of the Word, and there we may both discern and wash them; and consider the infinite holiness of God, and this will humble us to the dust.

—*Leighton*, 1611–1684.

(4466.) Let no soul examine itself by any lower marks than this, *participation of the divine nature, conformity to the divine image.* Examine what alliance your soul has to God; "whose is the image and superscription." Religion is a divine accomplishment, an efflux from God, and may, by its affinity to heaven, be discerned from a brat of hell and darkness. Therefore, Christians, if you will make a judgment of your state, lay your hearts and lives to the rule, the eternal goodness, the uncreated purity and holiness, and see whether you resemble that copy: for conformity to the image and will of God, that is religion; and that God will own for His, when all the counterfeits and shadows of it will fly away and disappear for ever.

There is a vanity which I have observed in many pretenders to nobility and learning, when men seek to demonstrate the one by their coat of arms, and the records of their family, and the other by a gown, or a title, or their names standing in the register of the university, rather than by the accomplishments and behaviour of gentlemen or scholars.

A like vanity, I doubt, may be observed in many pretenders to religion. Some are searching God's decretals to find their names written in the Book of Life, when they should be studying to find God's name written upon their hearts, "*Holiness to the* LORD" engraven upon their souls. Some are busy examining themselves by notes and marks without them, when they should labour to find the marks and prints of God and His nature upon them. Some have their religion in their books and authors, which should be the law of God written in the tables of the heart. Some glory in the bulk of their duties, and in the multitude of their pompous performances and religious achievements, crying with Jehu, "Come, see here my zeal for the Lord;" whereas it were much more excellent if one could see their likeness to the Lord, and the characters of divine beauty and holiness drawn upon their hearts and lives. But we, if we would judge rightly of our religious state, must view ourselves in God, who is the fountain of all goodness and holiness, and the rule of all perfection.

—*Shaw*, 1635–1696.

V. *MISTAKES TO BE GUARDED AGAINST.*

1. Judgments are not to be founded on merely transient emotions.

(4467.) Blessed is he that does righteousness: not only now and then, but 'tis his constant course. We do not judge men's complexions by the colour they have when they sit before the fire. We cannot judge of men by a fit and pang when they are under the awe of an ordinance, or in good company; but when at all times he labours to keep up a warmth of heart towards God. —*Manton*, 1620–1677.

2. It must not be forgotten that self-examination is only a means to an end.

(4468.) So sluggish are our hearts, and so loose and inconstant are our apprehensions and resolutions, that we have need to be most frequently quickening them, and lifting at them, and renewing our desires, and suppressing the contrary desires, by the serious thoughts of God and immortality. Our thoughts are the bellows that must kindle the flames of love, desire, hope, and zeal. Our thoughts are the spur that we must put on a sluggish, tired heart. And so far as they conduce to any such works and ends as these, they are desirable and good. But what master loveth to see his servant sit down and think when he should be at work? or to use his thoughts only to grieve and vex himself for his faults, but not to mend them? to sit down lamenting that he is so bad and unprofitable a servant, when he should be up and doing his master's business as well as he is able? Such thoughts as hinder us from duty, or discourage, or unfit us for it, are real sins, however they may go under a better name. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4469.) A Highlander who purchased a barometer under a mistaken idea of its purpose, complained that he could not see that it had made any improvement in the weather; and those who use signs and evidences for an intent which they will never answer, will be sure to complain that their faith is not increased, though they are always practising self-examination. Yet a barometer has its uses, and so have evidences of grace. To feel the pulse is an admirable thing; the mistake is to put this in the place of strengthening food or tonic medicine.

—*Spurgeon.*

3. It must not be conducted so as to become morbid and hurtful.

(4470.) Though straggling thoughts must be turned inward our hearts must be watched and not neglected, yet must we not be always poring on ourselves, and neglect the rest of our intellectual converse. To look too long on the running of a stream will make our eyes misjudge of what we after look on, as if all things had the same kind of motion. To look too long on the turning of a wheel will make us vertiginous, as if all turned round. And to pore too long on the disordered motions, the confused thoughts, the wants, the passions of our diseased minds, will but molest us, and cast us into greater disquiet and confusion.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4471.) As a general rule, self-contemplation is a power towards mischief. The only way to grow is to look out of one's self. There is too much introversion among Christians. A shipmaster might as well look down into the hold of his ship for the north star, as a Christian look down into his own heart for the Sun of Righteousness. Out and beyond is the shining. —*Beecher.*

(4472.) There are many honest, earnest, solemn-

minded men, who keep themselves under condemnation, as if all the time God were looking at every deed, feeling, or impulse of theirs, and as if He had no confidence in them at all: and they go about subjecting themselves to an unwholesome introverted inspection.

There was a time, which I recollect, when Professor Hitchcock delivered to the students of Amherst College a series of lectures on dyspepsia, being himself an archdyspeptic. He taught them that they should weigh out their food, and that so many ounces of such and such elements was a suitable meal for a robust man; and forthwith there was a buying of scales, and a weighing of bread and meat; and suspicions were excited in the minds of the young men as to what each organ of digestion was doing; and dyspeptics broke out on every side; and some of them never got over it. They had no confidence in their stomachs, and felt that they could not trust them; and watching took the place of that forgetfulness which is so favourable to the health of the body. —*Beecher.*

(4473.) By undue and overstrained self-inspection the mind is apt to become morbid and depressed, and to breed scruples, which tease and harass without producing any real fruit. The man becomes a valetudinarian in religion, full of himself, his symptoms, his ailments, the delicacy of his moral health; and valetudinarians are always a plague, not only to themselves, but to everybody connected with them. —*Goulburn.*

(4474.) Confession to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that self-scrutiny which must precede it, are most healthful practices; but they require to have their tendencies counterbalanced and held in equipoise by devotional exercises of a contrary kind. Self-introspection may easily, and will certainly, become morbid, if it be not checked by a constant outlooking of the mind. True religion is all comprised in two precepts, "Look into yourself to see your own vileness, Look out of yourself to Christ." Little enough health, comfort, peace, and satisfaction, shall we derive from the first of these precepts, unless we constantly couple with it the second in parallel columns.

Anatomy schools, and the nauseating operations performed in them, are absolutely essential to the maintenance of health. Unless our medical students acquaint themselves by dissection with the structure of the human frame, their practice will be all in the dark,—uncertain, empirical, blundering. But to live in an anatomy school would be to inhale a pernicious atmosphere. Nay, open the windows, and let in the air and light of heaven; and the study of the subject having been completed, let the student walk abroad and drink into his constitution the genial influences of nature.

To be ransacking the human structure all day, useful as the results may be, is an exercise which has morbid tendencies that require counteraction. Learn a lesson, my hearer, respecting that self-inspection which both reason and the Gospel recommend. Live not too much with thyself in the close chamber of spiritual anatomy. Doubt and disquietude, and subtle metaphysical difficulties, and over-canvassing of motives, and splitting of hairs, will be the least mischief resulting from such a system. The knowledge and deep consciousness of thy dark guilt is only valuable as a background, on which to paint more vividly to thy mind's eye the rainbow colours of the love of Jesus. Walk abroad ever and anon, and expatiate freely in the sunlight of God's grace and love in Christ. It is free as the air to those who would inhale it, bright as the sunlight to those who place no obstructions in its way. Breathe it, bask in it, walk in it, there is no other mode of really invigorating the spiritual system. A religion, if it is to be strong, must be joyous; and joyous it cannot be without the light of God's love in Christ shining freely into every corner of the soul. —*Goulburn.*

4. The disparity between our desires after holiness and our actual attainments is not to drive us to despair.

(4475.) Real saints are often complaining of their want of grace, and condemning themselves for their not improving the means of grace. Their desires are ardent and ascending to perfection, and they judge of their defects by that measure. He that sails before the wind in a river, and sees men walking on the shore, to his eye they seem to stand still, because of the swift motion of the boat. Thus the saints judge of their imperfections by the swiftness with which they are carried forward in their desires after complete holiness. Thus easily may we mistake in our judgment respecting the truth, or strength, of grace in our souls. —*Salter.*

SIN.

I. *A UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS.*

(4476.) As light is universal, although some may shut their eyes close, and admit none of it, so is the consciousness of sin universal, although many believe that they have got rid of it altogether. For this very absence of conviction only proves the incompleteness of their nature. They deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them. They have lost the feeling of sin that was given them as a safeguard. It burns them like a fire; but their skin has lost all sensation. They are sleeping steeped in cold mists and poisonous dews, but they know not the poison because they are asleep. Yet fire burns, and poison destroys not the less when the senses, that are sentinels against them, desert their posts. Every man whose nature is complete, and awake, and active, knows that there is such a thing as sin, and that he is a partaker of it. The man who has tried for a quarter of a century to pare off from his mind all that does not minister to one chosen worldly pursuit, will be able to deny that he is convinced of sin. But you appeal from such maimed and crippled spirits to the general sense of more complete minds. And the result is the admission that there is a better law, which our conscience admits the authority of, warning against the law of pride, and self-will, and appetite within us, and that the worse prevails against the better, and that the sense of disquiet accompanies that wrong decision in every case. —*Archbishop Thomson.*

II. *THE EVIL OF SIN.*

(4477.) There are many things that speak the evil of sin, but of all things the blood of Jesus speaks the evil of sin loudest.

The separation from God and union with Satan speaks the evil of sin. As by grace we are united unto God, made one with God, and separated from

the devil; so by sin we are separated from God, and united unto Satan, and made one with him.

The condemnation of the whole world by the sin of Adam speaks the evil of sin. If the committing that one sin brought condemnation upon all the world, how great must the evil of sin be!

The fire of hell speaks the evil of sin, for what is the fuel that the fire of hell feeds upon but sin; take sin away, and the fire of hell will die, it will be quenched.

The spoil of duties speaks it. One sinful thought is enough to spoil a prayer, to spoil a duty, to spoil a sermon. And if one drop of ink shall blacken a whole glass of milk, how black is that ink!

The horror of conscience speaks it; for if but one sin set on upon the soul by God doth put a man into such horror of conscience, how great is the evil of sin!

The troublesomeness of the relics of sin in the saint speaks it. Sins in the saints are but wasps without their stings; and if the wasps without their stings be so troublesome, how troublesome are the wasps that have their stings in them; how troublesome is sin in itself!

But above all, the blood of sprinkling speaks the evil of sin. For if the guilt of sin be so great that nothing can satisfy for it but the blood of Jesus; and the filth of sin be so great that nothing can fetch out the stain thereof but the blood of Jesus, how great, how heinous, how sinful must the evil of sin be! —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

III. *IS HATEFUL TO GOD.*

1. As a defiance of His authority.

(4478.) If a king warns a city of traitors, and calls upon them to search them out and send them away, and they never regard the message, but willingly give them harbour and entertainment, it is a sign they are disaffected to him. To cherish a sin after warning is an open rebellion against God. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4479.) Sin is an attempt to control the immutable and unalterable laws of everlasting righteousness, goodness, and truth, upon which the universe depends. —*Whichcote*, 1610–1683.

2. As an infraction of the moral order of the universe.

(4480.) The tempter persuadeth the sinner that it cannot be that God should make so great a matter of sin, because the thoughts of a man's heart or his words or deeds are matter of no great moment, when man himself is so poor a worm; and whatever he doth it is no hurt to God. But if God so much regards us as to make us and preserve us continually, and to become our Governor, and make a law for us, and judge us, and reward His servants with no less than heaven; then you may easily see that He so much regardeth us as to observe whether we obey or break His laws. He that so far careth for a clock or watch as to make it and wind it up, doth care whether it go true or false. What do these men make of God, who think He cares not what men do? Then He cares not if men beat you, or rob you, or kill you—for none of this hurteth God! And the king may say, "If any murder your friends and children, why should I punish him, he hurt not me?" But justice is to keep order in the world, and not only to preserve the governor from hurt. God may be wronged, though He be not hurt. And He will make you pay for it if you hurt others, and smart for it if you hurt yourself.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. Yet it does not necessarily cause Him to hate the sinner.

(4481.) Because sin is odious in the sight of men, we are apt to think it is odious in the sight of God in the same way. Men's thoughts of each other's sinfulness are oftentimes mingled with revengeful feelings. But God's thoughts of our sinfulness are like a mother's thought of the sinfulness of her dear beloved child. She hates the sin, but loves the child, and gives herself for the child, that she may cleanse out the sin. When God sees in us the sin of pride, or the sin of selfishness, running strong and deep, He does not despise us. He looks upon that which is evil in us as we look upon the warts on the rugged oak. He looks upon it as a development which comes from supereminent temptations or constitutional weaknesses, and so has compassion upon us. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." —*Beecher.*

IV. *IS HURTFUL TO MAN.*

1. It hopelessly enslaves him.

(4482.) The way to heaven is upward, hard, and difficult: the way to hell is downward. Now he that runs down a hill cannot stay when he will, or if he set down with himself how far and where he will stay, he is not like to observe it; so in sin, he cannot take upon himself when he would, to say thus far and no further I will sin; for the corruption of his nature is as fierce horses, and the devil as the driver; he shall not command himself when he would. —*Stock*, 1568–1626.

(4483.) One of the affecting features in a life of vice is the longing, wistful outlooks given by the wretches who struggle with unbridled passions, towards virtues which are no longer within their reach. Men in the tide of vice are sometimes like the poor creatures swept down the stream of mighty rivers, who see people safe on shore, and trees, and flowers, as they go quickly past; and all things that are desirable gleam upon them for a moment to heighten their trouble, and to aggravate their swift-coming destruction. —*Beecher.*

(4484.) It does not signify to the captive whether the chain which fetters his body be links of iron or a chain of gold. His captivity were a fact as truly though his limbs were bound with silken cords; only the former would be more galling to the flesh, harder to wear, and more degrading perhaps in appearance; but the latter would mark him as truly a slave in the power of the master, whose will must be obeyed, though he rule "with a rod of iron."

Sin is the master of the mind by nature; though in some cases, it secures the soul to the service of the world by bonds as fine as gossamer. Satan forges some of his chains of hard bondage, heavy as iron, strong as brass. In other cases he binds the heart with golden fetters; and thus gratifies pride, which assumes to be superior to the poorer —though all alike are his slaves, who are led "captive by the devil at his will" (2 Tim. ii. 26).

—*Bowden.*

2. It pollutes and corrupts the soul.

(4485.) Impurity arises from the iron, and, having arisen from it, it destroys it; thus do a transgressor's own works lead him to the evil path. —*Buddha.*

(4486.) Sin degrades man; of an angel created to love God it makes a demon who will curse **Him** for all eternity. —*Vianney.*

(4487.) Sin is to the soul like fire to combustible matter: it assimilates before it destroys it.
—*South*, 1633-1716.

3. It forfeits all our claims upon God as our Creator.

(4488.) The relation of a Creator is always very strong, and before sin this strength appears in love; but after sin the same strength vents itself in revenge. Where it meets with holiness it protects; where it meets with sin it destroys; as the same wind that carries a ship well ballasted, if ill-rigged or accoutred, it drowns it. The same strength of constitution that keeps off diseases from the body, when it comes to be infected, and to comply with a disease, quickens its dissolution. The same argument that proves this assertion, by a subtle inversion of the terms, will prove the contrary. The same relation of a Creator that endears God to the innocent, fires Him against a sinner. God looks upon the soul as Amnon did upon Tamar: while it was a virgin, He loved it; but now it is deflowered, He hates it. We read in the law that he that cursed his father was to be stoned to death; we do not read that if he had cursed another he had been dealt withal so severely. One would have thought that the nearness of a father would have saved him; but it was this alone that condemned him. Build not, therefore, upon the sandy foundation of a false surmise of God's mercy as a Creator; for this relation is (as I may so speak) indifferent, and may be determined, as to its influence, either to be helpful or destructive, according to the goodness or badness of the creature. While thou doest well it will embrace thee; but upon the least transgression it will confound thee. The same sword that now hangs by thy side, and defends thee, may be one day brought to run thee through.
—*South*, 1633-1716.

(4489.) Sin disengages the love of God to the creature, because it renders the creature useless as to the end for which it was designed. Things, whose essence and being stand in relation to such an end, have their virtue and value from their fitness to attain it. Everything is ennobled from its use, and debased as far as it is useless. As long as a man continues an instrument of God's glory, so long his title to life and happiness stands sure, and no longer. But now, sin in scripture, and in God's account, is the death of the soul. "We were dead in trespasses and sins." Now death makes a thing utterly useless, because it renders it totally inactive; and in things that are naturally active, that which deprives them of their action bereaves them of their use. The soul, by reason of sin, is unable to act spiritually; for sin has disordered the soul, and turned the force and edge of all its operations against God; so that now it can bring no glory to God by doing, but only by suffering, and being made miserable. It is now unfit to obey His commands, and fit only to endure His strokes. It is incapable by any active communion or converse with **Him** to enjoy His love, and a proper object only to bear His anger and revenge. We may take the case in this similitude. A physician has a servant; while this servant lives honestly with him, he is fit to be used and to be employed in his occasions; but if this servant should commit a felony, and for that be condemned, he can then be actively serviceable to him no longer; he is fit only for him to dissect, and make an object upon which to show the experiments of his skill. So while man was yet innocent he was fit to be used by God in a way of active obedience; but now having sinned, and being sentenced by the law to death as a malefactor, he is a fit matter only for God to torment and show the wonders of His vindictive justice.
—*South*, 1633-1716.

4. It is the source of all temporal evil.

(4490.) Sin produceth all temporal evil (Lam. i. 8). Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is removed. It is the Trojan horse, it hath sword and famine and pestilence in the belly of it.
—*Watson*, 1696.

V. *ITS DECEITFULNESS.*

(4491.) What is the reason that so many make a mock of sin, and dance merrily over the infernal pit, and play with the unquenchable fire, but ignorance? The child doth not know that the fire will burn him. As the horse, they rush into the battle, fighting against God and their souls, not knowing it will be to their destruction. These Balaams run greedily after the wages of unrighteousness, not seeing the angel that standeth in the way with a drawn sword in his hand ready to kill them. Did they know what they do when they wilfully break God's law, they would sooner leap into a furnace of scalding lead than provoke so jealous a God. But sin goeth in a disguise, and thence is welcome; like Judas, it kisseth and kills; like Joab, it salutes and slays. The foolish sinner seeth the pleasant streams of Jordan, but not the Dead Sea into which they will certainly empty themselves to his ruin. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4492.) It is the act of lust to show the quintessence and the refined part of a sinful action, separate from all its dregs and indecencies, so to recommend it to the apprehension of a deluded sinner. It will present you only with the fair side, and tell you what pleasure and satisfaction you shall reap from such or such an action: but it never reminds you of the regret and remorse of conscience that will accompany it; of the shame and vengeance that will follow it. No; lust is too skilful a sophister, and has at least this part of perfection, to conceal its imperfections.

Lust never deals impartially with the choice, so as to confront the whole good with the whole evil of an object; but declaims amply and magnificently of one, while it is wholly silent of the other. And it is observable that there are few things that present so entirely bad an appearance but admit of very plausible pleas and flourishes of commendation. Sin prevails upon the affections, not so much by the suitableness of the thing proposed as by the art of the proposal.

As for instance, should I tell a thirsty man that I had for him a drink of a noble colour, a quick taste, and a fragrant smell, surely there could be nothing in this description but must raise and

inflame his appetite: but should I tell him that it was poison that was of this so rare a taste, colour, and smell, this would be a full allay to his desire, and a sufficient countercharm to all its other alluring qualities.

It is no question but Judas' covetousness addressed his sin to him in this manner, and struck his apprehension with the convenience of having so much money, and gaining it with so much ease; but it told him nothing of the black despair and the disastrous death that was to follow it. For had this been offered to his thoughts at the same time, it is no doubt but it must have dashed the temptation, and made it cheap and contemptible.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4493.) The wages that sin bargains with the sinner are life, pleasure, and profit; but the wages it pays him with are death, torment, and destruction: he that would understand the falsehood and deceit of sin thoroughly must compare its promises and its payments together.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4494.) The approaches of sin are like the conduct of Jael. It "brings butter in a lordly dish." It bids high for the soul. But when it has fascinated and lulled the victim, the nail and the hammer are behind. —*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

(4495.) Sin always has two aspects—distinct and contrasting aspects: the one is that which she assumes before her end is gained and the deed done; and the other, that which she puts on after she has ensnared her dupe, and hung her fetters on his soul. How musical in the ear of Judas was the jingle of the thirty pieces of silver, while the bribe was dangling in the purse of the treasurer of the chief priests and elders! Yet how dull and tinsel was its ring as he dashed them down upon the table in his agony, after their lustre had been tarnished by the tinge of harmless blood! How fair was the enchantress when she came to him with her promises; yet how hard and haggard was her mocking features when the mask had fallen and the real face was seen! And is it not always so? Have not you found it so every time you have dallied with the charmer, and listened to her voice? There's many a deadly poison which is pleasant to the taste; there's many a fatal lullaby which is charming to the ear; there's many a Dead Sea apple which is tempting to the eye; there's many a cruel hand which is soft as velvet. Sin is a syren while she tempts, but an ugly raw-boned hag when she has her prey within her toils. Those tresses which appear so comely may change to snakes to sting the hand which smoothes them; those dove-like, winsome eyes that swim so wantonly, shall flash like basilisks upon you if you are captivated by their blandishments; the bloom upon those lips is painted to decoy the heady trifler, and the kiss of lust imprinted there shall wash away the lying bloom, and show the livid, corpse-like grin of the death's-head. There is said to have been kept in the halls of the Inquisition a beauteous statue or effigy of a virgin; the painter's tenderest strokes of art had been expended to give loveliness to the face, and the sculptor's utmost skill had been enlisted to add charm to charm in the rounded moulding of form and limb. The white arms were undraped and extended wide, as though to embrace; the eye and lip, and the whole attitude were full of winning invitation: and the professing penitent was led into this fair presence, and commanded to advance and embrace the figure. As soon as he drew near to meet that bending neck and stooping smile, the fair white arms encircled him—not with the caress of love, but with the vice-like clutch of vengeance, and the bosom opened, and the lips expanded, and a hundred gleaming knives shot from the virgin figure, transfixing the victim with a hundred scarlet stabs; the parted lips pushed forth a barbed tongue, and showed fanged teeth to lacerate and tear:—in short, the beauty was transformed into a beast, the fairy form became an armoury of poignards, whose every charm concealed a dagger, and whose every grace was death. And so it is with sin. Decking her bed with roses, she merges her poison-breath amidst their fragrance, and lulls her silly victim with a counterfeit repose. Oh, rest not on her pillow, for a serpent coils beneath it! Wander not amidst her bowers, for wasps are honeying amidst her blossoms and leaving their stings in the core of all her fruits. Recline not upon the sunny knolls, for volcanic lava lurks under the moss, and the fire of hell lights up her transient heaven. "My son, when sinners entice thee, consent thou not." —*Mursell.*

VI. *ITS FOLLY.*

(4496.) If a man is safe in sailing against God's laws and everything that is good, how much more will God prosper him if he applies to legitimate commerce the same skill and enterprise and industry that he is now applying to that which is illegitimate. I have seen men work ten times as hard to be villains as they would have been obliged to work to be honest men. The greatest slaves I know anything about are those whom the devil has got the upper hand of, and whom he is compelling to dodge between the supreme law of God and their worldly prosperity. They may secure some sort of prosperity, but you may depend upon it they work hard for it.

There was a man in the town where I was born, who used to steal all his firewood. He would get up on cold nights, and go and take it from his neighbours' wood-piles. A computation was made, and it was ascertained that he spent more time, and worked harder, to get his fuel than he would have been obliged to if he had earned it in an honest way, and at ordinary wages. And this thief was a type of thousands of men who work a great deal harder to please the devil than they would have to work to please God. —*Beecher.*

VII. *REASONS FOR SHUNNING IT.*

1. Because when it has once ensnared us, escape may be impossible.

(4497.) Sin weaves its twining and embracing tendrils round about the heart. In their growth they may seem weak; and on account of their littleness and tenderness not sufficiently worth our present serious attention, because we think at any spare moment we can take the pruning-knife and lop them off with ease. So sin, like the deadly ivy, in its growth escapes our notice; its branches are thin and frail and withal green and fair to look upon. But pause awhile! The budding shoot to-day is next year the stiff and stubborn branch, and there are ten thousand little tendrils clinging and growing

into the bark of the noble tree, around which the ivy is stealthily springing up: its leaves are darkening, it is becoming gloomy, and rugged, and stubborn. True, at the extremities it looks tender, and verdant, and harmless; but it is making its way, creeping on and on, and up and up. Did it approach the head of the forest tree with a hard and stubborn stalk it would take no hold. The leafy monarch would spurn the rude assault from its broad and gnarled front; but it steals softly, and even gracefully, into his breast; closes around him with a tender embrace, and then, from its roots beginning to call up its sap and latent vigour, it swells and extends, then darkens, hardens; its grip becomes irresistible; the tree's action grows less and less free; every day its waving arms gradually cease to wave; the free air and light becomes shut from its stem and branches; it is covered with a dull, thick drapery of leaves that obstructs its growth. So gradually its sap withers away; branch after branch decays; its noble stem betrays rottenness and infirmity, until at length the lord of the land passes by and says, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

It is thus sin engrafts itself upon the tree of our life, and men too commonly let it grow on and on, until their own free action becomes subject to the slavery of hell. —*Bellew.*

(4498.) In the gardens of Hampton Court you will see many trees entirely vanquished and well-nigh strangled by huge coils of ivy, which are wound about them like the snakes around the unhappy Laocoon: there is no untwisting the folds, they are too giant-like and fast fixed, and every hour the rootlets of the climber are sucking the life out of the unhappy tree. Yet there was a day when the ivy was a tiny aspirant, only asking a little aid in climbing; had it been denied then, the tree had never become its victim, but by degrees the humble weakling grew in strength and arrogance, and at last it assumed the mastery, and the tall tree became the prey of the creeping, insinuating destroyer. The moral is too obvious. Sorrowfully do we remember many noble characters which have been ruined little and little by insinuating habits. Drink has been the ivy in many cases. Reader, see to it, lest some slowly-advancing sin overpower you: men who were murdered by slow poisoning die just as surely as those who take arsenic.

—*Spurgeon.*

(4499.) It has been related by a French writer that the captain of a vessel was one day walking carelessly along by the side of a river, not far from its mouth, at low water. As he looked about him, not minding his steps, he did not see extended before him a great chain, one end of which was fastened to a ring fixed in a stone on the bank, the other to an anchor sunk in the river. Not seeing it, he stumbled against it, and his foot passing through one of the links of the chain, he could not draw it back again. He struggled violently to extricate himself; he turned his foot first on one side, and then on the other, but all in vain. He then called out for help, and some men who were passing heard him and hastened to his assistance.

They strained every nerve to drag the foot through the chain, but it was beginning to swell, and all their efforts were in vain. What was to be done? To unfasten or take away the chain was impossible. It was a mass of iron which could only be moved with the help of a capstan; and there was no time to be lost, for the tide was coming in, and the water rose every moment. "Let us call a smith to saw the chain," said the men to each other, and one of them was despatched to the nearest village, which was at a distance of two or three miles from the spot. The smith came, but it was found that the tools he had brought with him were not powerful enough, and he was obliged to go back to the village for others. At last he returned.

In the meantime the tide had risen, the mighty waves were rolling in, and the water, which at first had barely wet his feet, had now reached the unfortunate man's waist; the men who had come to his assistance had been forced to get into a boat, and the smith saw he could do nothing for him. What was to be done? Oh, the agony of that moment! There is one last resource, only one, but it is a terrible one. He must sacrifice his leg to save his life. Will he do it? Yes, he will sacrifice anything, everything to escape death.

A surgeon is sought without a moment's delay; he comes in hot haste, bringing his case of instruments and everything necessary for the operation. The unhappy man sees him approaching. "Oh do not lose a moment," he cries; "cut off my leg, doctor, and save my life." But when the doctor reached the spot, he was obliged to get into a boat, and it was only by strong strokes of the oars that he could get near the man; the water had reached his neck, and with great trouble they kept his head above water. "It is too late," cried the doctor, and in a few moments the waves rolled over the unhappy man's head—he was lost.

Reader, this terrible story may be useful to us as a comparison. You, like this man, go forth in the morning of life light-hearted and happy. The chain, which through carelessness he does not see, is the snare which Satan spreads for you. The ring in which his foot is caught is sin. He believes that he will easily free himself from it, but he deceives himself. The rising tide is death, which is approaching. There is not a moment to be lost; every passing hour renders the chain of sin stronger, salvation more uncertain. What will become of you? No boat in the world can save you; no smith has power to sunder that chain; there is no surgeon skilful enough to sever that which binds you to your sin. What will become of you?

There is a Saviour, one only—Jesus is His name. He can save you, deliver you, set you free. Turn unto Him, call upon Him for help; do not delay, for time is passing.

2. Because when it has once ensnared us, the very desire to escape may be lost.

(4500.) Heaven is compared to a hill: and therefore is figured by Olympus among the heathen; by Mount Zion, in God's Book: Hell, contrariwise to a pit. The ascent to the one is hard, therefore; and the descent of the other, easy and headlong: and so, as if we once begin to fall, the recovery is most difficult; and not one of many stays till he comes to the bottom. I will be content to pant and blow, and sweat in climbing up to heaven: as, contrarily, I will be wary of setting the first step downward towards the pit. For, as there is a Jacob's ladder into heaven, so there are blind stairs that go winding down into death, whereof

each makes way for other. From the object is raised an ill suggestion, suggestion draws on delight; delight, consent; consent, endeavour; endeavour, practice; practice, custom; custom, excuse; excuse, defence; defence, obstinacy; obstinacy, boasting of sin; *boasting a reprobate sense.* I will watch over my ways: and do Thou, Lord, watch over me, that I may avoid the first degrees of sin. And, if those overtake my frailty, yet, keep me, that presumptuous sins prevail not over me. Beginnings are with more ease and safety declined when we are free, than proceedings when we have begun. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4501.) Once upon the inclined road of error, and there is no swiftness so tremendous as that with which we dash adown the plane, no insensibility so obstinate as that which fastens on us through the quick descent. The start once made, and there is neither stopping nor waking until the last and lowest depth is sounded. Our natural fears and promptings become hushed with the first impetus, and we are lost to everything but the delusive tones of sin, which only cheat the senses and make our misery harmonious. Farewell all opportunities of escape—the strivings of conscience—the faithful whisperings of shame, which served us even when we stood trembling at the fatal point! Farewell the holy power of virtue, which made foul things look hideous, and good things lovely, and kept a guard about our hearts to welcome beauty and frighten off deformity! Farewell integrity—joy—rest—and happiness.

—*Melvill*, 1798–1871.

3. Because even if we escape from it, some of its effects are eternal.

(4502.) The mind of man has been compared to a white sheet of paper. Now it is like a white sheet of paper in this, that whatever we write upon it, whether with distinct purpose or no, nay, every drop of ink we let fall upon it, makes an abiding mark, a mark which we cannot rub out, without much injury to the paper; unless indeed the mark has been very slight from the first, and we set about erasing it while it is fresh. In one of the grandest tragedies of our great English poet, there is a scene which, when one reads it, is enough to make one's blood run cold. A woman, whose husband had made himself king of Scotland by means of several murders, and who had been the prompter and partner of his crimes, is brought in, while in her sleep, and continually rubbing her hands, as though she were washing them, crying ever and anon, "Yet here's a spot. . . . What! will these hands ne'er be clean? . . . here's the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." In these words there is an awful power of truth. We can stain our souls; we can dye them, and double-dye them, and triple-dye them; we can dye them all the colours of hell's rainbow; but we cannot wash them white. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten them, all the fountains of the great deep will not wash one little spot out of them. The usurping Queen of Scotland had been guilty of murder; and the stain of blood, it has been very generally believed, cannot be washed out. But it is not the stain of blood alone; every stain soils the soul; and none of them can be washed out. Every little speck of ink eats into the paper; every sin, however small we may deem it, eats into the soul. If we try to write over it, we make a deeper blot; if we try to scratch it out, the next letters which we write on the spot are blurred. Therefore is it of such vast importance that we should be very careful of what we write. In the tragedy which I was quoting just now, the Queen says, "What's done cannot be undone." This amounts to the same thing as what I have written, in the sense in which I am now calling upon you to consider these words. What's done cannot be undone. You know that this is true. You know you cannot push back the wheels of time, and make yesterday come again, so as to do over afresh what you did wrongly then. That which you did yesterday, yesterday will keep: you cannot change it; you cannot make it less or greater; if it was crooked, you cannot make it straight. You cannot turn back the leaves in the book of life, and read the lesson you have grabbed over again. That which you have written, you have written: that which you have done, you have done; and you cannot unwrite or undo it.

—*Hare*, 1796–1834.

(4503.) Even pardoned sins must leave a trace in heavy self-reproach. You have heard of the child whose father told him that whenever he did anything wrong a nail should be driven into a post, and when he did what was good he might pull one out. There were a great many nails driven into the post, but the child tried very hard to get the post cleared of the nails by striving to do right. At length he was so successful in his struggles with himself that the last nail was drawn out of the post. The father was just about to praise the child, when, stooping down to kiss him, he was startled to see tears fast rolling down his face. "Why, my boy, why do you cry? Are not all the nails gone from the post?" "Oh yes! the nails are all gone, *but the marks are left.*" That is a familiar illustration, but don't despise it because of that. It illustrates the experience of many a grey old sire, who, looking upon the traces of his old sins, as they yet rankle in his conscience, would give a hundred worlds to live himself back into young manhood, that he might obliterate the searing imprint of its follies. Have you never heard of fossil-rain? In the stratum of the old red sandstone there are to be seen the marks of showers of rain which fell centuries and centuries ago, and they are so plain and perfect that they clearly indicate the way the wind was drifting, and in what direction the tempest slanted from the sky. So may the tracks of youthful sins be traced upon the tablet of the life when it has merged into old age,—tracks which it is bitter and sad remorse to look upon, and which call forth many a bootless longing for the days and months which are past. —*Mursell.*

VIII. *ONE SIN.*

1. Is a transgression of the whole law.

(4504.) He that yields to one sin casts contempt upon the authority that made the whole law, and upon this account breaks it all. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," and he gives the reason in the next words, "For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art a transgressor of the law." Not that he is guilty of all distributively,

but collectively, as Estius well notes. For the law is one copulative; one commandment cannot be wronged, but all are interested in the same; as the whole body suffers by a wound given to one part, "God spake all these words:" they are ten words, but one law. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4505.) Consider what thou dost before thou gratifiest Satan in any one motion; for by one sin thou strengthenest the whole body of sin. Give to one sin, and that will send more beggars to your door, and they will come with a stronger plea than the former; another, why mayest thou not do this for them as well as that? Thy best way is to keep the door shut to all, lest, while thou intendest to entertain only one, all crowd in with it. But if it were possible that thou couldst break this connection of sin, so as to take off one link that pleaseth thee best, and not draw the whole chain after thee by committing this, yet know there is a connection of guilt also. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." A man cannot stab any part of the face, but he will disfigure the whole countenance, and wrong the whole man. Thus the law is copulative; an affront done to one redounds to the dishonour of all, and so is resented by God the law-giver, whose authority is equally in all. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4506.) A man that breaks one point of God's law, breaks it all. "If thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill thou art become a transgressor,"—of the single commandment? No! thou art a transgressor "of the whole law"! Like some of those creeping weeds that lie underground and put up a little leaf here and another one there; and you dig down fancying that their roots are short, but you find that they go creeping and tortuous below the surface, and the whole soil is full of them,—so all sin holds on by one root. —*Maclaren.*

2. Makes way for more.

(4507.) One sin keeps up the devil's interest; it is like a nest egg left there to draw a new temptation. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4508.) By allowing one sin, we disarm and deprive ourselves of having a conscientious argument to defend ourselves against any other sin. He that can go against his conscience in one, cannot plead conscience against any other; for if the authority of God awes him from one, it will from all. "How can I do this, and sin against God?" said Joseph. I doubt not but his answer would have been the same if his mistress had bid him to lie for her, as now when she enticed him to lie with her. The ninth commandment would have bound him as well as the seventh. Hence the Apostle exhorts "not to give place to the devil." Implying, by yielding to one, we lose our ground, and what we lose he gains; and let him alone to improve advantages. The little wimble once entered, the workman can then drive a great nail. One sin will widen thy swallow a little, that thou wilt not so much strain at the next. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4509.) One sin inclineth the mind to more. If one thief be in the house, he will let in the rest, because they have the same disposition and design. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

3. Proves the whole bent of the heart and life to be sinful.

(4510.) "But," saith the tempter, "it is but one sin, and the rest of thy life is good and blameless; and God judgeth by the greater part of thy life whether the evil or the good be most."

Answer. If a man be a murderer, or a traitor, will you excuse him because the rest of his life is good, and it is but one sin that he is charged with? One sort of poison may kill a man; and one stab at the heart, though all his body else be whole: you may surfeit on one dish: one leak may sink a ship. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all" (James ii. 10). Indeed God doth judge by the bent of thy heart and the main drift and endeavour of thy life. But canst thou say that the bent of thy heart and the main endeavour of thy life is for God, and heaven, and holiness? No; if it were, thou wert regenerate; and this would not let thee live in any one beloved, chosen, wilful sin. The bent of a man's heart and life may be sinful, earthly, fleshly, though it run but in the channel of one way of gross sinning! As a man may be covetous that hath but one trade; and a whoremonger that hath but one whore; and an idolator that hath but one idol. If thou lovedst God better, thou wouldst let go thy sin; and if thou love any one sin better than God, the whole bent of thy heart and life is wicked: for it is not set upon God and heaven, and therefore is ungodly.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

4. Is a proof that the Sun of Righteousness is not yet risen upon us.

(4511.) So long as you see one star in the sky the sun is not risen; so long as one leak admits the water the ship is not safe; so long as one sin reigns in a man's heart, and is practised in his life, Jesus is neither his Saviour nor his King.
—*Guthrie.*

5. Is sufficient to ruin the soul.

(4512.) There was but one crack in the lantern, and the wind has found it out and blown out the candle. How great a mischief one unguarded point of character may cause us. One spark blew up the magazine and shook the whole country for miles around. One leak sank the vessel and drowned all on board. One wound may kill the body; one sin destroy the soul. —*Spurgeon.*

IX. *LITTLE SINS.*

1. Lead to greater.

(4513.) It is Satan's custom by small sins to draw us to greater, as the little sticks set the great ones on fire, and a wisp of straw enkindles a block of wood. —*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4514.) A spark is the beginning of a flame; and a small disease may bring a greater.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4515.) Sin encroacheth by degrees upon the soul; if it can get but one of its claws into us, it will quickly follow with its head and whole body —"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Unfaithfulness to God is first discovered in the smallest matters, then it proceeds to greater things. As the decay of a tree is first visible in its twigs, but by degrees it goeth on the bigger arms, and from them to the main body.

As it is the nature of a cancer or gangrene to run from one joint or part of the body to another, from the toe to the foot, from the foot to the leg, from the leg to the thigh, and thence to the vital parts. Do we not sometimes see a whole arm imposthumated with the prick of a little finger; and have we not sometimes heard of a great city betrayed by the opening of a little postern? These little sins will grow to great ones if let alone. Time will turn small dust into stone. The poisonous cockatrice at first was but an egg. Small twigs will prove thorny bushes if not timely stubbed up.
—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4516.) These little sins, if they be so, will make way for greater. Little wedges open the way in the most knotty wood for bigger. As thieves, when they go to rob a house, if they cannot force open the doors, or break through the walls, let in a little boy at the window, who unbolts and unlocks the door, and so lets in the whole rabble; thus the devil, when men startle at greater sins, and by them he hath no hopes to get possession of their souls, he puts them upon those sins which they think little, and by these insensibly enters; for they, once admitted, open the doors of the eyes, of the ears, and of the heart too, whereby the whole legion enter, and rule and domineer in their souls to their ruin. Men do not, indeed they cannot, imagine the woful consequences of neglecting their watch against the least sin. How many who have been so modest and maidenly at first, that they would not so much as give a lascivious person the hearing when he hath spoken wantonly; yet by giving way to their own foolish thoughts, have at last prostituted themselves to their pleasure without any shame. Sinners increase to more ungodliness; when they once venture down hill, they know not where nor when to stop. Workmen bore holes with little wimbles, which make way for the driving of great nails.

When Pompey, saith Plutarch, could not prevail with a city to billet his army, he yet persuaded them to take in a few weak, maimed soldiers; but those soon recovered strength, and let in the whole army, to command and govern the city. Thus Satan, by sins of infirmity, prevails at length for sins of presumption. Great storms arise out of little gusts; and clouds no bigger than the palm of a man's hand come in time to cover the whole heavens. The greatest river is fed with drops, and the biggest mountain made up of atoms. As Sylla said, when in his proscription time, that he slew so many, one pleaded for the life of Cæsar, *In uno Cæsare multi Marii:* "In one little youth, many old subtle men," so in one little sin, there may be many great ones. When one evil spirit hath got lodging in the heart, he prepares it, and makes room for seven more wicked and worse than himself. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4517.) No one becomes vicious all at once. The way of a transgressor is like that of a stone down hill, which, when it is once set going, moves at every revolution with accelerated speed. He begins with little sins, and these lead on to greater ones; from acts he proceeds to habits; from habits to inveterate custom; from custom to glorying in his wickedness. Vice first is pleasing, then it grows easy, then delightful, then frequent, then habitual, then confirmed; then the man is impenitent, then he is obstinate, then he resolves never to repent, and then he is damned. —*John Angell James.*

(4518.) Infidelity to the conscience in small things is intimately connected with a like dereliction in large ones. Little lies are seeds of great ones. Little cruelties are germs of great ones. Little treacheries are, like small holes in raiment, the beginnings of large ones. Little dishonesties are like the drops that work through the banks of the levee; a drop is an engineer; it tunnels a way for its fellows, and they, rushing, prepare for all behind them. A worm in a ship's plank proves, in time, worse than a cannon ball. —*Beecher.*

2. Are most numerous.

(4519.) Despise not venial sins because they are small, but rather fear them because they are many.
—*Augustine*, 353–429.

(4520.) The little transgressions in which men indulge, though they have no power upon the settled course of human affairs, even if they are swept out into a current of public sentiment that carries them down, as leaves are carried by the Amazon, are not harmless nor indifferent, because, aside from the influence of minor delinquencies upon the sum of affairs outwardly, there is another history and record, namely, their influence upon the actor. I repeat that they deteriorate conscience. You can by a blow crush and destroy the conscience, or you can nibble and gnaw it to pieces. There is one way in which a lion strikes down his prey, and there is another way in which a rat comes at his prey, and in time the gnawing of vermin is as fatal to beauty and life itself as the stroke of the lion's paw. These little infidelities to duty, truth, rectitude, lower the moral tone, limit its range, destroy its sensibility; in short, they put out its light. It is recorded of a lighthouse erected on a tropical shore, that it was like to have failed for the most unlooked-for reason. When first kindled, the brilliant light drew about it such clouds of insects, which populate the evening and night of equatorial lands, that they covered and fairly darkened the glass. There was a noble light that shone out into the darkness and vanquished night, that all the winds could not disturb, nor all the clouds and storms hide; but the soft wings and gauzy bodies of myriads of insects, each one of which was insignificant, effectually veiled the light, and came near defeating the proposed gift to mariners. And so it is in respect to conscience. There may be a power in it to resist great assault, to overcome strong temptations, and to avoid fearful dangers; but there may be a million little venomous insect habits, unimportant in themselves, taken individually, and fearful in their results collectively.
—*Beecher.*

3. Are most dangerous.

(4521.) These of all others I observe the most dangerous, both for their frequency and secrecy: the one increasing them to a large heap, the other so covering them as we see not how they wrong us. The rain that falls in smallest drops moistens the earth, makes it miry, slimy, and dirty: whereas a hard shower, that descends violently, washes away but soaks not in. —*Felltham*, 1668.

(4522.) There is a tendency to fear great sins, and a tendency to be indifferent to little ones. Now, there are certain great sins that, being committed,

may give such a moral shock to a man's constitution as to be fatal in their effects; but these are not usually fallen into. Men are not very much in danger of great sins. They are ten thousand times more in danger of little ones. Men are not in danger of committing perjury half as much as they are of telling "white lies," as they are called. Men are not so much in danger of counterfeiting as they are of putting on little minute false appearances. Men are not so much in danger of committing burglary as they are of committing the myriad infinitesimal injustices with which life is filled. Any particular act, to be sure, such as I have alluded to, which of itself is simply as a particle of dust, is not so culpable as a great sin; but what is the effect on the constitution of a series of these offences that are so small as to be almost imperceptible? It is these little sins, continued and multiplied, that by friction take off the enamel of a man's conscience. It is these numberless petty wrongs that men do not fear, persisted in, that are the most damaging. I should dread the incursion into my garden, in the night time, of rooting swine, or trampling ox, or browsing buffalo; but, after all, aphides are worse than these big brutes. I could kill any one, or half a dozen, or a score of them, if they came in such limited numbers; but when they swarm by the billion I cannot kill one in ten thousand of them—and what *can* I do? Myriads of these insignificant little insects will eat faster than I can work, and they are the pest and danger of the garden, as often my poor asters and roses testify. There is many and many a flower that I would work hard to save, but the fecundity of insect life will quite match and overmatch any man's industry. Weakness multiplied is stronger than strength.

Now, that which does the mischief is these aphides, these myriad infinitesimal worms, these pestiferous little sins, every one of which is called *white*, and is a mere nothing, a small point—a mote, a speck of dust. Why, many a caravan has been overtaken, smothered, and destroyed by clouds of dust, the separate particles of which were so minute as to be almost invisible.

Many men are afraid that they will be left to some great sin—and they ought to fear that; but they have not the slightest fear of that which is a great deal more likely to bring them to condemnation—the series of petty violations of conscience, and truth, and duty, with which human experience is filled. —*Beecher.*

(4523.) Men, in their property, are afraid of conflagrations and lightning strokes; but if they were building a wharf in Panama, a million madrepores, so small that only the microscope could detect them, would begin to bore the piles down under the water. There would be neither noise nor foam; but in a little while, if a child did but touch the post, over it would fall as if a saw had cut it through.

Now, men think, with regard to their conduct, that, if they were to lift themselves up gigantically and commit some crashing sin, they should never be able to hold up their heads; but they will harbour in their souls little sins, which are piercing and eating them away to inevitable ruin.

—*Beecher.*

(4524.) There are sins which, like asps, always carry their sting with them. The instant one meddles with them, he is struck by the poisoned dart. Such sins are generally rare and admitted to be very wrong. But there are others that are far more dangerous. Men in tropical climates may be very much afraid of tigers; but there are multitudes of minute insects flying in the woods whose bite is death. Shall they be less afraid of these?

Great crimes ruin comparatively few. It is the little meannesses, selfishnesses, and impurities, that do the work of death on most men; and these things march not to the sound of fife or drum. They steal with muffled tread, as the foe steals on the sleeping sentinel. —*Beecher.*

(4525.) The worst sin is not some outburst of gross transgression, forming an exception to the ordinary tenor of a life, bad and dismal as such a sin is; but the worst and most fatal are the small continuous vices which root underground and honeycomb the soul. Many a man who thinks himself a Christian is in more danger from the daily commission, for example, of small pieces of sharp practice in his business, than ever was David at his worst. White ants pick a carcase clean sooner than a lion will. —*Maclaren.*

4. Destroy.

(4526.) Let no man think lightly of evil, saying in his heart, "It will not come near unto me." Even by the falling of water-drops a water-pot is filled; and the fool becomes full of evil, even if he gathers it little by little. —*Buddha.*

(4527.) You have escaped the formidable rocks; beware lest you are wrecked on the sands.

—*Gregory Nazianzen.*

(4528.) As a man may die as well by a fly choking him as by a lion devouring him; or as a ship may be sunk as well by too much weight of mustard-seed as of great stones and lumps of lead: so, likewise, little sins will sink a man to hell as soon as great sins. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4529.) A little rope suffices to hang a great thief: a little dross abases much gold; a little poison infects much wholesome liquor; a little heresy corrupts much sound doctrine; a little fly is enough to spoil all the alabaster box of ointment; so the smallest sin, the least peccadillo, without God's mercy, is sufficient to damn our souls to all eternity. —*Philip Bosquierus.*

(4530.) The least sin is damnable. The smallest bit of sin is a murdering morsel. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." To eat a little leaven seems a small thing, yet it is a cutting off from Israel (Exod. xii. 19). Gathering a few sticks on a Sabbath, looking into the ark, nay, touching the ark, are all punished with death. It is observable how God urgeth the command to abstain from blood, which seems a small matter, with this argument, as they desire God to do any good for them or theirs (Deut. xii. 23–25) and upon pain of death. Friend, a little thing, a prick of a thorn festering, the kernel of a raisin, a small bone in thy throat, may deprive thee of thy natural life; and these little sins, as thou callest them, may hinder thee of eternal life. A small leak in a ship unstopped may sink it. A drachm of poison diffuseth itself to all parts, till it seize and strangle the vital spirits. A penknife will stab mortally, and kill a

man as surely as a sword. A pistol will kill as dead as a cannon. Cæsar was slain, as some report, with bodkins. There are other diseases mortal beside the plague. Some have been eaten up by bears and lions, others by mice and lice. It is spiritual murder to stifle and suppress the conceptions of the Spirit in thy soul, as well as to do open despite to the Holy Ghost. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4531.) Little sins unrepented of will damn thee as well as greater. Not only great rivers fall into the sea, but little brooks; not only greater sins carry men to hell, but lesser; therefore do not think pardon easy because sin is small.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(4532.) If you have no great transgressions in your life, don't be too sure you are safe. The flakes of snow drop on the Alps one by one, so light there is no weight to them as they touch your finger; they come on, till after awhile the traveller's foot strikes the slide, and down comes the avalanche. So the sins of youth keep packing up till they become a mountain of sin, and after awhile start the indignation of the Lord Almighty. —*Talmage.*

5. Lead to hell.

(4533.) There are two ways of coming down from the top of a church-steeple: one is to jump down, and the other is to come down by the steps; but both will lead you to the bottom. So also there are two ways of going to hell: one is to walk into it with your eyes open—few people do that—the other is to go down by the steps of little sins.

X. *CUSTOM IN SINNING.*

1. Increasingly strengthens all sinful habits and dispositions.

(4534.) As mariners setting sail first lose sight of the shore, then of the houses, then of the steeples, and then of mountains and land; and as those that are waylaid by a consumption first lose vigour, then stomach, and then colour: thus it is that sin hath its woful gradations. None declines to the worst at first. Lust, having conceived, brings forth sin, and so proceeds to finishing—as thus: sin hath its conception, that is delight; and its formation, that is design; and its birth, that is the acting; and custom is the education of the brat; then follows a reprobate sense, and the next step is hell to all eternity. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(4535.) Every commission of sin introduces into the soul a certain degree of hardness, and an aptness to continue in that sin. It is a known maxim that it is much more difficult to throw out than to let in. Every degree of entrance is a degree of possession. Sin taken into the soul is like a liquor poured into a vessel; so much of it as it fills, it also seasons. The touch and tincture go together. So that, although the body of the liquor should be poured out again, yet still it leaves that tang behind it, which makes the vessel fitter for that than for any other. In like manner, every act of sin strangely transforms and works over the soul to its own likeness. Sin in this being to the soul like fire to combustible matter; it assimilates before it destroys it. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(4536.) Every commission of sin imprints upon the soul further disposition and proneness to sin; as the second, third, and fourth degrees of heat are more easily introduced than the first. Every one is both a preparative and a step to the next. Drinking both quenches the present thirst, and provokes it for the future. When the soul is beaten from its first station, and the mounds and outworks of virtue are once broken down, it becomes quite another thing from what it was before. In one single eating of the forbidden fruit, when the act is over, yet the relish remains, and the remembrance of the first is an easy allurement to the second. One visit is enough to begin an acquaintance, and this point is gained by it, that when the visitant comes again, he is no more a stranger. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(4537.) When a sin is let in as a suppliant, it remains in as a tyrant. The Arabs have a fable of a miller who one day was startled by a camel's nose thrust in the window of the room where he was sleeping. "It is very cold outside," said the camel, "I only want to get my nose in." The nose was let in, then the neck, and finally the whole body. Presently the miller began to be extremely inconvenienced at the ungainly companion he had obtained in a room certainly not big enough for both. "If you are inconvenienced you may leave," said the camel; "as for myself, I shall stay where I am." There are many such camels knocking at the human heart. Take, for instance, compliance with a single worldly custom—dancing. First, the custom creeps humbly to the door of the heart, and says, "Let me in; what am I but putting one foot before another? certainly *you* do not object to music, and *I* would not for the world have a full band." So in comes the nose of the camel, and it is not long before the entire body follows. The Christian then finds his heart occupied in full figure by the very vice which a little while before peeped in so meekly. "Being up," it says to him, "all night at a ball, with the eyes dazzled by lights, and the ears stunned with a full band, interferes, you say, with your private devotions. So it does. But your private devotions will have to go, for I will not." —*Episcopal Recorder.*

2. Sears the conscience.

(4538.) The deceptions of sin tend to harden the mind, by gradually, and almost imperceptibly influencing it till it becomes quite accustomed to sin. The force of habit is astonishing. Surgeons and medical men, who are naturally humane and tender, by being accustomed to dissections, wounds, and amputation, necessarily lose in a great measure the sensibility of their minds to these things. On the same principle, soldiers after engaging in two or three battles, witness those things with little emotion. And so if you yield to the imposing insinuations of sin, and give way by a little and little, again and again, you will be so accustomed to them, that the cheat will seem to you a reality; all that sin says you will believe to be true; and by and by you will indulge freely, and without remorse, in that at which you once felt shocked; and thus going on, you will become more and more hardened till you are beguiled into the commission of sin, of which, if it were proposed to you now, you would exclaim, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" —*Salter.*

3. Renders men insensible to saving influences.

(4539.) When men have long taken a custom of sinning, they grow hardened and senseless, as the

highway doth by being often trod upon, or as a labourer's hand grows hard by constant labour. And so sin becometh familiar to them, and they become "past feeling," and are "given up to work uncleanness with greediness."

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4540.) The chief danger of the poison called nightshade is its tendency to deprive the stomach of sensibility, and so to render the most powerful antidotes of no avail. Exactly like this is the effect of long-continued evil habits. Those who are governed by them lose all moral sensibility. Nothing will work upon them. They are "past feeling." Seeing, they see and do not perceive, and hearing, they hear and do not understand. The conscience becomes as it were "seared with a hot iron." In that state, applications which before would have made it start and tremble, fail to move it. —*R. A. Bertram.*

XI. *PRESUMPTUOUS SINS.*

1. Destroy assurance.

(4541.) O take heed of deliberate sins! like a stone thrown into a clear stream, they will so royle thy soul, and muddy it, that thou, who even now couldst see thy interest in the promise, wilt be at a loss, and not know what to think of thyself. They are like a fire on the top of the house, it will be no easy matter to quench it. But if thou hast been so unhappy, as to fall into such a slough, take heed of lying in it by impenitency; the sheep may fall into a ditch, but it is the swine that wallows in it, and therefore, how hard wilt thou find it (thinkst thou) to act thy faith on the promise, when thou art by thy filthy garments, and besmeared countenance, so unlike one of God's holy ones? It is dangerous to drink poison, but far more, to let it lie in the body long. Thou canst not act thy faith (though a believer) on the promise, so as to apply the pardon it presents to thy soul, till thou hast renewed thy repentance.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

2. Destroy the moral sense.

(4542.) As sins of presumption are more difficultly cured, so they waste the conscience infinitely more than any other sins. As really as blows and wounds and bruises weaken the body, and by degrees dispose it to its final dissolution, so certainly do some sins shake and batter, and tear down the constitution of the soul. Guilt upon the conscience, like rust upon iron, both defiles and consumes it, by degrees gnawing and creeping into it, as that does, till at length it has eaten out the very substance of the metal. The inward as well as the outward man has his proper health, strength, and soundness naturally belonging to him; and, in proportion, has also his diseases and distempers, arising from an irregular course of living. And every act of presumption is to him as a spiritual debauch or surfeit, things that bring a present disorder, and entail a future decay upon nature.

David was a sufficient example of this.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

3. Tend to increase.

(4543.) This kind of sin is marvellously apt to grow and prevail upon him that gives way to it. "Keep," says David, "Thy servant from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me." Every presumption is properly an encroachment, and all encroachment carries in it still a farther and a farther invasion upon the persons encroached upon. It enters into the soul as a gangrene does into the body, which spreads as well as infects, and, with a running progress, carries a venom and a contagion over all the members. Presumption never stops in its first attempt. If Cæsar comes once to pass Rubicon, he will be sure to march farther on, even till he enters the very bowels of Rome, and break open the capitol itself. He that wades so far as to wet and foul himself, cares not how much he trashes farther.

When the tenderness of the soul is lost, and its first awe of God and religion broke by a bold sin, it grows venturous, and ready to throw itself upon all sorts of outrages and enormities. It does not demur and tremble as it used to do, when anything gross and foul was proposed to it; but it closes with it readily, and steps undauntedly into that stream that is like to carry away and swallow it up for ever.

This growing, encroaching mischief perhaps first fastens but upon the thoughts, and they take the liberty to settle upon some unlawful base thing, like flies upon a carcase; from these it advances a step farther, and seizes the desires, which presently are carried out with a restless eagerness after the same vile object: and these at length meet with some friendly opportunity, by the help of which they break forth into actual commission; which actual commission grows from one into many, and comes to be frequent and repeated, till it settles into a custom and fixes itself immovably and for ever in a man's behaviour.

This is the nature and quality of presumption; much like what our Saviour says of the mustard seed, which at first is the least of all seeds, but being grown up is greater than all herbs, so that the birds of the air lodge in the branches of it. In like manner presumption first shows itself in a thought, the least of all sins for the matter of it; but from thence shooting up into a custom and a habitual practice, it grows mighty and wide, opens its arms, and spreads out its branches for every unclean bird, every sinful action and abomination, to come and lodge and rest upon.

No man can assign the limits, the *ne plus ultra*, of presumption, where it will stay, and with what pitch of villainy it will be contented; it is as unruly as power, as boundless as rebellion; and therefore, he that would preserve his conscience, and the peace of it, has cause to keep a perpetual guard upon his heart, to save it from a first admission.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

4. Greatly provoke God to anger.

(4544.) As it is with a friend, if you give him a blow peradventure, or strike him by chance, though he may be very angry at the first, yet, when he shall understand that it was done against your will, he is soon pacified; but if he perceive that you plot and contrive his death, that makes him look about him, and resolve that he will never come into your company any more. Thus it is with the blessed Spirit of God: when He sees thee fall into sin unadvisedly and inconsiderately, He will not withdraw from thee for this; but if He perceive that thou dost deliberate and contrive sin, this highly provokes Him, if not for ever, yet for a long departure from thee. Hence it is that a deliberate

will to sin without the act, is more sinful than the act of sin without a deliberate will; as in the case of St. Peter, that man does worse who purposeth to deny Christ, though he never do it, than St. Peter who did actually deny Christ, and never intended it. Let every man, therefore, look to his purposes and deliberations; for if he sin deliberately and advisedly, the Holy Ghost is highly provoked, and he is upon the very next step to the sin of those against whom the prophet prays, "*Lord, be not merciful to those that sin maliciously!*"

—*Spencer*, 1658.

5. Call for profound repentance.

(4545.) Let no man think presumptuous sins will be removed with mean and ordinary humiliations; the remedy must be proportioned, both for strength and quantity, ingredients and dose, to the quality and malignity of the distemper, or it will never do the cure. As stains of a deep dye will not come out of the cloth with such ordinary washings as will fetch out lighter spots, so to cleanse the heart defiled with these deeper pollutions, these crimson and scarlet sins, and to restore it pure white as snow or wool, a more solemn and lasting course is requisite than for lesser transgressions. It will ask more sighs, more tears, more indignation, more revenge; a stronger infusion of all those sovereign ingredients presented by St. Paul (2 Cor. vii.), before there can be a comfortable hope that it is pardoned. The will of man is a sour and stubborn piece of clay, that will not frame to any serviceable use without much working. A soft and tender heart indeed is soon rent in pieces, like a silken garment if it do but catch upon any little nail; but a heart hardened with a long custom of sinning, especially if it be with one of these presumptuous sins, is like the knotty root end of an old oak that has lain long a-drying in the sun. It must be a hard wedge that will enter, and it must be handled with some skill too to make it do that; and when the wedge is entered, it will endure many a hard knock before it will yield to the cleaver, and fall in sunder. And indeed it is a blessed thing, and to be acknowledged a gracious evidence of God's unspeakable mercy to those that have wilfully suffered such an unclean spirit to enter in and to take possession of their souls, if they shall ever be enabled to out him again, though with never so much fasting and prayer.

—*Sanderson*, 1587–1662.

XII. *SECRET SINS.*

(4546.) Take heed of secret sins. They will undo thee if loved and maintained: one moth may spoil the garment; one leak drown the ship; a penknife stab and kill a man as well as a sword; so one sin may damn the soul; nay, there is more danger of a secret sin causing the miscarrying of the soul than open profaneness, because not so obvious to the reproofs of the world; therefore take heed that secret sinnings eat not out good beginnings.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(4547.) Go down into your hearts and take the keys of them and ransack your private cupboards, and narrowly observe what junkets your souls have hitherto lived upon, and gone behind the door and there secretly and stoutly made a meal of them. As dogs have bones they hide and secretly steal forth to gnaw upon, so men have sins they hide under their tongues as sweet bits.

—*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(4548.) I have heard that a shepherd once stood and watched an eagle soar out from a cliff. The bird flew far up into the air, and presently became unsteady and reeled in its flight. Then one wing dropped and the other; presently, with accelerated speed, the poor bird fell rapidly to the ground. The shepherd was curious to know the secret of its fall. He went and picked it up. He saw that where the eagle lighted last on a cliff, a little serpent had fastened itself upon him; and as the serpent gnawed in farther and farther, the eagle in its agony reeled in the air. When the serpent touched the heart the eagle fell. Have you never seen a man or woman in the church, in society, rising and rising; the man becoming more and more influential, strong apparently, widely known, asserting power far and near; but by and by, growing unsteady, uncertain, reeling, as it were, in uncertainty, inconsistency, and at last fall to the earth, and lay there in hopeless disgrace, a spectacle for angels to weep over, and scoffers and devils to jeer at? You do not know the secret of the fall. But the omniscient eye of God saw it. That neglect of prayer, that secret dishonesty in business, that stealthy connivance with the intoxicating cup, that licentiousness and profligacy unseen of men, that secret tampering with unbelief and error, was the serpent at the heart that brought the eagle down. —*Cuyler.*

(4549.) I once heard of two men who, in a state of intoxication, set out in the night to cross a frith in an open boat. They rowed, and rowed, and rowed, till the gray light of dawn began to open upon them, when to their astonishment they found that they had not moved a yard. Would you know the reason? In the stupidity of their intemperance they had neglected to lift the anchor before they began! Now, so it is with many, and their endeavours after the Christian life. They hear ministers gladly, and the more earnest the sermon is, they are the more delighted; they converse with Christians about their souls, and are considered to be in a hopeful state, but, somehow, they never move out of their position. Why? Because, deep down their hearts are anchored to some hidden thing, and they did not lift the anchor when they began. There is a righteousness of their own, which they will not part with even for the spotless robe which Jesus would bestow upon them. There is a sum of money, of which they do not choose that Christ should have the disposal. There is a secret chamber in their souls, of which they are determined that Christ shall not have the key. There is a darling lust which they are resolved yet to gratify, and so they still hang back and are only almost persuaded after all. —*W. M. Taylor.*

XIII. *BESETTING SINS.*

(4550.) Every evil man has lusts of his own, which he is as resolute to maintain as a father to keep his own children. It is easy for men to dislike lusts not their own, to condemn another man's sins; but our own lusts are dear unto us.

Many being reproved, answer, Alas! you must bear with me in this, it is my fault; as if every man were allowed his own fault. There is a private Sodom within us; we are loth to part with that.

Men say of their sins as Jacob said of his sons, "Go, all but Benjamin." Other vices we will not so much stick for, but, "Oh, that Ishmael might live!" There is still some worm in the root of the tree that will spoil the fruit. We extenuate it: is it not a little one? But a little hair in the pen makes a great blot in the paper.

—*Adams*, 1654.

(4551.) We have every one of us besetting sins. I use the plural, for they are sometimes, alas! not one, but many; sins, that is, which more easily get advantage over us than others, to which we have a mournful proclivity, an especial predisposition; it may be through natural temperament, it may be through faults in our education, it may be through the circumstances in which we are placed, it may be through having given way to them in times past, and thus broken down on their side more than on any other the moral defences of our soul; the soul in this resembling paper, which, where it has been blotted once, however careful the erasure of the blot may have been, there more easily blots and runs anew than elsewhere. It is, then, a point of obvious prudence to strengthen the defences of the city of the soul there, where they are felt and known to be weakest—where *that* is, every one who has kept any close record of the sad secrets of his own spiritual life, will in his own case abundantly know—to watch and pray against *all* sin, but, above all, with especial emphasis and earnestness, against the sin which most easily besets us. —*Trench.*

XIV. *ORIGINAL SIN.*

1. Is an indisputable fact.

(4552.) Original or birth sin is not merely a doctrine in religion, it is a fact in man's world acknowledged by all, whether religious or not. Let a man be providing for an unborn child; in case of distribution of worldly property, he will take care to bind him by conditions and covenants which shall guard against his fraudulently helping himself to that which he is to hold for or to apportion to another. He never saw that child; he does not know but that child may be the most pure and perfect of men; but he knows it will not be safe to put temptation in his way, because he knows he will be born in sin, and liable to sin, and sure to commit sin. —*Alford*, 1810–1871.

(4553.) As it is absolutely impossible for a man to believe, when the dice are thrown sixes successively a thousand times, that the dice are not loaded; so is it a thousand times more impossible to believe, when every human being of all nations and generations, without a single exception, begins to sin the instant he enters moral agency, that his will is not biassed by a previous effectual tendency in his nature to sin. —*Hodge.*

2. Is implied in the mission and teaching of Christ.

(4554.) Many inquirers find it difficult to believe themselves innately bad, simply because they have been told that such a belief is required of them. No man taught the doctrine of original sin, commonly so called, so impressively as Jesus Christ, and yet He never mentioned it. His whole scheme was founded upon the assumption that men were wrong. Every call to a new point, every frown upon sin, every encouragement of well-doing, meant that society needed regeneration. Men may come upon the doctrine of original depravity in one of two different ways; for example, they may come upon it as a dogma in theology. The first thing that some theologians do is to abuse human nature, to describe it as being covered with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, and as deserving nothing but eternal burning. Human nature resists this as a slander: it says, "No; I have good impulses, upward desires, generous emotions towards my fellow-creatures; I resent your theological calumnies." So much for the first method of approaching the doctrine. The second is totally unlike it. A man, for example, heartily accepts Jesus Christ, studies Him with most passionate devotion, and grows daily more like Him in all purity, gentleness, and self-oblivion. From this attitude he looks back upon his former self; he compares the human nature with which he started with the human nature he has attained, and involuntarily, by the sheer necessity of the contrast, he says, "I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity." This conclusion he comes to, not by dogmatic teaching, but by dogmatic experience; what he never could have understood as an opinion he realises as a fact.

Suppose a tree to be conscious, and let it illustrate what is meant by growing into a right understanding of this hard doctrine. Tell the tree in April that it is bare and ungainly in appearance; very barren and naked altogether. The tree says, "Nay; I am rooted in the earth; my branches are strong; I live in the light; I drink the dew; and I am beautiful; the winds rock me, and many a bird twitters on my boughs." This is its April creed. Go to the same tree after it has had a summer's experience: it has felt the quickening penetration of the solar fire, quenched its thirst in summer showers, felt the sap circulating through its veins; the leaves have come out on branch and twig, the blossoms have blushed and bloomed through long days of light; fruit has been formed, and mellowed into maturity. Now hear the tree! 'I am not what I was in April; my very identity seems to be changed; when men called me bare and rugged I did not believe them a few months ago; now I see what they meant—their verdict was sound: I thought the April light very beautiful, but it is nothing to the blazing splendour of the later months; I liked the twitter of the spring birds, but it is poor compared with the song of those that came in June. I feel as if I had been born again." The parable is broad enough to cover this bewildering, and at times horrifying, doctrine of hereditary depravity. Men cannot be in April what they will be in September. Each year says to growing hearts, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." In old age men may accept the rejected doctrines of their youth. Experience brings us round many a rugged hill, and gives us better views of condemned, because misunderstood, opinions. —*Parker.*

3. Cleaves to us till death.

(4555.) There is no getting rid of the corrupt nature of man until death prostrates it in the dust. It is like the Jewish leprosy in the walls of the tainted house, which could never be eradicated until the whole building was taken down. But its nature undergoes a material change through the operation of grace upon it. Just as the virulent properties of

an acid are neutralised by the mixture of alkali, the substance is not destroyed, or removed, but the character is changed—so the whole leaven of corruption, when acted on by grace, is altered in its pernicious effects, and assumes a new character, although it is not taken away.

4 Necessitates continual watchfulness.

(4556.) Let original sin make us walk with continual jealousy and watchfulness over our hearts. The sin of our nature is like a sleeping lion, the least thing that awakens it makes it rage. The sin of our nature, though it seems quiet, and lies as fire hid under the embers, yet if it be a little stirred and blown up by a temptation, how quickly may it flame forth into scandalous evils? therefore we had need always to walk watchfully. "I say to you all, watch" (Mark xiii. 37). A wandering heart needs a watchful eye. —*Watson*, 1696.

5. It deserveth God's wrath and damnation.

["Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world *it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.*"—*Articles of Church of England, No. ix.*]

(4557.) As we do not cease to hate a young wolf although that he hath not yet worried any sheep, or a young serpent, notwithstanding that it hath not yet cast forth its venom, but do judge them worthy of death because of the perverse nature that is in them: so ought we to esteem that God hath no less occasion to condemn us, even from our mother's womb, because of our perversity and natural malice engendered within us. And though the Lord should damn us eternally, He should do us no wrong, but only that which our nature deserveth; for although the young infant hath not yet done any work which we may judge to be evil, since he hath not yet the understanding or the power to do it, yet it followeth not therefore but that the perversity which is natural in man hath already its root in him as one part of his paternal inheritance, the which cannot please God; for although it bringeth not forth its fruits, yet they do remain still there, as in their root, which will bring them forth in its time—as the venom is already in a serpent, although he bite not, and the nature of a wolf in a young wolf, how harmless soever he seemeth to be. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

6. Yet it does not exclude children from covenant mercies.

(4558.) "But how can God be the God of our children, when they are born in corruption, children of wrath? Can they be the children of wrath and the children of God both at one time?"

I answer, Yes: both at one time. For even as in civil matters, in our city here, a man may be a freeman of the city and yet be born lame or leprous, or with some contagious disease—this hinders not his freedom—so the children of a believing father and mother may be freemen of the city of God, and in the covenant of grace, and yet be tainted with original sin, that overspreads the powers of the soul notwithstanding. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

XV. *SINS OF OMISSION.*

(4559.) Suppose sins of omission were little, yet it is folly and madness upon this to allow of them. A mote in the eye is a little thing, it hindereth our sight of the sun, and is big enough to put us to great pain, and to disturb our whole body. The flies and lice of Egypt were little creatures, but great plagues. The sting of a bee is a little thing, but it puts us to grievous torment. He who refused to give a few crumbs, was denied one drop (Luke xvi. 21). A fly spoils an alabaster box of ointment; a little poison spoils much wholesome liquor.

If they were little, yet they are sins, and that enough to set a good man against them. It is as much treason to coin a penny, as a twenty shillings piece; because the royal authority is as much violated in the one as in the other. There is the same rotundity in a little ball or bullet, as in a great one. The authority of God is as truly despised in the breach of the least commandments, as some are called, as in the breach of the greatest, as others are called (Matt. xxii. 36–38). A sprig of wormwood hath the same bitterness with the plant. A drop of sea-water hath the same saltness with the ocean. The smallest sin is a breach of the royal law as well as the greatest (1 John iii. 4). Though the object may be different, yet the command is still the same; and the wise man tells us that the law must be kept as the apple of the eye, which is offended by the smallest dust (Prov. vii. 2). —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4560.) All omissions of duty will more and more unfit the soul for duty. A key thrown by, gathers rust; a pump not used will be hardly got to go; and armour not used will be hardly made bright, &c. Look, as sinful commissions will stab the soul; so sinful omissions will starve the soul.
—*Brooks*, 1608–1680.

(4561.) Few of our errors, national or individual, come from the design to be unjust—most of them from sloth, or incapacity to grapple with the difficulties of being just. Sins of commission may not, perhaps, shock the retrospect of conscience. Large and obtrusive to view, we have confessed, mourned, repented, possibly atoned them. Sins of omission, so veiled amidst our hourly emotions—blent, confused, unseen, in the conventional routine of existence—Alas! could *these* suddenly emerge from their shadow, group together in serried mass and accusing order—alas, alas! would not the best of us then start in dismay, and would not the proudest humble himself at the throne of mercy!
—*Lord Lytton.*

XVI. *SINS OF THE PAST.*

(4562.) I must confess I am shocked with some people whom I know, who glibly rehearse their past lives up to the time of their supposed conversion, and talk of their sins, which they hope have been forgiven them, with a sort of smack of the lips, as if there was something fine in having been so atrocious an offender. I hate to hear a man speak of his experience in sin as a Greenwich pensioner might talk of Trafalgar and the Nile. The best thing to do with our past sin, if it be

indeed forgiven, is to bury it; yes, and let us bury it as they used to bury suicides, let us drive a stake through it, in horror and contempt, and never set up a monument to its memory. If you ever do tell anybody about your youthful wrongdoing, let it be with blushes and tears, with shame and confusion of face; and always speak of it to the honour of the infinite mercy which forgave you. Never let the devil stand behind you and pat you on the back and say, "You did me a good turn in those days." Oh, it is a shameful thing to have sinned, a degrading thing to have lived in sin, and it is not to be wrapped up into a telling story and told out as an exploit as some do. "The old man is crucified with him," who boasts of being related to the crucified felon. If any member of your family had been hanged, you would tremble to hear any one mention the gallows; you would not run about crying, "Do you know a brother of mine was hanged at Newgate?" Your old man of sin is hanged, do not talk about him, but thank God it is so; and as He blots out the remembrance of it, do you the same, except so far as it may make you humble and grateful. —*Spurgeon.*

XVII. *SIN IN BELIEVERS.*

1. Is especially conspicuous.

(4563.) If the sun be eclipsed one day, it attracts more attention than by its clear shining a whole year. —*Secker.*

2. Is exceeding sinful.

(4564.) A sin acted in the temple was greater than if the same had been by a Jew committed in his private dwelling, because the temple was a consecrated place. The saint is a consecrated person, and by acts of unrighteousness he profanes God's temple; the sin of another is theft, because he robs God of the glory due to Him; but the sin of a saint is sacrilege, because he robs God of that which is devoted to Him in an especial manner.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

3. Is specially injurious to others.

(4565.) If a man could be wicked and a villain to himself alone, the mischief would be so much the more tolerable. But the case is much otherwise. The plague flies abroad, and attacks the innocent neighbourhood.

The guilt of the crime lights upon one, but the example of it sways a multitude; especially if the criminal be of any note, or eminence in the world. For the fall of such an one by any temptation (be it never so plausible) is like that of a principal stone, or stately pillar, tumbling from a lofty edifice into the deep mire of the street: it does not only plunge and sink into the black dirt itself, but also dashes and bespatters all that are about or near it when it falls.

Was it not thus with Samson? who, of a judge of Israel, and a terror to his enemies, a man all made up of miracle, rendered himself both the shame of the former and the contempt of the latter; a scoff and a byword to all the nations round about him (as every vicious and voluptuous prince must needs be); and all this by surrendering up his strength, his reason, and his royal trust to the charms of a brutish temptation, which quickly transformed and made him a more stupendous miracle of folly and weakness than ever he had been of strength; and a greater disgrace to his country than ever he had been a defence; or in a word, from a judge of Israel, a woful judgment upon it.

And was it not thus also with David? This was the worst and most killing consequence of the temptation which he fell by (2 Sam. xii. 14), that he had, by that enormous act, "given the enemies of God," as the prophet told him, "great occasion to blaspheme." And no doubt the religion he professed, as well as the sin he had committed, was thereupon made "the song of the drunkards;" and many a biting jeer was obliquely cast at one, as well as directly levelled at the other. For to be vicious in the sight of a man's enemies, and those not more the enemies of himself than of his religion, what a bitter aggravation is it on his guilt, and what an indelible reproach to his person!
—*South*, 1633–1716.

4. Brings dishonour on the Gospel.

(4566.) The sins of the godly are worse than others, because they bring a greater reproach upon religion. For the wicked to sin, there is no other expected from them; swine will wallow in the mire; but when sheep do so, when the godly sin, that redounds to the dishonour of the gospel: "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." A stain in scarlet, every one's eye is upon it: for the godly to sin, it is like a spot in scarlet, it is more taken notice of, and it reflects a greater dishonour upon the ways of God. When the sun is eclipsed, every one stands and looks upon it; so, when a child of light is eclipsed by scandalous sin, all stand and gaze at this eclipse. —*Watson*, 1696.

(4567.) An eminent professor is the concern of a whole profession: as to nonplus an Aristotle would look, not only like a slur to a particular philosopher, but like a baffle to philosophy itself.

The devil will let a man build and practise high, that he may at length fetch him down with the greater shame, and so make even a Christian an argument against Christianity.

The subduing of any soul is a conquest, but of such an one a triumph. A signal professor cannot perish without a train, and in his very destruction his example is authentic. —*South*, 1633–1716.

5. Dishonours God.

(4568.) God is worthy of honour: "Blessed be Thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessings and praise." He is above all the acclamations and triumphs of the archangels. Oh then, let every true child of God honour his Heavenly Father! Though the wicked dishonour Him by their flagitious lives, yet let not His own children dishonour Him. Sins in you are worse than in others; a fault in a stranger is not so much taken notice of as a fault in a child: a spot in black cloth is not so much observed; but a spot in scarlet, every one's eye is upon it; a sin in the wicked is not so much wondered at, it is a spot in black; but a sin in a child of God, here is a spot in scarlet; this is more visible, and brings an odium and dishonour upon the gospel. The sins of God's own children go nearer to His heart: "When the Lord saw it He abhorred them, because of the provoking of His sons and daughters." Oh forbear

doing anything that may reflect dishonour upon God. Will you disgrace your Heavenly Father? Let not God complain of the provocations of His sons and daughters; let Him not cry out, "I have brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." —*Watson*, 1696.

6. Dishonours Christ.

(4569.) It is recorded of Alexander the Great, that a soldier was reported to him as having betrayed great cowardice on a particular occasion, on which Alexander called him to him and asked his name. On hearing that his name was Alexander, he upbraided him with the dishonour that he brought on such a name, and entreated him either to change his manners or to change his name, asking him how he could dare, while known as Alexander, to act unworthily? And shall not the Christian remember the high and holy name by which he is called, and dread encountering the guilt and meanness of dishonouring his Head, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." That *name*, in its very signification, tells him that he is related to the *anointed One*, and that (as the name implies) all his members, in their measure and degree, are anointed ones. How shall they who take this sacred unction upon them, dare to dishonour this name, and *so* sin against Christ. —*Salter.*

7. Is specially hateful in the sight of God.

(4570.) God never hates sin so much as when He sees it in His people. Let those who have made some advance in the divine life especially note this, for it is in gardens that weeds are odious; we do not blame them when we find them in fields and ditches; and the better kept is the garden, the more unsightly are any weeds that are left there.
—*R. A. Bertram.*

8. A man may sin and yet be a child of God.

(4571.) A traveller, in his journey, thinks of nothing so much as his journey's end: if he stumble by the way, that is against his will, and more than he intended; and if he chance to get a fall, or to go out of his way, he rests not till he be up, and in it again. So look but upon a hunter, he has no design to follow his way at all, whether in the way or out of the way, his mind is upon the game; an archer bends his bow, delivers his arrow, and though it fall short or over, on one side or other, his aim was at the mark. Thus it is with the children of God, their aim is at heaven, their thoughts upon Zion, their looks towards Jerusalem, and their faces thitherward; and if there be any aberrations or turning aside, it is no more they, but sin that dwelleth in them. It is not so with the ungodly, they have no such design for God's glory, the desire of their hearts is the satisfaction of their lusts and sinful pleasures, they aim at nothing else but sin, and so in the end reap the wretched fruit of their own wicked ways. —*Westfield*, 1628.

(4572.) A good man is not infallible; a good man may err, may fall; but there is life in that man, there is a principle in that man; *fainting is not dying*. The bough may be borne down by the violence of the flood, but when the pressure has rolled off, it will regain its erectness, and point towards heaven.
—*Salter.*

(4573.) A man rescued from drowning, under suspended animation, presents no appearance but that of a dead man, but the spark of life is not extinct, and with proper remedies he will be restored, and perform the offices of life. So a strong man, overcome by a violent distemper, has his strength prostrated to the ground, and is as weak as a little child. But the principle of manhood is still within him, and once restored he will again put forth the mightiness of his strength. In like manner a believer is sometimes beat down to the ground with the force of some mighty sin. His conscience, meanwhile, is like that of a man in a swoon; like David, who, after the matter of Uriah, lived on for *a time* with a stupid conscience. But, as in the royal offender, there is a principle of recovery in him. He needs the arrow of conviction, "thou art the man," to pierce his soul, and he shall straightway be healed.
—*Salter.*

9. Is but momentary.

(4574.) A truly gracious man, like a thorough good watch, may deviate and point wrong for a season, but, like the machine just mentioned, will, after a short time, with a single touch, come round, and point right as before.

10. Afterwards makes them more watchful.

(4575.) The remembrance of those sorrows and fears, the anxieties and indignation against himself that sin caused in a true penitent, will make him jealous for the future of his heart, and circumspect against all temptations that may betray him (2 Cor. vii. 11). As one that has narrowly escaped consuming by fire, retains the idea of his danger so deeply impressed on his mind that upon any new occasion his ancient fears revive and make him very watchful. —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

11. The fact that God overrules the sins of His people for good should not render us less watchful against sin.

(4576.) Whether true evangelical humility, and an enlarged view of the grace of God in Christ, triumphing over all obstacles, be ordinarily attainable without an experience of declensions, backslidings, and repeated forgiveness, is the last question I shall consider. I dare say you will do me the justice to believe that I would not advise any one to run into sin in order to get a knowledge of his own heart. David broke his bones thereby; he obtained an affecting proof of his inability of standing in his own strength, and of the skill and goodness of his Physician who healed him; yet no man in his wits would break his bones for the sake of making experiments, if he were ever so sure they would be well set again. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

12. Should inspire the ungodly with apprehension.

(4577.) Is it not evident that other men's sins should move you to be the more religious and careful of yourselves, and not the less? If you see them stumble, you should look the better to your feet, and not cast yourselves headlong from the rock that you should be built upon. You should think with yourselves, if such men are so faulty for all the pains they take, how much more pains must I take to escape such faults? If they that run so hard shall many of them miss of the prize by coming short, it is a mad conceit of you to think to win it by sitting still, or doing less than they that lost it.
—*Baxter* 1615–1691.

XVIII. *SHOULD BE INSTANTLY AND UTTERLY FORSAKEN.*

1. Because sin in all its forms is the ruin of the soul.

(4578.) As there is bitterness in every sprig of wormwood, and saltness in every drop of sea-water, so there is death and hell, and wrath and damnation, in every sin. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4579.) Use sin as it will use you; spare it not, for it will not spare you: it is your murderer, and the murderer of the world: use it, therefore, as a murderer should be used. Kill it before it kills you; and though it kill your bodies, it shall not be able to kill your souls; and though it bring you to the grave, as it did your Head, it shall not be able to keep you there. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4580.) Our Lord pronounced the children of this world "wise in their generation;" and who can doubt that thousands who are lost would, with God's blessing, be saved, did they bring the same prudence, and diligence, and energy to their eternal, as they do to their temporal interests? But in how many people is consummate wisdom joined to the greatest folly? They are wise enough to gain the world, and fools enough to lose their souls.

Convince a man that the only way to save his life is to part with his limb, and he does not hesitate an instant between living with one limb and being buried with two. Borne into the operating theatre, pale, yet resolute, he bares the diseased member to the knife. And how well does that bleeding, fainting, groaning sufferer teach us to part with our sins rather than with our Saviour. If life is better than a limb, how much better is heaven than a sin?

Two years ago a man was called to decide between preserving his life, and parting with the gains of his lifetime. A gold-digger, he stood on the deck of a ship that, coming from Australian shores, had—as some all but reach heaven—all but reached her harbour in safety. The exiles had been coasting along their native shores: and to-morrow, husbands would embrace their wives, children their parents, and not a few realise the bright dream of returning to pass the evening of their days in happiness amid the loved scenes of their youth. But as the proverb runs, there is much between the cup and the lip. Night came lowering down: and with the night a storm that wrecked ship, and hopes, and fortunes, all together. The dawning light but revealed a scene of horror—death staring them in the face. The sea, lashed into fury, ran mountains high; no boat could live in her. One chance still remained. Pale women, weeping children, feeble and timid men must die; but a stout, brave swimmer, with trust in God, and disencumbered of all impediments, might reach the shore, where hundreds stood ready to dash into the boiling surf, and, seizing, save him. One man was observed to go below. He bound around his waist a heavy belt, filled with gold, the hard gains of his life; and returned to the deck. One after another, he saw his fellow-passengers leap overboard. After a brief but terrible struggle, head after head went down—sunk by the gold they had fought hard to gain, and were loth to lose. Slowly he was seen to unbuckle his belt. His hopes had been bound up in it. It was to buy him land, and ease, and respect—the reward of long years of hard and weary exile. What hardships he had endured for it! The sweat of his brow, the hopes of day and the dreams of night, were there. If he parts with it, he is a beggar; but then if he keeps it, he dies. He poised it in his hand; balanced it for a while; took a long, sad look at it; and then with one strong, desperate effort, flung it far out into the roaring sea. Wise man! It sinks with a sullen plunge; and now he follows it—not to sink, but, disencumbered of its weight, to swim; to beat the billows manfully; and, riding on the foaming surge, to reach the shore. Well done, brave gold-digger! Ay, well done, and well chosen; but if "a man," as the devil said, who for once spoke God's truth, "will give all that he hath for his life," how much more should he give all he hath for his soul? Better to part with gold than with God; to bear the heaviest cross than miss a heavenly crown! —*Guthrie.*

(4581.) A great warrior was once persuaded by his enemies to put on a beautiful robe, which they presented him. Not suspecting their design, he wrapped himself tightly in it, but in a few moments found that it was coated on the inside with a deadly poison. It stuck to his flesh as if it had been glued. The poison entered into his flesh, so that, in trying to throw off the cloak, he was left torn and bleeding. But did he for that reason hesitate about taking it off? Did he stop to think whether it was painful or not? Did he say, "Let me wait and think about it awhile"? No, he had more sense than that. He tore it off at once, and threw it from him, and hastened away from it to the physician. Sinner, this is the way you must treat your sins if you would be saved. They have gone into your soul. If you let them alone you perish. You must not fear the pain of repentance. You should cast them from you as poison, and hasten away by faith to Jesus Christ, the only Physician who can cure you, by His own blood applied to your hearts. Do this, or your sins will consume you like fire. —*Meade.*

2. Because one sin leads to another.

(4582.) Sins are like circles formed in the water when a stone is thrown into it; one produces another. When anger was in Cain's breast, murder was not far off. —*Eliza Cook.*

3. Because even one sin is enough to enslave and destroy the soul.

(4583.) If seven thieves shall enter a man's house, and, six of them being overcome, the seventh lie lurking in some secret corner, the master of that house cannot but sleep in danger; and a bird falling into a snare, or a mouse being taken in a trap, if the one be but held by the claw, or the other by the end of the tail, they are both in as much danger as if their whole bodies were surprised. Thus it is that all sin, and the least sin, must be repented of. Pharaoh, being smitten with many plagues, is willing at last to let the people go, so as they would leave their sheep and their cattle behind them. "No," says Moses, "that cannot be; all the flocks and herds shall go along with us, not a hoof shall be left." And Satan, like Pharaoh, would keep something of sin in us, which may be as a pledge of our returning to him again; though sin be taken away, yet he would have the occasions

of sin to remain. "Leave gaming," says he, "but let not the cards and dice be burnt; thou mayest cease to be a fornicator, but do not pull out thy wanton eye; thou must not hate thine enemy, yet what necessity is there that thou shouldest love him?" This is the voice of Satan. But God bespeaks the sinner after another manner: He will have all sin to be repented of; not so much as the occasion of sin shall remain; which, if it do, Satan will make a re-entry, and then the end shall be worse than the beginning. —*Stapleton.*

(4584.) As an eagle, though she enjoy her wings and beak, is wholly prisoner if she be held but by one talon; so are we, though we could be delivered of all habit of sin, in bondage still, if vanity hold us but by a silken thread. —*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(4585.) Observe, before pardon can be sealed, he must forsake not this sin, or that, but the whole law of sin. "*Let the wicked forsake his way.*" A traveller may step from one path to another, and still go on the same way, leave a dirty, deep, rugged path, for one more smooth and even; so many finding some gross sins uneasy, and too toilsome to their awakened consciences, step into a more cleanly path of civility; but alas! poor creatures, all they get is to go a little more easily and cleanly to hell, than their beastly neighbours; but he forsakes the way of sin, that turns out of the whole road; in a word, thou must forsake the blindest path of all in sin's way, that which lies behind the hedge, as I may so say, in the thoughts of the heart, "*and the unrighteous his thoughts;*" or else thou knockest in vain at God's door for pardoning mercy, and therefore, poor soul, forsake all or none. This halving with sin is ridiculous. Art thou afraid of this sin, and not of a less, which hinders thy peace, and procures thy damnation as sure, only not with so much distraction to thy drowsy conscience at present? This is as ridiculous, as it was with him, who being to be hanged, desired that he might by no means go through such a street to the gallows, for fear of the plague that was there. What wilt thou get poor sinner, if thou goest to hell, though thou goest thither by thy ignorance, unbelief, spiritual pride, &c., yet led about so, as to escape the plague of open profaneness? —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4586.) While I was walking in the garden one bright morning, a breeze came through and set all the flowers and leaves a fluttering. Now, that is the way flowers talk, so I pricked up my ears and listened.

Presently an old elder tree said, "Flowers, shake off your caterpillars!"

"Why?" said a dozen all together.

The elder said, "If you don't, they'll eat you up alive."

So the flowers set themselves a shaking till the caterpillars were shaken off.

In one of the middle beds there was a beautiful rose, who shook off all but one, and she said to herself, "Oh, that's a beauty! I'll keep that one."

The elder overheard her, and called out, "One caterpillar is enough to spoil you."

"But," said the rose, "look at his brown and crimson fur, and his beautiful black eyes, and scores of little feet; I want to keep *him;* surely *one* won't hurt me."

A few mornings after, I passed the rose again; there was not a whole leaf on her; her beauty was gone; she was all but killed, and had only life enough to weep over her folly, while the tears stood like dew-drops on her tattered leaves. "Alas! I didn't think one caterpillar would ruin me."

—*C. A. Davis.*

4. Because our next transgression may bring down on us the vengeance we have long deserved.

(4587.) We commonly say, it is not the last blow of the axe that fells the oak: perhaps the last may be a weaker blow than any of the former, but the other blows made way for the felling of it, and at length a little blow comes and completes it. So our former sins may be the things that make way for our ruin, and then at length some lesser sins may accomplish it.

—*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

(4588.) Didst thou know that God remembers the sins of thy youth, and thy maturer age, thou wouldst fear that, on the next sin thou committest, God might bring upon thee all thy previous transgressions. As a man that has used his body to drink poison for a time may do well, but at last he is overcome and destroys himself; so the nex sin which thou committest, though it be less than former transgressions, it may set all the rest on working; as, suppose there be many barrels of gunpowder in a room, and a few grains lie scattered about, and a spark falls into that, and so fires all the rest; so thy former sins are as the barrels of gunpowder, the next sin thou committest, especially if a sin against knowledge, may be the grains which set all the rest on work to pull down judgment upon thee. —*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

5. Because sin was the cause of Christ's death.

(4589.) Suppose a man should come to a table and there is a knife laid at his trencher, and it should be told him, "This is the knife that cut the throat of your child, or your father;" if he could now use that knife as any other knife would not one say, "Surely there was but little love either to the father or to the child!" So, when there is a temptation to any sin, this is the knife that cut the throat of Christ, that pierced His sides, that was the cause of His sufferings, that made Christ to be a curse. Now, wilt thou not look on that as a cursed thing that made Christ to be a curse? Oh, with what detestation would a man or woman fling away such a knife! and with the like detestation it is required that a man should renounce sin; for that, and that only, was the cause of the death of Christ. —*Alphonsus ab Avendano.*

(4590.) Shall we continue in sin (Rom. vi. 1) after we know what it cost Christ to expiate our sins? God forbid! When Mark Antony addressed the citizens of Rome, to animate them to revenge the death of Cæsar, he enlarged upon Cæsar's character, his great actions, his love to the Roman people, and the evidence he had given of it in the donations and bequests he had appointed them by his will, the particulars of which he specified. When he had thus engaged their admiration and gratitude, and they discovered emotions of regret and sensibility that Cæsar, the greatest character in Rome, who had fought and triumphed for them, and had remembered them in his will, should be slain, Antony threw aside a cloth, and showed them his dead body covered with wounds and blood.

This sight rendered it needless to say more. The whole assembly united as one man, to search out, and to destroy his murderers. The application is obvious.—May our hearts, from this hour, be filled with a determined, invariable resentment against sin, the procuring cause of the humiliation and death of our best friend and benefactor.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

6. Because God hates it.

(4591.) As it is with two children, the one forbears to touch a coal, because it will black and smut his hand; the other will not by any means be brought to handle it, because he perceives it to be a fire-coal, and will burn his fingers: thus, all ungodly men, they will not touch sin because it will burn; they may be, and often are, troubled for sin, but their disquietness for sin ariseth more from the evil of punishment, the effect of sin, than from the evil that is in the nature of sin; they are troubled for sin, but it is because sin doth destroy the soul, and not because sin doth defile the soul; because God pursueth sin, and not because He hates sin; more, because it is against God's justice that is provoked, than because it is against the holiness of God which is dishonoured; because God threatens sin, not because God doth forbid sin; because of the hell for sin, not because of the hell in sin. But now, on the other side, all good and godly men, they hate and loathe sin, because it is of a smutting and defiling nature, because it is against the nature of God, because God loathes and hates it, more because it is against God's command than because God doth punish it; not because of the damning power of sin, but because of the defiling power of sin, &c. —*Inchinus.*

7. Because sin in all its forms and degrees is hateful.

(4592.) If sin be evil, and displease God, and deserve damnation, he that most fully and carefully avoideth it, is the honestest and the wisest man. You will not blame your child or servant for being loath to offend and disobey you even in the smallest matter. You like not him that offereth you the least abuse, so well as him that offereth you none. You had rather be well than have the least disease. You will not take a little poison, nor would you feel a little of hell. Why then should we not avoid the least sin so far as we are able?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4593.) There may be a forsaking of a particular sin that has been delightful and predominant without sincerity towards God, for another lust may have got possession of the heart, and take the throne. There is an alternate succession of appetites in the corrupt nature, according to the change of men's temper or interests in the world. As seeds sown in that order in a garden, that 'tis always full of a succession of fruits and herbs in season; so original sin that is sown in our nature is productive of diverse lusts, some in the spring, others in the summer of our age, some in the autumn, others in the winter. Sensual lusts flourish in youth, but when mature age has cooled these desires, worldly lusts succeed; in old age there is no relish for sensuality, but covetousness reigns imperiously. Now he that expels one sin and entertains another continues in a state of sin; 'tis but exchanging one familiar for another; or, to borrow the prophet's expression, "'Tis as one should fly from a lion, and meet with a bear that will as certainly devour him." —*Salter.*

(4594.) Thou dost not hate sin if thou only hatest some one sin. All iniquity will be distasteful in thy sight if God the Holy Spirit has really made thee to loathe iniquity. If I say to a person, "I will not receive you into my house when you come dressed in such a coat;" but if I open the door to him when he has on another suit which is more respectable, it is evident that my objection was not to the person, but to his clothes. If a man will not cheat when the transaction is open to the world, but will do so in a more secret way, or in a kind of adulteration which is winked at in the trade, the man does not hate cheating, he only hates that kind of it which is sure to be found out; he likes the thing itself very well. Some sinners, they say they hate sin. Not at all; sin in its essence is pleasing enough; it is only a glaring shape of it which they dislike. —*Spurgeon.*

(4595.) If we would realise the full force of the term "hatred of evil," as it ought to exist in all, as it would exist in a perfectly righteous man, we shall do well to consider how sensitive we are to natural evil in its every form—to pain, and suffering, and misfortune. How delicately is the physical frame of man constructed, and how keenly is the slightest derangement in any part of it felt! A little mote in the eye, hardly discernible by the eye of another, the swelling of a small gland, the deposit of a small grain of sand, what agonies may these slight causes inflict! That fine filament of nerves of feeling spread like a wonderful network of gossamer over the whole surface of the body, how exquisitely susceptible is it! A trifling burn, or scald, or incision, how does it cause the member affected to be drawn back suddenly, and the patient to cry out! Now there can be no question that if man were in a perfectly moral state, moral evil would affect his mind as sensibly and in as lively a manner—would, in short, be as much of an affliction to him as pain is to his physical frame. He would shrink and snatch himself away, as sin came near to his consciousness; the first entrance of it into his imagination would wound and arouse his moral sensibilities, and make him positively unhappy.

—*Goulburn.*

8. Because the consequences of sin are so far reaching.

(4596.) Sages of old contended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone; that no man could do ill and his fellows not suffer. They illustrated it thus:—"A vessel sailing from Joppa, carried a passenger, who, beneath his berth, cut a hole through the ship's side. When the men of the watch expostulated with him, "What doest thou, O miserable man?" the offender calmly replied, "What matters it to you? The hole I have made lies under my own berth."

This ancient parable is worthy of the utmost consideration. No man perishes alone in his iniquity; no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression. —*Spurgeon.*

9. It must be renounced in the heart as well as in the outward life.

(4597.) Observable is the story of Phaltiel: David had married Michal, Saul injuriously gave

her to another. When David came to the crown and was able to speak a word of command, he sends for his wife Michal; her husband dares no but obey, brings her on her journey, and then, not without great reluctancy of spirit, takes his leave of her. But what? Was Phaltiel weary of his wife, that he now forsakes her? No, he was enforced; and though she were gone, he cast many a sad thought after her, and never leaves looking till he sees her as far as Bahurim, weeping and bemoaning her absence. Thus, carnal and unregenerate men, though, for fear or some other reasons, they shake hands with their sins, yet they have many a longing heart after them: they part, and yet they are loth to part asunder.

Hence it is, that as the merchant throws away his goods in a storm because he cannot keep them, so they, in the times of sickness and distress, when the sea grows high and the tempest rageth, when they begin to apprehend what death is and what hell is, and know, unless the vessel be lighted, they cannot be safe, then they are hard at work, heave overboard their usury, their drunkenness, their swearing, and such like stuff, not out of hatred to them, but love to themselves; for if they could but continue in their sins and be saved when they have done, they would never part with them at all.

—*Stiles*, 1627.

(4598.) Clip the hairs short, yet they will grow again, because the roots are in the skull. A tree that is but pruned, shred, topped, or lopped, will sprout again: root it up, and it shall grow no more. What is it to clip the outward appearances, and to lop the superfluous boughs of our sins, when the root is cherished in the heart? —*Adams*, 1654.

(4599.) Men may forbear sin that do not hate it: they forbear it by constraint, for fear of punishment, shame, worldly ends, but regard it in their hearts. The dog has a mind to the pail, but fears the cudgel. But God judges not as man judges.

—*Manton*, 1620–1677.

(4600.) All the Israelites departed in reality out of the land of Egypt, but they did not depart in affection; wherefore, in the wilderness, many of them repined that they had not the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt. So there are penitents, who in effect forsake sin, but not in affection; that is, they purpose to sin no more, but it is with a certain reluctancy of heart to abstain from the mischievous delight of sin. Their heart renounces sin and avoids it, but ceases not often to look back that way, as Lot's wife did towards Sodom. They abstain from sin, as sick men do from melons, which they forbear, because the physician threatens them with death if they eat them; but it is troublesome to them to refrain; they talk of them and are unwilling to believe them hurtful; they would at least smell them, and account those happy who may eat them. —*Francis de Sales.*

(4601.) *To forsake sin*, is to leave it without any thought reserved of returning to it again. Every time a man takes a journey from home about business, we do not say he hath forsaken his house, because he meant when he went out to come to it again. No, but when we see a man leave his house, carry all his stuff away with him, lock up his doors, and take up his abode in another, never to dwell there more; here's a man hath indeed forsaken his house. It were strange to find a drunkard so constant in the exercise of that sin, but some times you may find him sober: and yet a drunkard he is, as well as if he were then drunk. Every one hath not forsaken his trade that we see now and then in their holy-day suit; then the man forsakes his sin, when he throws it from him and bolts the door upon it with a purpose never to open more to it, "*Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?*" —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4602.) I once walked into a garden with a lady to gather some flowers. There was one large bush whose branches were bending under the weight of the most beautiful roses. We both gazed upon it with admiration. There was one flower on it which seemed to shine above all the rest in beauty. This lady pressed forward into the thick bush, and reached far over to pluck it. As she did this, a black snake, which was hid in the bush, wrapped itself round her arm. She was alarmed beyond all description; and ran from the garden, screaming, and almost in convulsions. During all that day she suffered very much with fear; her whole body trembled, and it was a long time before she could be quieted. That lady is still alive. Such is her hatred now of the whole serpent race, that she has never since been able to look at a snake, even though it were dead. No one could ever persuade her to venture again into a cluster of bushes, even to pluck a beautiful rose. Now this is the way the sinner acts who truly repents of his sins. He thinks of sin as the serpent that once coiled itself round him. He hates it. He dreads it. He flies from it. He fears the places where it inhabits. He does not willingly go into the haunts. He will no more play with sin than this lady would afterwards have fondled snakes. —*Meade.*

XIX. *ITS PUNISHMENT.*

1. Is certain.

(4603.) No closer doth the shadow follow the body than the revenge of self-accusation follows sin. Walk eastward in the morning, the shadow starts behind thee: soon after it is upon thy left side; at noon it is under thy feet; lie down, it coucheth under thee; towards even it leaps before thee. Thou canst not be rid of it while thou hast a body and the sun light. No more can thy soul quit the conscience of evil. This is to thee instead of a hell of fiends, that shall ever be shaking firebrands at thee; ever torturing thee with affrights of more pains than thy nature can comprehend: *Sæva conturbata conscientia* (Wisd. xvii. 11).

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4604.) As where punishment is there was sin; so where sin is there will be, there must be, punishment. "If thou doest ill," saith God to Cain, "sin lies at thy door" (Gen. iv. 7). *Sin*, that is, *punishment* for sin: they are so inseparable that the one word implies both; for the doing ill is the sin that is within doors; but the suffering ill is the punishment, and that lies like a fierce mastiff at the door, and is ready to fly in our throat when we look forth, and if it do not then seize upon us, yet it dogs us at the heels, and will be sure to fasten upon us at our greatest disadvantages: *Tum gravior cùm tarda venit*, &c. Joseph's brethren had done heinously ill: what becomes of their sin? it makes no noise, but follows them slily and silently in the

wilderness; it follows them home to their father's house; it follows them into Egypt. All this while there is no news of it; but when it found them cooped up three days in Pharaoh's ward, now it bays at them, and flies in their faces. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the anguish of his soul," &c. (Gen. xlii. 21).

What should I instance in that, whereof not Scripture, not books, but the whole world is full—the inevitable sequences of sin and punishment? Neither can it be otherwise. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" saith Abraham. *Right*, is to give every one his due: wages is due to work; now "the wages of sin is death." So, then, it stands upon no less ground than very necessary and essential justice to God, that where wickedness hath led the way, there punishment must follow.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4605.) Fearful it is to consider that sin does not only drive us into calamity, but it makes us also impatient, and embitters our spirit in the sufferance: it cries aloud for vengeance, and so torments men before the time even with such fearful outcries, and horrid alarms, that their hell begins before the fire is kindled. It hinders our prayers, and consequently makes us hopeless and helpless. It perpetually affrights the conscience, unless by its frequent stripes it brings a callousness and an insensible damnation upon it. It makes us to lose all that which Christ purchased for us,—all the blessings of His providence, the comforts of His Spirit, the aids of His grace, the light of His countenance, the hopes of His glory. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(4606.) Terror and trouble are the shadow of sin, that follow it though the sun shine never so brightly. If we carry fire in our clothes, we shall smell it at the least. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4607.) If any sinner be free from outward afflictions and sufferings, yet sin never fails to carry its own punishment along with it; there is a secret sting and worm, a divine nemesis and revenge that is bred in the bowels of every sin, and makes it a heavy punishment to itself; the conscience of a sinner doth frequently torment him, and his guilt haunts and dogs him wherever he goes; for whenever a man commits a known and wilful sin, he drinks down poison, which, though it may work slowly, yet it will give him many a gripe, and if no means be used to expel it, will destroy him at last.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4608.) There is no sin but is attended and surrounded with so many miseries and adherent bitternesses, that it is at the best but like a single drop of honey in a sea of gall.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4609.) Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit that, unsuspected, ripens within the flower of the pleasure that concealed it. —*Emerson.*

(4610.) What a diabolical invention was the "Virgin's kiss," once used by the fathers of the Inquisition! The victim was pushed forward to kiss the image, when, lo, its arms enclosed him in a deadly embrace, piercing his body with a hundred hidden knives. The tempting pleasures of sin offer to the unwary just such a virgin's kiss. The sinful joys of the flesh lead, even in this world, to results most terrible, while in the world to come the daggers of remorse and despair will cut and wound beyond all remedy. —*Spurgeon.*

2. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

(4611.) The labourer can hope to reap a harvest only of the same nature as the seed he has sown. Pleasures, human consolations, indulgences of sense, the satisfactions of our own wills, are the seeds of all those miseries, which attain the full expansion of their deadly fruits in hell. But, on the contrary, whilst the indulgence of an evil nature yields these unhappy fruits, a spiritual submission, for Christ's sake, to crosses, to humiliations, self-denials and contradictions, are those seeds which bear their full and blessed fruits of holiness and happiness in the world to come. —*M. de St. Marthe.*

(4612.) The whole force of life and experience goes to prove that right or wrong doing, whether in relation to the physical or the spiritual nature, is sure, in the end, to meet its appropriate reward or punishment. Penalties are often so long delayed that men think they shall escape them; but some time they are certain to follow. When the whirlwind sweeps through the forest, at its first breath, or almost as if the fearful stillness that precedes had crushed it, the giant tree with all its boughs falls, crashing to the ground. But it had been preparing to fall for twenty years. Twenty years before it received a gash. Twenty years before the water commenced to settle in at some crotch, and from thence decay began to reach in with its silent fingers towards the heart of the tree. Every year the work of death progressed, till at length it stood, all rottenness, only clasped about by the bark with a semblance of life, and the first gale felled it to the ground. Now, there are men who for twenty years have shamed the day and wearied the night with their debaucheries, but who yet seem strong and vigorous, and exclaim, "You need not talk of penalties. Look at me! I have revelled in pleasure for twenty years, and I am as hale and hearty to-day as ever." But in reality they are full of weakness and decay. They have been preparing to fall for twenty years, and the first disease strikes them down in a moment.

Ascending from the physical nature of man to the mind and character, we find the same laws prevail. People sometimes say, "Dishonesty is as good as honesty, for aught I see. There are such and such men who have pursued for years the most corrupt courses in their business, and yet they prosper, and are getting rich every day." Wait till you see their end. Every year how many such men are overtaken with sudden destruction, and swept for ever out of sight and remembrance? Many a man has gone on in sin, practising secret frauds and villanies, yet trusted and honoured, till at length, in some unsuspected hour, he is detected, and, denounced by the world, he falls from his high estate as if a cannon-ball had struck him—for there is no cannon that can strike more fatally than outraged public sentiment—and flies over the mountains, or across the sea, to escape the odium of his life. He believed that his evil course was building him up in fame and fortune; but financiering is the devil's forge, and his every act was a blow upon the anvil shaping the dagger that should one day strike home

to his heart and make him a suicide. The pea contains the vine, and the flower, and the pod, in embryo, and I am sure, when I plant it, that it will produce them and nothing else. Now, every action of our lives is embryonic, and according as it is right or wrong it will surely bring forth the sweet flowers of joy or the poison fruits of sorrow. Such is the constitution of this world, and the Bible assures us that the next world only carries it forward. Here and hereafter "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." —*Beecher.*

XX. *CONVICTION OF SIN.*

(4613.) If the man whose crimes have deprived him of the favour of God can reflect upon his conduct without disturbance, or can at will banish the reflection; if he who considers himself as suspended over the abyss of eternal perdition only by the thread of life, which must soon part by its own weakness, and which the wing of every minute may divide, can cast his eyes round him without shuddering with horror, or panting for security; what can he judge of himself but that he is not yet awakened to sufficient conviction, since every loss is more lamented than the loss of the Divine favour, and every danger more dreaded than the danger of final condemnation? —*Dr. S. Johnson,* 1709-1784.

(4614.) In the early part of the reign of Louis XVI., a German prince, travelling through France, visited the arsenal at Toulon, where the galleys were kept. The commandant, as a compliment to his rank, said he was welcome to set free any one galley-slave whom he should choose to select.

The prince, willing to make the best use of the privilege, spoke to many of them in succession, inquiring why they were condemned to the galleys. Injustice, oppression, false accusations, were assigned by one after another as the causes of their being there. In fact, they were all injured and ill-treated persons.

At last he came to one, who, when asked the same question, answered to this effect: "Your highness, I have no reason to complain; I have been a very wicked, desperate wretch. I have deserved to be broken alive on the wheel. I account it a great mercy that I am here." The prince fixed his eyes upon him, and said: "You wicked wretch! It is a pity you should be placed among so many honest men. By your own confession, you are bad enough to corrupt them all; but you shall not stay with them another day." Then turning to the officer, he said: "This is the man, sir, whom I wish to be released."

Was not this a wise decision? Must not all who hear the story allow that the man who was sensible of his guilt, and so submissive to his punishment, was, in all probability, the most worthy of pardon, and the most likely not to abuse it?

Sense of sin is the first step toward forgiveness. There is hope of a man who confesses his guilt, and feels that punishment is his desert. And the deeper the conviction of sin, the more hopeful often is the condition.

SOUL. THE

1. Its mysteriousness.

(4615.) The pit that is deepest, the pit that is most unexplored and most unfathomable, is that which is the wonder and glory of God's thought and hand,—our own soul. —*Beecher.*

2. Invisible, yet real.

(4616.) I wonder whether these men believe that they breathe in summer as well as in winter. In summer they cannot see their own breath; but as cold grows on, it begins to appear. God's providence, and their own souls, are things of so subtle a nature that they cannot see them during the summer of their pleasures. But when the winter of judgment comes, this will show them a God in their just sufferings; and in that soul of theirs, which they would not believe they had, they shall feel an unspeakable torment. Then shall their pained sense supply the want of their faith. —*Adams,* 1654.

(4617.) The soul is formless, is shadowless. No eye beholds it; no hand handles it; no pencil may draw its lineaments. The mother that gave birth to her child; that overhung the cradle; that carried her babe imbosomed; that studied the girl's girlhood, youth, and womanhood, till the cloud of love opened and hid her in the wedded life—even the mother does not know the girl nor the woman. Nor does he that takes her know her, when she is taken; nor even she herself. Our life is hinted, but it is hidden. It gleams out at times; it flashes in sparks upon us. None has seen the full orb, or known the full measure of it. We stand before each other as volumes of books. The binding and lettering are plain enough; the contents are unknown, or but dimly suspected. We are like books in which some things are to be hidden from the common reader as unsafe, and at every few paragraphs the critical things are expressed in a dead language. So in human life, the simplest things are read; the interior things are not legible.
—*Beecher.*

(4618.) If by the existence of a spiritual being in man is meant the existence of an invisible principle which we call the soul, then I conceive that as to any difficulty in the conception of this, the matters we have just been considering will greatly aid us to get over it. Indeed, as to the manner in which they may do so, I have already adverted to it. We know, for example, not only that there is present a real power holding together the oxygen and the hydrogen, which in their combination constitute a grain of water, but we know that that real power is not in the slightest degree dependent for its existence on the material elements which it is holding in combination; for we know that in the act of decomposition it flies forth with enormous force. He, therefore, that is in the habit of such contemplations, is not only prepared to believe that an immaterial principle may be a real principle, but he is prepared also to believe, as a thing according to all analogy and previous experience, that it shall be independent for its existence of the material particles with which for the time it may be combined.

But this does not amount by any means to the evidence that there is in man a spiritual being. It amounts to the proof that physics, that material science, affords no presumption against it; the positive manifestation that it is there must arise from some other quarter. —*A. J. Scott,* 1866.

3. Its powers.

(4619.) The soul is variously denominated from its several powers and offices, as the sea from the several shores it washes. "As it quickens the body, it is called the *life;* as it exerts acts of the

will, it is called the power of *volition;* as it is the subject of knowledge, it is called the *mind;* when it recollects, it is called the *memory;* as it produces breathing, it is called the *spirit.*

—*Flavel*, 1627-1691.

4. Is in most men incompletely developed.

(4620.) Going into a village at night, with the lights gleaming on each side of the street, in some houses they will be in the basement and nowhere else, and in others in the attic and nowhere else, and in others in some middle chamber; but in no house will every window gleam from top to bottom. So is it with men's faculties. Most of them are in darkness. One shines here, and another there; but there is no man whose soul is luminous throughout. —*Beecher.*

(4621.) Men are differently built. There are men who are broad and strong at the base, in the middle, and up until you reach the moral faculties. These are shrunken in, and almost vanished.

Such men are like lighthouses, built well at the bottom, and all the way up. All right, *only* they have no lantern and no light. And the two things, the man and the house, are equally valuable.

—*Beecher.*

(4622.) It is a part of our physiological nature that, in order to the healthful development of our moral faculties, they must be placed highest, else they can no more flourish than could a plant growing under the shade and drip of trees. But most men make no provision for these faculties. Like a lighthouse, built well from foundation upwards, but without any place for the lantern, so many men build carefully their lower natures, but never rear the highest storey. As a musical instrument might have the bass and tenor very well tuned and concordant, while, if you ran your fingers over the higher notes all would be clash and jargon, so men say, "I must compose and harmonise myself to natural laws for the sake of health," and thus they tune the bass; and then they say, "I must have peace at home, and peace in my neighbourhood," and so they regulate their social affections; and there are lofty flights of reason, and imagination, and art, and poetry, and music, and thus they tune the tenor; but when they come to the highest notes, which were meant to be sweet to the ear of God, there is neither regularity nor concordance. All is void, vast, and mysterious in their moral nature. —*Beecher.*

5. Is developed by the cares of life.

(4623.) At the foot of any one of these beeches you would probably find a buried chrysalis. By and by the enclosed moth will break a little hole in the case, and struggle to get through the aperture. The process is difficult, and may occupy hours. If you were to watch it, you would pity the creature straining and tugging so painfully, and it might occur to you that a slight snip of a pair of scissors would enlarge the opening sufficiently to give the poor prisoner vent. If you did so, however, the moth would come out with small, unexpanded, useless wings. The struggle, which seems so hard, is necessary to force the vital fluid into the minute vessels (compared with which the capillaries of a man are immense), which ramify throughout the gauzy, scale-covered pinions of the moth. Is there no moral in the fact? Does it not hint to us that many of our frets and cares are not accidental nor useless, but meant to strengthen and vitalise the soul? I have often seen a person suffering the last sickness; at first irritable and impatient, but gradually growing more self-forgetful, more mindful of others, more trustful in God—and the parable of the moth has come to my mind, and I have said to myself, thus also the soul in its pangs of emancipation is being prepared for the higher life beyond.

6. Should be carefully guarded from injury.

(4624.) The blemishes of the soul are like the wounds of the body: however skilfully healed, the scar always remains, and they are at every moment in danger of breaking open again.

—*La Rochefoucauld.*

7. Is degraded and ruined by sin.

(4625.) As the sluggard does nothing more unwillingly than forsake his bed, nor bears anything with more regret than to be awaked out of his sweet sleep, though you should entice him with the pleasures of a paradise to quit a smoky loathsome cottage; so fares it with the sluggish soul, as if it were locked in an enchanted bed: it is so fast held by the charms of the body, all the glory of the other world is little enough to tempt it out: than which there is not a more deplorable symptom of this sluggish slumbering state. So deep an oblivion, which you know is also naturally incident to sleep, has seized it of its own country, of its alliances above, its relation to the Father and world of spirits,—it takes this earth for its home, where it is both in exile and captivity at once: and, as a prince, stolen away in his infancy, and bred up in a beggar's shed, so little *seeks*, that it *declines*, that better state. —*Howe*, 1630-1705.

(4626.) Speak I to men who though their frames are bent and hardened by toil, were nevertheless created in God's image—who, though their hands are so busily engaged with this world, are possessed of undying souls? And need I tell them what a degradation it is, what an act of violence to their better nature, when that soul is uncared for, when its wonderful faculties are permitted to lie dormant, entombed in the body as in a living grave! Ah me! to think of such a soul being made to grind like a blinded Samson at the wheel of your sensual pleasures—when it has a wing scarcely inferior to the seraph's in strength, and might yet prove capable of a flight as high! To think of its being confined to the duties of the workshop, seldom rising above the question, What wages can I earn?—when the boundless universe is its proper field of discovery, and does not afford it too ample range! To think of its being made a drudge of the body, knowing no better employment than to pamper its lusts, when it could make the highest world its footstool, and while suns and systems roll in all their grandeur at its feet, could levy tribute from them all! The degradation of such a soul can neither be described nor imagined. In vain do we look around us to find, or exercise the imagination to conceive of, anything that will adequately illustrate its extent. I have thought of the eagle which, soaring above the range of human vision, gazes with unfaltering eye on the splendour of the noonday sun, and basks in his golden beams; I have thought of the degradation of the noble bird when

chained to a stone in the dungeon wall. I have thought of an angel smitten with insanity, its noble intellect deranged, leaving the heaven where in its youth it soared and sang, to find employment in heaping together the dust of the earth. I have thought, too, of the king reduced to the condition of a beggar; and thus have I attempted to picture by comparison the most deplorable calamity—the waste, the destruction of a human soul. But I have tried in vain. Its degradation cannot be described by any illustration which the universe can furnish or the imagination create. Our lamentations indicate what we cannot measure or describe. "How are the mighty fallen! How has the gold become dim; and the most fine gold changed?" —*Landels.*

8. Its true portion. [*See also* 2378-2387.]

(4627.) The soul of man bears the image of God; so nothing can satisfy it but He whose image it bears. Our soul, says Augustine, was created as by God, so for God, and is therefore never quiet till it rest in God. As man fell at first into this restlessness by falling away from God, so he cannot be recovered of it but by returning to Him again. It is with man's soul in this regard as it was with Noah's dove in the deluge. As the dove after she left the ark found no rest for the sole of her foot in the wide world, being then all afloat, till she betook her again thither from whence she came forth; so neither can man, fallen from God, find any sure rest for the foot of his soul in the whole world beside, till he come back to Him again from whom it came at the first.

—*Gataker*, 1574-1654.

(4628.) As a cup of pleasant wine, offered to a condemned man in the way to his execution; as the feast of him (Damocles) who sat under a naked sword hanging perpendicularly over his head by a slender thread; as Adam's forbidden fruit, seconded by a flaming sword; as Belshazzar's dainties, overlooked by a handwriting against the wall; such are all the empty delights of the world—in their matter and expectation earthly; in their acquisition painful; in their fruition nauseous and cloying; in their duration dying and perishing; in their operation, hardening, effeminating, leavening, puffing up, estranging the heart from God; in their consequences seconded with anxiety, solicitude, fear, sorrow, despair, disappointment; in their measure shorter than that a man can stretch himself on, narrower than that a man can wrap himself in; every way defective and disproportionable to the vast and spacious capacity of the soul of man, as unable to fill that as the light of a candle to give day to the whole world. Nothing but emptiness attends them all, unless they be found in Christ Jesus.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(4629.) The fulness of the earth can never satisfy the soul. All satisfaction and contentment arise from the conjunction of a convenient with a convenient; the conjunction of suitables. If a man have never so great an estate, if his heart be not suited to it, he hath no content. If a man have never so small an estate, if his heart be suited to it, he is content. What suitableness is there between the fulness of the earth and the better part of man, the soul! A thing is never said to be full till it be full of that for which it is made: a chest or trunk is not said to be full of air, though it *be* full of air. So take one of these meeting-houses; though the place be full of stools, or full of air, yet we say the church is empty: because though it be full, yet it is not full of that for which it is made, full of people. So now, take a man that hath all the fulness of the earth: because that his soul was never made for the fulness of the earth, therefore he is said to be empty; in the midst of all his fulness, the man is an empty man, because his heart is not full of that for which he was made, and that is Christ.

—*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

(4630.) God is the chiefest good; and other things are only good in subordination. All creature goodness is but a stricture of that perfect good which is in God, and therefore if we find any good in them, that should lead us to greater good even in the Creator. Who would leave the substance to follow the shadow? or desire the picture to dishonour and neglect the person whom it represents? Certainly they do that run after the creature and neglect God, that seek happiness in sublunary enjoyments, to the wrong and neglect of God. That small good which the creatures have, is not to hold us on them, but to lead us to Him, as the stream will direct us to the fountain; and the steps of the ladder are not to stand still upon, but to ascend higher. If your affections be detained in the creature, you set the creature in God's stead, you pervert it from its natural use, which is to set forth the invisible things of God, His excellency, His goodness, His Godhead, and His power to do you good; and to send you to Him that made them. But how usually does that which should carry us to God divert and detain us from Him? If a prince should woo a virgin by a messenger, and she should leave him and cleave to the messenger, and those he sent as spokesmen and servants, this were an extreme folly. By the beauty and sweetness of the creature, God's end is to draw us to Himself as the chiefest good; for that which we love in other things is but a shadow and an obscure resemblance of that which is in Him. There is sweetness in the creatures, mixed with imperfection; the sweetness is to draw us to God; but the imperfection is to drive us from setting our hearts on them. There is somewhat good in them, look up to the Creator; but there is vanity and vexation of spirit, this is to drive us off from these sublunary things. —*Manton*, 1620-1677.

9. Its preciousness.

(4631.) The real value of an object is that which one who knows its worth will give for it. He who made the soul, knew its worth, and gave His life for it. —*Jackson*, 1579-1640.

(4632.) The preparations God makes for souls in heaven, speak their great worth and value. When you lift up your eyes to heaven, and behold that spangled azure canopy beset and inlaid with so many golden studs and sparkling gems, you see but the floor or pavement of that place which God has prepared for some souls. He furnished this world for us before He put us into it; but, as delightful as it is, it is no more to be compared with the Father's house in Heaven, than the smallest ruined chapel your eyes ever beheld is to be compared with Solomon's temple, when it stood in all its glory.

When you see a stately and magnificent structure built, richest hangings and furniture prepared to

adorn it, you conclude some great persons are to come thither: such preparations speak the quality of the guests.

Now heaven, yea, the heaven of heavens, the palace of the great King, the presence chamber of the Godhead, is prepared, not only by God's decree and Christ's death, but by His ascension thither in our names and as our Forerunner, for all renewed and redeemed souls. "In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for *you!*"

—*Flavel*, 1630–1694.

(4633.) Should I suggest in some companies, that the conversion of a hundred sinners (more or less) to God, is an event of more real importance than the temporal prosperity of the greatest nation upon earth, I should be charged with ignorance and arrogance; but your lordship is skilled in scriptural arithmetic, which alone can teach us to estimate the value of souls, and will agree with me, that one soul is worth more than the whole world, on account of its redemption-price, its vast capacities, and its duration. Should we suppose a nation to consist of forty millions, the whole and each individual to enjoy as much good as this life can afford, without abatement, for a term of fifty years each; all this good, or an equal quantity, might be exhausted by a single person in two thousand millions of years, which would be but a moment in comparison of the eternity which would still follow: and if this good were merely temporal good, the whole aggregate of it would be evil and misery, if compared with that happiness in God, of which only they who are made partakers of a divine life are capable. On the other hand, were a whole nation to be destroyed by such accumulated miseries as attended the siege of Jerusalem, the sum-total of these calamities would be but trifling, if set in competition with what every single person that dies in sin has to expect, when the sentence of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power, shall be executed.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

10. Its salvation should be the first business of life.

(4634.) If you have crossed the Atlantic in a mail-steamer, you may have observed how ready the captain was to come into the cabin on a quiet evening, and to minister to the pleasure of his passengers. But if you were suddenly to hear the loud tramp of hurrying feet across the deck overhead, and the hoarse prattling of the first mate's trumpet to "haul in the jib," and "close-reef the top-sails," would you dare to invite the captain to a game of chess, or to listen to an operatic air? No! The sturdy seaman would reply, "In an hour the hurricane may send two hundred souls to the bottom, if everything isn't made fast. I can't play with you while the gale is playing with my ship."

My unconverted friend, when your soul is saved you may talk about the price of gold, or the ten per cent. that offers to you in some new speculation, or the latest discoveries in the gold regions. Until then, your real *business* must be to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

—*Cuyler.*

11. Its loss.

(4635.) "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And what is it to lose a soul? It is to let weeds grow there instead of flowers. It is to let selfishness grow, passions grow, suspicious, envious tempers grow, avarice grow, wantonness grow, until they have all the field to themselves. Set these in full force within a being, and add, if you will, a whole universe of possession, it is hell. You may think that these are only strong rhetorical words. It is just as simple literal fact as that two and two make four. I do not think that you will need to look far around you in the world for the proof of it.

—*J. Baldwin Brown.*

(4636.) Often, when travelling among the Alps, one sees a small black cross planted upon a rock, or on the brink of a torrent, or on the verge of the highway, to mark the spot where men have met with sudden death by accident. Solemn reminders these of our mortality! but they led our mind still further; for we said within us, if the places where men seal themselves for the second death could be thus manifestly indicated, what a scene would this world present! Here the memorial of a soul undone by yielding to a foul temptation, there a conscience seared by the rejection of a final warning, and yonder a heart for ever turned into a stone by resisting the last tender appeal of love. Our places of worship would scarce hold the sorrowful monuments which might be erected over spots where spirits were for ever lost—spirits that date their ruin from sinning against the Gospel while under the sound of it.

—*Spurgeon.*

(4637.) "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" or, according to the still more impressive record of Christ's saying which we find in Luke's Gospel: "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away?" One summer afternoon a steamer, crowded with passengers, many of them miners from California, was speeding along the Mississippi. Striking suddenly and strongly against the wreck of another vessel, that, unknown to her captain, lay near the surface of the water, her bow was stove in, and she began to fill rapidly. Her deck was a scene of wild confusion. Her boats were launched, but did not suffice to carry off one-fourth of the terrified passengers. The rest, divesting themselves of their garments, like St. Paul's companions in their famous shipwreck, cast themselves into the river, "Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship: and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land." Some minutes after the last of them had quitted the vessel, another man appeared on her deck. Seizing a spar, he also leaped into the river, but, instead of floating as the others had done, he sank instantly as if he had been a stone. His body was afterwards recovered, and it was found that he had employed the quarter of an hour, in which his fellow-passengers had been striving to save their lives, in rifling the trunks of the miners. All around his waist their bags of gold were fastened. In one short quarter of an hour he had gained more gold than most men earn in their lifetime; but was he advantaged thereby, seeing that he lost himself? And though you should gain power, or rank, or fame, or learning, or great wealth; though your life should be one prolonged triumphal procession, all men applauding you; though all your days you

should drink unrestrained of the cup of the world's pleasures, and never reach its bitter dregs; yet what shall you be advantaged if, nevertheless, you lose yourself, and, at last, instead of being received into heaven, are cast away? —*R. A. Bertram.*

11. Its relations to the body.

(1.) *Their diverse tendencies.*

(4638.) Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, as he was passing on the way, espied a boy with a bird tied in a string to a stone, the bird was still taking wing to fly away, but the stone kept her down. The holy man made good use of this sight, and, bursting out into tears, said, "Even so it is betwixt the flesh and the spirit; the spirit is willing to mount upwards in heavenly thoughts and contemplation, but the flesh keepeth it down, and, if possible, would not admit of the least thought of heaven. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(4639.) As a fair and gentle wife, star-like and dove-like, is given to the guardianship of some rude, coarse, uncultured nature, who treads among her sweet feelings as the hoof and the snout deal with flowers in the garden, so it is in this strange husband and wife, the body and the soul, the soul full of sweetness and gentleness, and purity and delicacy, and the coarse animal body full of despotism, and swayings and conflicts of cruel passions; and they fare but ill in their wedded life on earth.

The body looks down, and searches the ground for its delights: the soul looks up, and, like an astronomer, culls treasures from among the stars, and beyond. The body eats and drinks: the soul thinks and feels. The body lives in the world, for the world, and with the world: the soul reaches far away to some higher life, whose need it feels—but all is vague, but the wish, but the need. Strange visions rise; but neither to-day does the soul know its origin, nor to-morrow. The picture of beauty and of purity that rose bright in the morning has faded out before night. To-morrow mocks the expectation of to-day. The soul is like a bird caged from the nest that yet remembers something of its fellows in the forest of green leaves, and in summer days hears snatches of song from far-off fields, and yearns, with all its little life, for that liberty which it has never proved, for that companionship which it so early missed, and for those songs which it never learned to utter, though it strives in broken notes for them.

Once some adventurous hunters, from a ledge of rocks, robbed an eagle's nest of an eaglet. Brought home, he was reared among fowls, that he might perform domestic duty. As he grew, he grew apart from the children of the dunghill, and sat moody in sullen dignity. As his wings secretly grew strong, they were clipped. When on a summer's day, wild in the heaven the hawk screamed, every fowl in the yard ran cowering to a shelter; he, with flashing eye, and discordant scream, reared himself to fly. But, alas! he could not rise. He fell sick. He would have died, if he might. They let him alone. His pinions grow again. They forgot him. He forgot not. The sky was his. The great round of air, without line or bound, was his. And when, one neglectful summer day, all were dozing, from afar up in the sky—so far that none could see, or see only a floating speck—there came down a cry so faint that no ear might hear it—none but an eagle's. Then, with sudden force, all its life beating in its breast, it sprang up. Away from the yard, its fowls, its owners, over the rick and over the barn, over the trees and over the hills, round and round in growing circles, beaten with growing power of wing, the freed eagle sought its fellow, and found its liberty right under the sun!

And such, of many and many a soul, sad in bondage, valiant in liberty, has been the history. —*Beecher.*

(2) *The soul should have the pre-eminence.*

(4640.) How just is it that the soul should have the pre-eminence in all respects above the body. The one is the fading offspring of the earth, the other is of an heavenly extraction and incorruptible nature. When Pherecides, the Assyrian, first taught among the Grecians the doctrine of the soul's immortality, his discourse so prevailed on Pythagoras of Samos, that it changed him from an athlete into a philosopher. He that before wholly attended upon his body to make it excel in strength or agility, that he might contend victoriously in the Olympic games, then made it his business to improve and advance his soul in knowledge and virtue. And if the glimmering appearances of this great truth were so powerful upon him, how much more should the clear and certain discoveries of it be operative to to make us chiefly regard the interest of our immortal part. —*Bates*, 1625–1699.

(3.) *The folly of caring more for the body than the soul.*

(4641.) The body is to the soul as a barren turf to a mine of gold, as a mud-wall about a delicate garden, as a wooden box wherein the jeweller carries his precious gems, as a coarse case to a fair and rich instrument, as a rotten hedge to a paradise, as Pharaoh's prison to a Joseph, or as a mask to a beautiful face. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4642.) The soul was not made for the body, as the lute is not made for the case, but the body for the soul, as a box for the jewel. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4643.) I do not approve the sullenness of that soul which wrongs the body; but I worse like to have the body wrong the soul, to have Hagar tricked up in Sarah's garments and set at upper end of the table. If the painted popinjay, that so dotes on her own beauty, had an eye to see how her soul is used, she would think her practice more ill-favoured and unhandsome than perfuming a putrefied coffin, or putting mud into a glass of crystal. For shame, let us put the soul foremost again, and not set heaven lowest and earth uppermost. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4644.) There is a parable of a woman, who, having twin children, and both being presented to her, she falls deeply and fondly in love with the one, but is careless and disrespectful of the other: this she will nurse herself, but that is put forth. Her love grows up with the child she kept herself: she decks it fine, she feeds it choicely; but at last, by overmuch pampering of it, the child surfeits, becomes mortally sick, and when it was dying, she remembers herself, and sends to look after the other child that was at nurse, to the end she might now cherish it; but when the messenger came, she finds it dying and gasping likewise, and examining the

truth, she understands that through the mother's carelessness and neglect to look after it, the poor child was starved: thus was the fond, partial mother, to her great grief, sorrow, and shame, deprived of both her hopeful babes at once. Thus every Christian is this mother, the children are our body and soul; the former of these it is that men and women fall deeply and fondly in love with, whilst indeed they are careless and neglect the other; this they dress and feed, nothing is too good or too dear for it; but at the last the body surfeits, comes by some means or other to its deathbed, when there is very little or no hope of life; then men begin to remember the soul, and would think of some course to save it: the minister he is sent for in all haste to look after it; but, alas! he finds it in part dead, in part dying; and the very truth is, the owner, through neglect and carelessness, hath starved the soul, and it is ready to go to hell before the body is fit for the grave. And so the foolish fond Christian, to his eternal shame and sorrow, loseth both his body and soul for ever. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(4645.) If one should send me from abroad a richly-carved and precious statue, and the careless drayman who tipped it upon the side-walk before my door should give it such a blow that one of the boards of the box should be wrenched off, I should be frightened lest the hurt had penetrated further, and wounded it within. But if, taking off the remaining boards, and the swathing-bands of straw or cotton, the statue should come out fair and unharmed, I should not mind the box, but should cast it carelessly into the street. Now, every man has committed to him a statue, moulded by the oldest master, not of Cupid, or Venus, or Psyche, or Jupiter, or Apollo, but the image of God; and he who is only solicitous for outward things, who is striving to protect merely the body from injuries and reverses, is letting the statue go rolling away into the gutter, while he is picking up the fragments and lamenting the ruin of the box. —*Beecher.*

(4.) *The loss of the soul carries with it the loss of the body.*

(4646.) If the soul be lost, the man is lost. The body is but as a boat fastened to the stern of a stately ship: if the ship sink, the boat follows it.
—*Flavel*, 1630–1691.

(4647.) The soul is the bottom in which the body and its everlasting good is embarked.
—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(5.) *As the body and the soul are partners in sin, so they shall be also in suffering.*

(4648.) There was a master of a family who committed the custody of his orchard unto two of his servants, whereof the one was blind and the other lame; and the lame servant being taken in love with the beauty of the fruit, presently told his blind fellow that if he had but the use of his limbs, and his feet to walk as well as he had, it should not be long ere he would be master of these apples. The blind man answered, he had as good a mind to enjoy them as himself, and if his eyes had not failed him they had not rested all that while upon the tree. Whereupon they both agreed to unite their strength and join their forces together. The whole blind man took the well-sighted lame man upon his shoulder, and so they reached the apples, and conveyed their master's fruit away. But being impeached for their fault and examined by their master, each one framed his own excuse. The blind man said he could not so much as see the tree whereon they grew, and therefore it was plain he could have none of them; and the lame man said he could not be suspected, because he had no limbs to climb or stand to reach them. But the wise master, perceiving the subtle craft of his two false servants, put them as they were, one upon the other's shoulders, and so punished both together. Thus it is that sin is neither of the body without the soul, nor of the soul without the body, but it is a common act of both body and soul; they are like Simeon and Levi, brothers and partners in every mischief; and therefore God, in His just judgment, will punish both body and soul together, if they be not repaired and redeemed by Christ.
—*Peter Martyr.*

12. Its immortality.

(1.) *A world-wide conviction.*

(4649.) The unanswerable reasonings of Butler never reached the ear of the grey-haired pious peasant, but he needs not their powerful aid to establish his sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality. It is no induction of logic that has transfixed the heart of the victim of deep remorse, when he withers beneath an influence unseen by mortal eye, and shrinks from the anticipation of a reckoning to come. In both the evidence is within, a part of the original constitution of every rational mind, planted there by Him who framed the wondrous fabric. This is the power of conscience: with an authority which no man can put away from him it pleads at once for his own future existence, and for the moral attributes of an omnipresent and everpresent Deity. In a healthy state of the moral feelings, the man recognises its claim to supreme dominion. Amid the degradation of guilt it still raises its voice and asserts its right to govern the whole man; and though its warnings are disregarded, and its claims disallowed, it proves within his inmost soul an accuser that cannot be stilled, and an avenging spirit that never is quenched.
—*Dr. J. Abercrombie*, 1781–1844.

(4650.) It cannot be questioned that there is a deep and wide testimony in man's nature to the existence of a God and of a future life; it may be pronounced either true or false, but it must be admitted to exist. We find it appearing in all countries and in all ages, and the seeming exceptions to it no more vitiate the fact than the absence of reason in some individuals, or its degradation in some races, would lead us to deny that man is rational. —*Ker.*

(2.) *Influence of the hope of immortality.*

(4651.) Few, without the hope of another life, would think it worth their while to live above the allurements of sense. —*Atterbury*, 1663–1732.

(4652.) No man who has not a clear belief in a future life can have permanently a strong sense of duty. A man may, indeed, persuade himself during various periods of his existence that this sense of duty is the better and the purer from not being bribed by the prospect of a future reward, or stimulated, as he would perhaps say, unhealthily by the dread of a future punishment. But, for all that, his moral life, if he has not an eternal future before

him, is, depend upon it, futile and impoverished. It is not merely that he has fewer and feebler motives to right action; it is that he has a false estimate, because an under-estimate, of his real place in the universe. He has forfeited, in the legitimate sense of the term, his true title to self-respect. He has divested himself of the merit, of the instincts, of the sense of noble birth and lofty destiny which properly belong to him. He is like the heir to a great name, or to a throne, who is bent on forgetting his lineage and his responsibility in a self-sought degradation. Man cannot, if he would, live with impunity only as a more accomplished kind of animal than are the creatures around him. Man is, by the terms of his existence, a being of eternity, and he cannot unmake himself. He cannot take up a position which abdicates his highest prerogatives without, sooner or later, sinking down into degradations which are in themselves a punishment.
—*Liddon.*

(3.) *Is not incredible.*

(4653.) Even in a moral point of view, I think the analogies derived from the transformation of insects admit of some beautiful applications, which have not been neglected by pious entomologists. The three states—of the caterpillar, larva, and butterfly—have, since the time of the Greek poets, been applied to typify the human being,—its terrestrial form, apparent death, and ultimate celestial destination; and it seems more extraordinary that a sordid and crawling worm should become a beautiful and active fly—that an inhabitant of the dark and fetid dunghill should in an instant entirely change its form, rise into the blue air, and enjoy the sunbeams—than that a being whose pursuits here have been after an undying name, and whose purest happiness has been derived from the acquisition of intellectual power and finite knowledge, should rise hereafter into a state of being where immortality is no longer a name, and ascend to the source of Unbounded Power and Infinite Wisdom.
—*Sir Humphrey Davy*, 1778–1829.

(4.) *The soul is not destroyed by its separation from the body.*

(4654.) Carnal reason can hardly imagine how a soul should have subsistence after its separation from the body; it seems incredible, because it is invisible. But eagles can see more than owls; nor was mere nature ignorant of this: through all clouds of error she could see this clear truth, that souls die not with their bodies. This is an inbred instinct sucked from the breast of nature, an indelible principle stamped in the soul by God Himself, not to be rased out. The waggoner hath a being, though his coach be broken; the ship is wrecked on the sea, yet the mariner may swim to harbour; the adder lives after she has slipt off her coat; the musician keeps his skill, though his lute be broken; the snail may creep out, and leave his shell behind.
—*Adams*, 1654.

(4655.) That it hath much use of or dependence on the body in its present operations is no proof at all that when it is out of the body it cannot otherwise act or operate. If the candle shine in the lantern, it can shine out of it, though with some difference. He is scarcely rational that doubteth whether there be such things as incorporeal, invisible intelligences, minds, or spirits: and if they can act without bodies, why may not our minds? Though the egg would die if the shell were broken or the hen did not sit upon it, it doth not follow that therefore the chicken cannot live without a shell, or sitting on. Though the embryo and infant must have a continuity with the mother, and be nourished by her nourishment, it doth not follow that, therefore, it must be so with him when he is born and grown up to ripeness of age. And when there is full proof that souls have a future life to live, it is a folly to doubt of it, merely because we cannot conceive of the manner of their acting without a body; for he that is not desirous to be deceived, must reduce things uncertain and dark to those that are clear and certain, and not contrarily; all good arguing is *à notioribus*, and not *à minimis notis*. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4656.) Were the soul but an accident, a quality, or a result, he that kills the body must needs kill the soul too, as he that casts a snowball into the fire must needs destroy the whiteness with the snow. Accidents fail and perish with their subjects. But, seeing it is plain in these and many other scriptures (Luke xxiii. 43; Matt. x. 20, &c.), the soul does not fail with the body, nothing can be more plain and evident than that it is of a substantial nature.

When the Spaniards came first among the poor Indians, they thought the horse and his rider to be one creature, as many ignorant ones think the soul and body of man to be nothing but breath and body. Whereas indeed they are two distinct creatures, as vastly different in their natures as the rider and his horse, or the bird and his cage. While the man is on horseback he moves according to the motion of the horse; and while the bird is encaged, he eats and drinks, and sleeps, and hops and sings in his cage. But if the horse fail and die under his rider, or the cage be broken, the man can go on his own feet, and the bird enjoy itself as well, yea, better, in the open fields and woods than in the cage; neither depend, as to being or action, on the horse or cage.
—*Flavel*, 1630–1691.

(4657.) I once heard a preacher trying to teach young children that the soul would live after they were all dead. They listened, but did not understand what he was saying. But at last, taking his watch from his pocket, he said—

"James, what is this I am holding in my hand?"

"A watch, sir."

"Do you all see it?"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you know it is a watch?"

"It ticks, sir."

"Very well, can any of you hear it tick? all listen now."

After a pause—

"Yes, sir; we hear it."

He then took off the case, and held the case in one hand and the watch in the other.

"Now, children, which is the watch? You see there are two which look like watches."

"The little one in your right hand, sir."

"Very well again; now I will lay the case aside, and put it away down there in my hat. Now let us see if you can hear the watch tick."

"Yes, sir, we hear it," exclaimed several voices.

"Well, the watch can tick, and go, and keep time, you see, when the case is taken off and put in my hat. The watch goes just as well. So it is with you, children. Your body is nothing but the

case; your soul is inside. The case—the body—may be taken off and buried in the ground, and the soul will live and think just as well as the watch will go, as you see, when the case is off!"

(5.) *The soul contains within itself prophecies of immortality.*

(4658.) Among these and other excellent arguments for the immortality of the soul, there is one drawn from the perpetual progress of the soul to its perfection without a possibility of ever arriving at it; which is a hint that I do not remember to have seen opened and improved by others who have written on this subject, though it seems to me to carry a great weight with it. How can it enter into the thoughts of man, that the soul, which is capable of such immense perfections, and of receiving new improvements to all eternity, shall fall away into nothing almost as soon as it is created? Are such abilities made for no purpose?

—*Addison*, 1672–1719.

(4659.) In the desire for immortality man has sure proof of his capacity for it.

—*Southey*, 1774–1843.

(4660.) Nature never deceives. All the instincts, all the faculties which are in any of its creatures—there is always something to meet them. Nature does not disappoint. If there is a particular appetite, there is something to meet it; if there is a particular faculty, there is something to meet it; if there is a particular instinct, there is something to meet it. Well, then, the moral aspirations of man, the spiritual instincts, the irrepressible anticipations of which he is capable and which are in him, part of himself, faculties and instincts which nature has bestowed, is she to play fast and loose with them? Is she to deceive him with regard to them? She deceives in nothing besides. She meets every appetite and instinct of inferior creatures, she meets them with that which is appropriate; but the highest affections, the noblest aspirations, the spiritual instincts, are they all a make-believe? Is nature deceiving and tantalising man in all that? You take an egg out from under the parent bird when she has been sitting on it, and it is nearly come to perfection; you hold the egg in your hand: there it is, as it were, a dark world with its single inhabitant. You take off the top; you look in. There in that darkness are tiny wings. What are they? Of what use are they there in that little dark world occupied by that individual? Why, they are a prophecy that the creature is intended for a world in which there is an atmosphere, intended to be born into an atmosphere, and there is its preparation. These tiny wings are a prophecy and preparation for its future condition. Have the souls of men no wings? Are not the spiritual aspirations, desires, hopes, anticipations—are not these wings of the spirit? Are they not instincts which are given to us here, which are a prophecy to us of the future for which we are intended?

—*Binney.*

(4661.) The spirit or soul of man knows itself to be capable, I will not say of unlimited, but of continuous progress and development. However vigorous the tree or the animal may be, it soon reaches the point when it can grow no more. The time comes when the tree has borne all the leaves and fruit and buds which it can bear, when its vital force is exhausted, and it is no more. The animal may have done its best, it may have reached a high condition of strength and beauty, but when its limit is reached it can grow no more. With the soul of man as a living and thinking power it is far otherwise; he has never exhausted himself. When the man of science has made some noble discovery, when the literary man has written a great book, when the statesman has carried a series of important measures, we cannot say that he has exhausted himself. The spiritual man is indeed dependent on the material man, and as the body moves on towards decay and dissolution it extends something of the influence of its weakness and incapacity to its spiritual companion; but even then the soul resists this and asserts its separate existence; the mind of man knows that each separate effort instead of exhausting his powers tends to strengthen them, and so he will go on continually making larger and nobler and more vigorous efforts. So, too, is it with conscience and duty; with these there is no finality. One great act suggests another, one sacrifice makes another easier; the virtuous impulse in the soul is not like the growth in the tree, a self-exhausting force, but it is always moving on, always advancing. "Be not weary in well-doing"—this is the language of the Eternal to the human will; but never is "Be not weary of growing" said to the tree or the animal, because organic matter differs from spirit in this, that it does reach the limit of its activity, and then it turns backwards towards non-existence.

—*Liddon.*

(4662.) Oh, if this life were all that I could have, I should weep, it seems to me, from the present hour to the very end, unless I could say, as the ancients did, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry. To-morrow we die, so let us make the best of the little time that is left us." I should be in a state of wanton, merry despair, on the one side; or of tearful, sad despair, on the other side. I must live again. I must make the experiment of life once more. I have made poor work here, but I have met with just success enough to feel that if I had a better chance I could do something. I am like a man that takes the first canvas to paint a picture. He does not know what he will do. He lays in forms in all sorts of ways without coming to any satisfactory result. At last he says, "I cannot make anything of that picture; but I have a conception. Bring me a fresh canvas, and I will try again, when I think I shall have better success." I have long been trying to paint a true life, and have only partially succeeded; but if God Almighty will give me another canvas, I think I can paint better. And He will. He that brought forth from the dead our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will bring me forth.

—*Beecher.*

(4663.) The faith of immortality is the world's peculiar need. We need this faith from the sense of the incompleteness which there is in this mortal state; and we need it just in proportion as we rise toward perfection ourselves. We need it because life in us awakens a thousand ideas and recognitions of possibilities which, after all, we cannot realise in this world, nor fulfil. We are perpetually receiving seeds in our temperate zone, from foreign zones: seeds from South America, and seeds from the Orient. They have great promise in them: some

of fruit, some of esculent vegetable, and some of blossom; and the torment of our summer to those who are enthusiastic in regard to such things, is that it is not warm enough nor long enough to bring forth their excellence. The flower will not blossom; the fruit will not develop its saccharine nature. Hundreds and thousands of men plant these seeds, and nourish them till they begin to develop all the habits of their respective species, and throw out buds which give promise of fruit, and excite confident expectation. With great care the gardener protects the plants from the first frosts, hoping thereby to enable it to come to maturity. But at last winter smites it before it has even blossomed, and he cannot but say, "The growth of this plant was not completed; it was susceptible of further development; but I could not carry it any further because the season was not long enough nor warm enough." And all the reasoning in this world could not convince him that God created that plant to stop growing where it did. He says he stakes his being on it, he declares that it stands to reason (for that is the expression which men employ when they feel all all over that a thing is true, when they have an instinct in them that it is true, but when they have no reason about it) that the seed of this partly developed plant was meant somewhere to have a summer long enough for its full development. Or, if he carries it so far as to bring out a flower, he says, "Thank God for the flower; but I want to see if under other conditions I cannot carry the plant far enough to develop seed or fruit." For there is many a summer that is long enough and warm enough to develop buds, which is not long enough and warm enough to develop flowers; and there is many a summer that is long enough and warm enough to develop flowers, which is not long enough and warm enough to develop seed or fruit. And he says, "If I can get another seed, I will see if I cannot bring it to ripeness." He tries, and fails; the summer is too short; and he says to himself (and in your thought and feeling every one of you justifies his conclusion), "There must be, somewhere, a clime to which this seed is adapted. It grew somewhere, and somewhere there is a summer warm enough and long enough for it. And if I could find that place, and plant it, it would grow, through the kindly months, until it swelled into ripeness, developing in their turn bud, and blossom, and fruit." Now I declare that human life in this world is a seed whose development here stops far short of those possibilities which are foreshadowed in its experiences. Here men are not fully developed in any single faculty of their being, except those which are related to time and earth. —*Beecher.*

(6.) *The condition of the soul in the future life.*

(4664.) Thank God, when I go home to heaven, I shall leave behind many things that will be of no use to me there. When an engine is taken from one boat and placed in another, it is not necessary that the fastenings should go with it. The screws and clamps and feeding-pumps that belong to that peculiar ship from which it is taken may be left behind. The screws and clamps and feeding-pumps that have been necessary to keep my mind in this body, and that it has given me so much trouble to patch and mend, I shall leave in the grave. But my supremest reason, my divinest sentiments of religion, my affections and loves, my tastes—these God, the blessed Pilot, shall carry safely through the grave and its darkness, and I shall be planted again in heaven, where snows never fall, where frosts never come, and I shall bring out leaf and blossom and fruit; and then, with leaf and blossom and fruit, I will present myself at the Throne of God, saying, "Thou hast given me life, and life again, and life for ever: to Thee, and to Thee only, be praise and honour and glory evermore."

—*Beecher.*

(7.) *The developments it renders possible.*

(4665.) The caterpillar, on being converted into an inert scaly mass, does not appear to be fitting itself for an inhabitant of the air, and can have no consciousness of the brilliancy of its future being. We are masters of the earth, but perhaps we are the slaves of some great and unknown being. The fly that we crush with our finger or feed with our viands has no knowledge of man, and no consciousness of his superiority. We suppose that we are acquainted with matter and all its elements; yet we cannot even guess at the cause of electricity, or explain the laws of the formation of the stones that fall from meteors. There may be beings, thinking beings, near or surrounding us, which we do not perceive, which we cannot imagine. We know very little; but, in my opinion, we know enough to hope for the immortality, the individual immortality, of the better part of man.

—*Sir Humphrey Davy*, 1778–1829.

(8.) *If an error, a delightful error.*

(4666.) But if I err in believing that the souls of men are immortal, I willingly err; nor while I live would I wish to have this delightful error extorted from me; and if after death I shall feel nothing, as some minute philosophers think, I am not afraid lest *dead philosophers* should laugh at me for the error. —*Cicero*, B.C. 106–43.

(9.) *How faith in the soul's immortality should manifest itself.*

(4667.) If the soul be immortal, it requires to be cultivated with attention, not only for what we call the time of life, but for that which is to follow,—I mean eternity; and the least neglect in this point may be attended with endless consequences. If death were the final dissolution of being, the wicked would be great gainers by it, by being delivered at once from their bodies, their souls, and their vices; but as the soul is immortal, it has no other means of being freed from its evils, nor any safety for it, but in becoming very good and very wise; for it carries nothing with it but its bad or good deeds, its virtues and vices, which are commonly the consequences of the education it has received, and the causes of eternal happiness or misery.

—*Socrates*, B.C. 469–339.

TEMPTATION.

I. *WHY IT IS PERMITTED.*

1. That our hearts may be revealed to us.

(4668.) Worms, and other insects, take up their habitation under the surface of the earth. A plot of ground may be outwardly verdant with grass, and decorated with flowers;—but take a spade in your hand, and turn up the mould, and you soon have a

sample of the vermin that lurks beneath. Temptation is the spade which breaks up the ground of a believer's heart, and helps to discover the corruptions of his fallen nature. —*Salter.*

2. That our character may be tested.

(4669.) We know not what patience we have, what courage, what zeal, till we be put to it. A man is that he is when he is tempted. Some presume more than they can; so did Peter—"Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee:" alas! he knew not his own weakness. Others doubt of that they can, as Naaman; God be merciful to me when I come into the house of Rimmon: here I can serve God constantly, but when I wait on my master to the idolatrous temple, what shall I do then? Lord, be merciful to me in this. Go in peace, saith the prophet; God will strengthen thee. Every cock-boat can swim in a river, every sculler sail in a calm; every man of a patient temper or cheery disposition, can hold up his head in ordinary gusts. But when a black storm rises, a tenth wave flows, deep calls unto deep, nature yields, spirit faints, heart fails; here is the trial, how dost thou now? When our hopes are adjourned, our expectation delayed, and instead of pleasing contents we find bitter sorrows; this will discover our hearts. If, then, faith prevail above sense, and hope against all natural reason and fear, our graces shall shine like orient pearls, in true and perfect beauty. After all the prorogations of promised ease, still to stand erect and triumph; here is the assurance of faith, that hath the word for compass, Christ at the helm, and the voyage is salvation. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4670.) A further reason why you are thus tempted and tried is, that God, in His wise providence, is now testing you to see whether you are a fit man for His work. Before a fire-arm is sold it is taken to the proof-shop, and there it is loaded with a charge, perhaps four or five times heavier than it will ever have to carry at the ordinary sportsman's hand. The barrels are fired, and if they burst in the proof-house no great hurt is done; whereas it would be exceedingly dangerous if they should burst in the hands of some unskilful man. So God takes His servants. Some He will make special use of, He puts to the proof, perhaps loads them with five times more temptations than He means they should ordinarily have to endure, in order that He may see, and prove to onlookers, that they are fit men for the Divine service. We have heard that the old warriors, before they would use their swords, would bend them across their knees. They must see whether they had the right stuff or no before they would venture into battle with them. And God does this with His servants. Martin Luther had never been the Martin Luther he was, if it had not been for the devil. The devil was, as it were, the proof-house for Martin Luther. He must be tried and tempted by Satan, and then he becomes fit for the Master's use. —*Spurgeon.*

3. That our vigilance may be increased.

(4671.) The Lord permits Satan continually to assail us with his temptations, to the end that we may continually buckle upon us the whole armour of God, that we may be ready for the battle. For as those who have no enemies to encounter them cast their armour aside and let it rust because they are secure from danger, but when their enemies are at hand and sound the alarm, they both wake and sleep in their armour, ready for the assault; so, if we should not continually skirmish with our spiritual enemies, we would lay aside the spiritual armour; but when we have continual use for it, both day and night we keep it fast buckled upon us, that being armed at all points, we may be able to make resistance and not be surprised at unawares. —*Downame*, 1642.

4. That our assurance may be strengthened.

(4672.) God sometimes permits Satan to assail His dear children, the more to strengthen them in His spiritual graces, and to confirm them more fully in the assurance of His love and their salvation.

For as a city which has been once besieged and not sacked will ever after be more strong to hold out if it be assaulted by the like danger, because the citizens will carefully fortify their walls and increase their bulwarks, and as he who has been once robbed by thieves will ever after ride better prepared to make resistance, that he do not again fall into their hand; so those who are besieged and assaulted by their spiritual enemies will ever after more carefully arm themselves against them with the graces of God's Spirit, that they may not be overcome nor foiled by them.

We know that whilst men quietly enjoy their possessions and inheritance they rest secure, keeping their writings in a box without ever looking on them from year to year; but when their title and right is called into question, and some man labours to thrust them out of their possession, then they peruse their writings and deeds with all diligence. And not satisfied with their own judgment, they resort to skilful lawyers, craving their counsel how they may maintain their right, and answer the plea which their adversary makes against them. Whereby oftentimes it comes to pass that they make their title not only much more strong in itself, but also more clear and evident unto all others, so that afterwards none dare once adventure to trouble them again, or call their right into question. So whilst we never doubt of our heavenly inheritance we rest secure, and let the book of God, which is our best deed and evidence, lie under our cupboards till it mould for want of use. But when Satan by his temptations calls our title into question, and pleads that we have no right to God's kingdom, then do we most carefully and diligently peruse the book of God, then do we go unto God's ministers, desiring their counsel how we may answer Satan's plea and clear our title; then do we most carefully use all good means to increase our knowledge, that thereby we may thoroughly inform ourselves of our right, and confirm our assurance against all cavils and objections. And hereby it comes to pass that those who before had very weak titles to their heavenly inheritance, whilst they lived reckless and secure, and but slender assurance ever to enjoy it; now, by their care, pains, and diligence have so confirmed it unto themselves, and so cleared it to all the world, that Satan dare never after call it into question; unless he do it, like many contentious men in these days, rather that he may trouble and vex them with a tedious suit, than for any hope of prevailing in the end. —*Downame*, 1642.

II. *HOW IT ASSAILS US.*

1. Under false masks.

(4673.) Satan like a pirate hangs out flags of

truce, to signify peace and friendship, till he have gotten us within his reach and command: and then he grapples with us, ransacks us of all God's graces, and casts us overboard into the sea of destruction.
—*Downame*, 1642.

(4674.) When Satan assaults any poor soul, he suffers nothing to appear to the eye but pleasure, profit, a sweet satisfaction of our desires, and a phantasma of happiness. There is also wrath, and judgment, and torment, and sting of conscience belonging to it; these must be, but these shall not be seen. All the way is white snow, that hides the pit. Green grass tempts us to walk; the serpent is unseen. If temptations, like plaises, might be turned on both sides, the kingdom of darkness would not be so populous. If David could have foreseen the grief of his broken bones ere he fell upon Bathsheba, those aspersions of blood and lust had not befallen him. If Achan could have foreseen the stones about his ears before he filched those accursed things, he would never have fingered them. But as it is said of Adam and Eve after their fall, "Then their eyes were opened;" then, not before. Judas was blind till he had done the deed, then his eyes were opened, and he saw it in its true horror. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4675.) Temptations, like Delilah, tell us a fair tale, but their end is to bring us a-sleep, and pluck out our eyes. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4676.) "I am very sharp," said the Hook which was holding the struggling Fish.

"I know that but too well," answered the poor captive; "but let me tell you, it was not owing so much unto your sharpness that I am captured, as to the bit of bait by which I was tempted."

"It is the way all Hooks succeed," observed the other; "there must be trick in order to decoy. Had you seen my point, and been aware of the danger, you should have wisely kept out of the way instead of so readily swallowing the worm."

By disguised temptations the great enemy hopes, and frequently succeeds, to get souls into his power. How often a Hook is hid within a Lure! and in what multitudes of instances souls have perished through catching at the Bait, which Satan placed in the way. —*Bowden*.

2. In many forms.

(4677.) If there were but one cup alone, it would cloy, and satiate, and procure loathing, as even manna did to Israel; therefore Satan doth diversify his drinks, to keep the wicked man's appetite fresh and sharp. If he be weary of one sin, behold, another stands at his elbow. Hath Dives dined? He may walk up to his study, and tell his money, his bags, his idols; or call for the key of his wardrobe, to feed his proud eye with his silks: for *divitiæ et deliciæ*, riches and pleasure, serve one another's turn. If Nabal be weary of counting his flocks, or laying up their fleeces, he may go and make himself drunk with his sheep-shearers.
—*Adams*, 1653.

(4678.) If thou dost not stumble at this stone, the devil hath another at hand to throw in the way. He is not so unskilful a fowler as to go with one single shot into the field; and therefore expect him, as soon as he hath discharged one, and missed thee, to let fly at thee with a second.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

3. In forms specially adapted to our weakness.

(4679.) The devil plagues and torments us in the place where we are most tender and weak. In Paradise he fell not upon Adam, but upon Eve.
—*Luther*, 1483–1546.

(4680.) The world is Satan's bait. He seldom throws out a naked hook. Let murder, fraud, lying, or idolatry be presented in their undisguised turpitude, and few of good education and correct morals can be taken captive by him. But he conceals the hook in a goodly bait, and like a skilful angler. He knows how to use that part of the world which is best suited to our taste and most likely to decoy. For one he has a golden bait; for another, pleasure; for a third, worldly consequence and honour. And his line is thrown out in every place,—in the place of business, in our families, studies, and at our tables, and on our pillows. —*Jackson*, 1640.

(4681.) Satan, like a fisher, baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4682.) An enemy before he besiegeth a city, surroundeth it at a distance to see where the wall is the weakest, best to be battered, lowest, easiest to be scaled, ditch narrowest to be bridged, shallowest to be waded over; what place is not regularly fortified, where he may approach with least danger, and assault with most advantage: so Satan walketh about, surveying all the powers of our souls, where he may most probably lay his temptations, as whether our understandings are easier corrupted with error, or our fancies with levity, or our wills with frowardness, or our affections with excess.
—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(4683.) Sometimes a man shall see the scene of things round about him so fitly laid, and prepared to serve him in the gratification of his corrupt desire, that he cannot but conclude that there was something more than blind chance which brought him into that condition. For when we see a net or snare curiously and artificially placed, we may be sure that there is something intended to be caught, and that the fowler is not far off, whether we see him or no. —*South*, 1633–1716.

4. From opposite quarters.

(4684.) Temptations may be compared to the wind, which when it has ceased raging from one point, after a short calm frequently renews its violence from another quarter. The Lord silenced Satan's former assaults against you, but he is permitted to try you again in another way.
—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

III. *IN WHAT ITS STRENGTH LIES.*

(4685.) Let Satan present such a bait as honour, pleasure, pelf, and the naughty heart of man skips after it as a hungry dog would at a crust.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4686.) Let any temptation whatever be proposed to a man, the suitableness of whose matter to his corruptions or manner of its proposal makes it a temptation, immediately he has not only to do with the temptation as outwardly proposed, but also with his own heart about it. Without further consideration or debate, the temptation has got a friend in him. Not a moment's space is given

between the proposal and the necessity there is incumbent on the soul to look to its enemy within. In a city that is at unity with itself, compact and entire, without divisions and parties, if an enemy approach about it, the rulers and inhabitants have no thoughts at all, but only how they may oppose the enemy without, and resist him in his approaches. But if the city be divided in itself, if there be factions and traitors within, the very first thing they do is to look to the enemies at home, the traitors within, to cut off the head of Sheba, if they will be safe. —*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(4687.) "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." If you apply a magnet to the end of a needle that courses freely on its pivot, the needle, affected by a strange attraction, approaches as if it loved it. Reverse the order, apply the magnet now to the opposite end—to the other pole, and the needle shrinks away, trembling, as if it did not love, but hated it. So it is with temptation. One man rushes into the arms of vice; another recoils from them with horror. Joseph starts back, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" What is loved by one, is loathsome in another's eyes; and according as the nature it addresses is holy or unholy, temptation attracts or repels; gives pain or pleasure; is loved or hated. It is our corrupt and evil passions that give its power to temptation. These are the combustibles it fires; the quick and fiery powder, that a spark, which a dewdrop had quenched, flashes into an explosion.
—*Guthrie.*

(4688.) It is in our own bosom that the power of temptation is found. Temptation is but a spark; and if a spark fall upon ice, if it fall upon snow, if it fall upon water, what is the harm of a spark? but if it fall upon powder—the powder is yours, the spark only is the devil's. —*Beecher.*

(4689.) The power of temptation depends upon two elements: first, the power of presenting inducement or motive on the part of the tempter; and, secondly and mainly, the strength in the victim of the passion to which this motive is presented. No man could tempt to pride one that had not already a powerful tendency to pride. The chord must be there before the hand of the harper can bring out the tone. —*Beecher.*

(4690.) The power of temptation is in proportion to the nature of the soul tempted. A thoughtless miner takes an uncovered light into the mine; where there is but little gas there is but a wavering and flickering of a transient flame,—hardly flame indeed; but where there is an accumulation of gas, the uncovered light occasions an explosion which shivers the rocks and brings swift destruction upon all who are in the mine. In both cases it was the same mine, the same light, the same miner, but the condition of the air was different. So is it with the fiery darts of the wicked one; they are shot into all human hearts, and just in proportion to the materials, so to speak, which are found there will be the success or failure of the enemy.
—*Joseph Parker.*

IV. *REASONS FOR SHUNNING IT.*

1. Because our safety lies in avoiding it.

(4691.) [*On a spider in his window.*] See how cunningly this little Arabian hath spread out his tent for a prey; how heedfully he watches for a passenger. So soon as ever he hears the noise of a fly afar off, how he hastens to his door! and if that silly heedless traveller do but touch upon the verge of that unsuspected walk how suddenly doth he seize upon the miserable booty; and, after some strife, binding him fast with those subtle cords, drags the helpless captive after him into his cave.

What is this but an emblem of those spiritual freebooters that lie in wait for our souls? They are the spiders, we the flies; they have spread their nets of sin; if we be once caught, they bind us fast, and hale us into hell.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4692.) The best way to conquer sin is by Parthian war—to run away. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4693.) "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Sin is a disease which is communicated by contagion. Shun, therefore, the place of infection. More than if they had plague or fever, avoid the company of the infected. Abjure every scene, abstain from every pleasure, abandon every pursuit, which experience has taught you tends to sin, dulls the fine edge of conscience, unfits for religious duties, indisposes for religious enjoyments, sends you prayerless to bed, or dull and drowsy to prayer. As the seaman does with surf-beaten reef or iron-bound shore, give these a wide berth; and, passing on, hold straight away, under a press of canvas, in your course for heaven. —*Guthrie.*

(4694.) A holy life is impossible to any but those who stand on their guard against the beginnings of evil. Take alarm at an evil thought, wish, desire. What are these but the germs of sin—the winged seeds which, wafted on by the wind, drop into the heart, and, finding in our natural corruption a fat and too favourable soil, spring up into actual transgressions? These, like the rattle of the snake, the hiss of the serpent, reveal the presence and near neighbourhood of danger. Besides, does not the experience of all good men prove that sin is most easily crushed in the bud, and that it is safer to flee from temptation than to fight it? Fight like a man when you cannot avoid the battle, but rather flee than fight. Be afraid of temptation, avoid it, abhor it; and if caught by the enchantress, tear yourself from her encircling arms, seek safety in flight, your answer that of Joseph's chastity, "Shall I do this great evil and sin against God?" —*Guthrie.*

(4695.) Stand in awe of God, and in fear of temptation. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." It is not safe to bring gunpowder within the fall even of a spark; nor safe, however dexterous your driving, to shave with your wheels the edge of a beetling precipice; nor safe in the best-built bark that ever rode the waves, to sail on the outmost rim of a roaring whirlpool.
—*Guthrie.*

(4696.) If you have bad habits of temper, take care that you do not go where your temper will be tried. If you have had drinking habits, be careful that you do not go where the sight or smell of liquor will tempt you to drink again. If you are going to maintain your good resolutions, if you are going to reform your habits, keep away from evil. Pass not by it. Turn from it. Avoid it. Avoid the very appearance of it. A man who has been

leading a lustful and lascivious life, cannot afford to go into the company of those who have been accustomed to go with him. No amount of resolving to do right will save a man if he remains under the influences which have led him to go wrong. If a man wears garments in which powder is wrought into the texture, he cannot safely go and hire out in a blacksmith's shop. —*Beecher.*

(4697.) Our passions are inflammatory. If once a spark falls upon them they explode, and you cannot prevent it. You can keep fire away from powder; but when you have once touched fire to powder it will do no good to say your prayers; you will go up in spite of yourselves if there is enough of it. Our appetites and passions are of such a nature that you must cure them or keep them away from temptation if you would avoid any explosion. If a man is very passionate, and he has been accustomed to give way to his passion, and he wants to overcome it, he must watch against being tempted. If the fire comes to the powder you will have a discharge. You must look out beforehand.
—*Beecher.*

(4698.) Camping down upon the edges of a sin from which a man has just escaped is dangerous work. A person in such a position is like one who, upon finding himself in the running current of a river which is rising, swollen by heavy rains, struggles desperately until he reaches its banks, and there settles himself in false security. In the morning the waters of the freshet are booming about him, and he flies to the meadow, a little higher. But the floods are out, and they rise and rise, faster than he can run, and the man who by fleeing at once *to the mountains* when he came up from the river would have been saved, by tarrying upon the lowlands perishes. —*Beecher.*

(4699.) Our Lord bids us watch and pray that we "*enter* not into temptation." Let us avoid the *entrance* to the cave, if we would not fall victims to the lion that lurks there. If we would save the big ship, let us stop the small leak. If we would preserve the palace from flames, let us put out the spark. If we would prevent the wide wedge bursting asunder our defences, let us not admit its thin point. If we would escape the plague, let us not breathe infection. If we would guard the camp from capture, let us defend the outworks. If we would not enter into temptation, let us watch against the first step that would lead us astray from righteousness, the only path of safety.
—*Newman Hall.*

(4700.) A man says, "I wish I could be set free from sin to-night," and to-morrow he will mix with gay associates and loose companions, and go to places of amusement, where he is as sure to be led into sin as he would be sure that his coat would burn if he put it into the fire. He goes into the middle of the mischief; he takes the tinder of his heart where he knows there are sparks, and he says, "There will come no harm of it." He puts a candle near the gunpowder, and he hopes he will not be blown away. The man who means to conquer sin, and resolves to conquer it, will keep himself out of mischief's way, that he may be clean before the living God. —*Spurgeon.*

2. Because exposure to it is perilous.

(4701.) Jonah was no sooner come to Joppa, but he goes to the haven, or meets with mariners, and presently understands of a ship, not going to Nineveh, but to Tarshish. As soon as he set forward to fly from God, Satan straightway prepared a ship, so that temptation and occasion of sin do always go together. Shall Judas lack money, or Jonah stay for a ship? No, saith Satan, by the mouth of his ministers: Here, Judas, take thee money, and betray thy Master; and, Jonah, here is a ship for thee: go, haste thee away, and fly from the service of the Lord. For the devil is always a very serviceable and pleasant devil to such as fly from God. He can find occasion at all times, and means, and instruments fit for that purpose. If thou wilt fly from God, the devil will lend thee both spurs and a horse, yea, a post-horse, and that will carry you swiftly and lustily away unto all vanity and ungodly lusts. —*Henry Smith*, 1560–1591.

(4702.) Many think they may allow themselves to come near a temptation, and they come so near that they fall into the pit. As sometimes in your houses, when you light a candle, you see moths that will flutter up and down the light, and then approach nearer till at length they singe their wings and perish; so it is with many, at first they think they will not do such a thing—Oh! God forbid that they should do so and so; but they will come nigh a temptation, and be tampering with it, till at length they are ensnared by it and destroyed.
—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(4703.) Satan presents some sinful motion handsomely dressed up to the eye of the soul, that the Christian, ere he is aware of it, may take this brat up, and handle it in his thoughts, till at last he makes it his own by embracing it; and, may be, this boy sent in at the window will open the door to let in a greater thief. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4704.) Consider how apt a temptation is to diffuse, and how prone our nature is to receive an infection. It is dangerous dwelling even in suburbs of an infected city. Not only the touches, but also the very breath of a temptation, is poisonous: and there is sometimes (if I may so express it) a contagion even without a contact.

And if the conscience has not wholly lost its native tenderness, it will not only dread the infection of a wound, but also the aspersion of a blot. For though the soul be not actually corrupted and debauched by a temptation, yet it is something to be sullied and blown upon by it, to have been in the dangerous familiarities of sin, and in the next approach and neighbourhood of destruction. Such being the nature of man, that is hardly possible for him to be near an ill thing, and not the worse for it.
—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4705.) Fly therefore the occasions and appearances of evil. If you would not be drowned, what do you so near the water-side? If you would not be wounded, why do you thrust yourself among your enemies? If you would escape the hook, meddle not with the bait; walk not among the lime-twigs if you would not be entangled.
Baxter, 1615–1691.

(4706.) It is the tempter's care to bring the temptation near enough, or to draw the sinner near enough to it; the net must come to the fish, or the fish to the net; the distant fire will not burn the wood. The devil's chief confidence is in the

sensitive appetite, which worketh strongest at hand. If he get the drunkard into the alehouse, and show him the cup, he hath half conquered him already; but if he be scrupulous and modest, some one shall drink a health, or importune him, and put the cup into his hand. The thief with Achan shall see the bait, and the sight will work a covetous desire. The glutton shall have a variety of tempting dishes before him, and be at a table which by the variety of delicious food is fitted to become a snare; whereas, if he hath nothing set before him but the poor man's simple food, which hath nothing in it fit to tempt him, he might easily have escaped. The fornicator shall have his beautiful dirt brought near him, and presented to him in a tempting dress; for at a sufficient distance there had been little danger. The ambitious person shall have preferment offered him, or brought so fair to his hand that with a little seeking it may be attained. The fearful coward shall be threatened with the loss of estate or life, and hear the report of the cannons, guns, and drums of Satan. Peter is half conquered when he is got among questioning company in the High Priest's hall. Thus David, thus Lot, thus ordinarily sinners are drawn into the snare.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4707.) Weak dallying with forbidden desires is sure to end in wicked clutching at them. Young men, take care! You stand upon the beetling edge of a great precipice, when you look over, from your fancied security, at a wrong thing; and to strain too far, and to look too friendly, leads to a perilous danger of toppling over and being lost! If you know that a thing cannot be won without transgression, do not tamper with hankerings for it. Keep away from the edge, and *shut* your "eyes from beholding vanity." —*Maclaren.*

(4708.) What we are taught to seek or shun in prayer, we should equally pursue or avoid in action. Very earnestly, therefore, should we avoid temptation, seeking to walk so guardedly in the path of obedience that we may never tempt the devil to tempt us. We are not to enter the thicket in search of the lion. Dearly might we pay for such presumption. This lion may cross our path, or leap upon us from the thicket, but we have nothing to do with hunting him. He that meeteth with him, even though he winneth the day, will find it a stern struggle. Let the Christian pray that he may be spared the encounter. Our Saviour, who had experience of what temptation meant, thus earnestly admonished His disciples,—"Pray that ye enter not into temptation." But let us do as we will, we shall be tempted; hence the prayer, "Deliver us from evil." —*Spurgeon.*

3. Because we are unable to resist it.

(4709.) Thy grace is weak:—It concerns thee, so much the more, to be cautious in avoiding occasions of temptation. He that carries brittle glasses is chary of them, that they take not a knock; whereas, strong metal fears no danger. He that hath but a small rush-candle walks softly, and keeps off every air. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(4710.) If we mean not to be burnt, let us not walk upon the coals of temptation; if not to be tanned, let us not stand where the sun lies. They sure forget what an insinuating wriggling nature this serpent hath, that dare yield to him in something, and make us believe they will not in another. Who will sit in the company of drunkards, frequent the places where sin is committed, and yet pretend they mean not to be such? That will prostitute their eye to unchaste objects, and yet be chaste? That will lend their ears to any corrupt doctrine of the times, and yet be found in the faith? This is a strong delusion that such are under. If a man hath not power enough to resist Satan in the less, what reason hath he to think he shall in the greater? Thou hast not grace (it seems) to keep thee from throwing thyself into the whirl of temptation, and dost thou think, when in it, thou shalt bear up against the stream of it? One would think it is easier, when in the ship, to keep from falling overboard, than when in the sea, to get safely into the ship again. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4711.) The soul, tested by temptation, is like iron tried by weights. No iron bar is absolutely infrangible. Its strength is tested by the weight which it will bear without breaking. No soul is absolutely impeccable. It seems as if all we can dare to ask even of the holiest is how much temptation he can bear without giving way.

—*Robertson*, 1816-1853.

(4712.) In Eden, our first parents and the tempter were not unequally matched. Belonging to a superior race of intelligent beings, he had more mental, but they, on the other hand, being still innocent, were superior to him in moral power. Thus Eve, like one who, though he brings less strength, brings better weapons to the field of battle than his enemy, might be considered as a fair match for the devil. Vice cannot look virtue in the face, any more than an owl can the sun; and innocence still, imperfect though it be, seems to possess such power over guilt as the eye of a man has over a lion,—the savage beast quails before his fixed and steady look. Clad in this panoply of heavenly armour, it was Eve's own fault that the simplicity of the dove did not prove more than a match for the cunning of the serpent. But it did not; and you know the result.

And what chance for us where our first parents perished? how can guilt stand where innocence fell? How can poor, fallen creatures, such as we are, expect to conquer an enemy who has won his accursed victories in heaven as well as on earth, and triumphed over the innocence both of angels and of men! Summoned to a holy war, we are called to fight the good fight, and to resist the devil; but is it not with us as if I were to raise a sick man from his bed, and, when the earth was spinning round to his dizzy eyes, bid him fight an enemy that had conquered him when health bloomed on his pallid cheek, and strength lay in the arm that hangs powerless by his side? What chance have infants against the lion that, with bristling mane, lashing tail, and flashing eyes, stands with his paw on the bleeding body of their mother? When traitors swarm in her streets, what hope has a city to resist the foe that in loyal days scaled, and breached, and carried its walls? We have been reduced to slavery; and did bondsmen ever win where freemen lost? Hope there is none for us out of Christ. Our only hope is David's (1 Sam. xvii. 45). —*Guthrie.*

(4713.) If, in early life, when sin was comparatively weak and conscience was comparatively strong, we were so easily and so often overcome by temptation, what hope for us, when this order is reversed; when conscience has become weak, and sin grown strong? If we were no match for the cub, how shall we conquer the grown lion? If we had not strength to pull out the sapling, how are we to root up the tree? If it exceeded our utmost power to turn the stream near its mountain cradle, how shall we turn the river that, red, roaring, swollen, pours its flood on to the sea? If we could not arrest the stone on the brow of the hill, how shall we stop it when, gathering speed at every turn, and force at every bound, it rushes into the valley with resistless might? Sin gaining such power by time and habit, "If we have run with the footmen and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses?" Spirit of God! but for Thy gracious aids the attempt were hopeless.

—*Guthrie.*

(4714.) The heart is deceitful in regard to its powers of resisting temptation. In the halcyon days of youth and inexperience we think that we are proof against all the forms of allurement, and we listen with no pleasurable emotions to those who would warn us of danger. Experience and aged wisdom find it not easy to get and retain the ear of the young, while they portray the dangers of the youthful course, and warn against the alluring customs of the world. And the reason is plain. Those whom we would admonish have had no experience; and they suspect no danger. They confide in their own powers; they see before them a smooth ocean on which they expect to glide without danger. A gallant ship, with her sails all set, leaves the port. She is new, and her virgin sails have not before been fanned by the breeze. The gale springs up and gently swells all her canvas. Before her is the vast ocean—spread out as if to invite her. On her deck stands the young mariner fresh from his home, buoyant with hope, his glad eye looking out on the new scene as the ship dances from wave to wave, and his heart beats with joy. How chilling now, how cold, how incongruous is it, for the weather-beaten seaman—the man of many voyages—to come and tell of rocks, and quicksands, and whirlpools, and furious tempests! How incongruous to suggest that the seams may open, or the canvas be torn to ribbons, or that some unseen current may drift that beautiful vessel into unknown seas, where she may lie becalmed,

> "Day after day, day after day,
> With neither breath nor motion,
> As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean!"

So we start on the voyage of life. We flatter ourselves that we are able to meet temptation. We confide in the strength of our principles. We trust to the sincerity of our own hearts. Guileless ourselves—I do not mean guileless in the sense that we have no propensities to evil, but guileless in the sense of sincere and confiding—we suspect no fraud in others. Suspicion is not the characteristic of youth. It is the unhappy work of experience; the influence that comes into our hearts, notwithstanding all our efforts to resist it, from long acquaintance with the insincerity of mankind. The world flatters us, and a thousand temptations, adapted with consummate skill to the young, allure us. Professed friends meet us on the way and assure us that there is no danger. The gay, the fashionable, the rich, the winning, the beautiful, the accomplished, invite us to tread with them the path of pleasure, and to doubt the suggestion of experience and of age. We feel confident of our own safety. We suppose we may tread securely a little farther. We see no danger near. We take another step still, and yet another, thinking that we are safe yet. We have tried our virtuous principles, and thus far they bear the trial. We could retreat if we would; we mean to retreat the moment that danger comes near. But who knows the power of temptation? Who knows when dangers shall rush upon us so that we cannot escape? There is a dividing line between safety and danger. Above thundering Niagara the river spreads out into a broad and tranquil basin. All is calm and the current flows gently on, and there even a light skiff may be guided in safety. You may glide nearer and nearer to the rapids, admiring the beauty of the shore, and looking on the ascending spray of the cataract, and listening to the roar of the distant waters, and be happy in the consciousness that you are safe. You may go a little further, and may have power still to ply the oar to reach the bank. But there is a point beyond which human power is vain, and where the mighty waters shall seize the quivering bark, and bear it on to swift destruction. So perishes many a young man by the power of temptation. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

4. Because to expose ourselves to it is to tempt God to leave us.

(4715.) Thou temptest God to suffer thy locks to be cut, when thou art so bold to lay thy head in the lap of a temptation. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

5. Because prevention is better than cure.

(4716.) He is a better physician that keeps diseases off us, than he that cures them being on us. Prevention is so much better than healing, because it saves the labour of being sick. Thou allowest not a surgeon unnecessarily to break thy head to try his skill and the virtue of his plaster.

—*Adams*, 1653.

6. Because if we expose ourselves to it, and are overcome by it, we are left without excuse.

(4717.) Christ has taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." It is a folly for us to cast ourselves upon it; we draw hatred upon ourselves, and run headlong into dangers without necessity; we must make ourselves amends by repentance, otherwise God will not. If a man set his house on fire, he is liable to the laws; if it be fired by others, or by an ill accident, he is pitied and relieved.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

V. *THINGS THAT EXPOSE US TO TEMPTATION.*

1. Idleness.

(4718.) Notice the invention used by country people to catch wasps. They will put a little sweet liquor into a long and narrow-necked phial. The do-nothing wasp comes by, smells the sweet liquor, plunges in and is drowned. But the bee comes by, and if she does stop for a moment to smell, yet she enters not, because she has honey of her own to

make; she is too busy in the work of the commonwealth to indulge herself with the tempting sweets. Master Greenham, a Puritan divine, was once waited upon by a woman who was greatly tempted. Upon making inquiries into her way of life, he found she had little to do, and Greenham said, "That is the secret of your being so much tempted. Sister, if you are very busy, Satan may tempt you, but he will not easily prevail, and he will soon give up the attempt." Idle Christians are not tempted of the devil so much as they tempt the devil to tempt them. —*Spurgeon.*

2. Self-confidence.

(4719.) Many horses fall at the bottom of a hill because the driver thinks the danger past and the need to hold the reins with firm grip less pressing. So it is often with us when we are not specially tempted to overt sin, we are the more in danger through slothful ease. I think it was Ralph Erskine who said, "There is no devil so bad as no devil." The worst temptation that ever overtakes us, is, in some respects, preferable to our becoming carnally secure and neglecting to watch and pray.

"More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling overhead."

—*Spurgeon.*

VI. *SMALL TEMPTATIONS.*

1. Most numerous.

(4720.) As great temptations exceed in quality, so the lesser exceed in quantity, for which reason the victory over them may be comparable to that over the greatest. Wolves and bears are without doubt more dangerous than flies, yet the former neither give us so much trouble, nor exercise our patience so much as the latter. It is an easy thing to abstain from murder, but it is extremely difficult to restrain all the little sallies of passion, the occasions whereof are every moment presenting themselves.

—*Francis de Sales.*

2. Are most dangerous.

(4721.) As when Pompey could not prevail with a city to billet his army with them, he yet persuaded them to admit a few weak, maimed soldiers, but those soon recovered their strength, and opened the gates to the whole army. And thus it is that the devil courts us only to lodge some small sins, a sin of infirmity or two, which being admitted, they soon gather strength and sinews, and so subdue us. How many have set up a trade in swearing with common interlocutory oaths, as "Faith" and "Troth"? How many have begun thieving with pins and pence? How many drunkenness with one cup more than enough? How many lusts with a glance of the eye? And yet none of them ever dreamt they should be prostituted to those prodigious extremities they afterwards found themselves almost irrecoverably engulfed in. —*Price*, 1646.

(4722.) The giving way to a small sin does marvellously prepare and dispose a man for a greater; by giving way to one little vice after another, the strongest resolutions may be broken. For though it be not to be snapped in sunder at once, yet by this means it is untwisted by degrees, and then it is easy to break it one thread after another. —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

(4723.) There is no such thing as being wicked to a measure, or playing the knave to a certain degree, and no further. This being (as the comedian says) "*dare operam, ut cum ratione insanias.*"

And therefore he who ventures upon any unlawful or suspicious practice, or supposed advantage, on such terms, is like a man who goes into the water for his pleasure of refreshment: his design (to be sure) is to divert, not to destroy himself, and accordingly with great caution he enters in step by step; but the rapid stream presently draws him in, carries him away, and hurries him down violently, and so the poor man, with all his heart and caution, is drowned. He thought to have been too wise and skilful for the stream, but the stream proved too strong for him.

In the concerns of the soul, as well as of the body, it is a dangerous thing for a man to venture beyond his depth. —*South*, 1633–1716.

(4724.) The temptation is, to a religious or respectable man, the most dangerous which solicits him to the doing of some little thing. Dr. A. Clarke had a very attentive hearer, who was often much affected by the Word, but who never found peace in believing. At last he turned ill, and after many interviews Dr. Clarke said, "Sir, it is not often that God deals thus with a soul so deeply humbled as yours, and so earnestly seeking redemption through the blood of His Son. There must be a cause for this." The gentleman raised himself in bed, and fixing his eyes on the minister, told how, years ago, taking his voyage to England, he saw some merchants of the place give the captain a bag of dollars to carry to a correspondent. He marked the captain's carelessness in leaving it rolling on the locker day after day, and for the purpose of frightening him, he hid it. No inquiry was made, and on arriving at their destination, the merchant still retained it, till it should be missed. At last the parties to whom it was consigned inquired for it, and an angry correspondence commenced; hearing of which the gentleman got frightened, and resolved to keep his secret. The captain was thrown into prison, and died. "Guilt," added the dying man, "had by this time hardened my mind. I strove to be happy by stifling my conscience with the cares and amusements of the world—but in vain. I at last heard you preach; and then it was that the voice of God broke in on my conscience, and reasoned with me of righteousness and of judgment to come. Hell got hold upon my spirit; I have prayed, I have deplored, I have agonised at the throne of mercy, for the sake of Christ, for pardon; but God is deaf to prayer, and casts out my petition; there is no mercy for me; I must go down into the grave unpardoned, unsaved." The captain's widow was still alive, and to her and her children Dr. Clarke was the medium of paying over the sum, with compound interest, obtaining an acknowledgment which he kept till his dying day; and soon after, the conscience-stricken penitent died in peace, having obtained the hope of pardon. But the incident illustrates the subtlety of Satan. The man was respectable, and had it been put to him, "Are you capable of stealing? Do you think you could commit a murder? Are you one that could allow an innocent man to languish in prison for your crime, and go down to the grave covered with infamy, for a fault which, not he, but you committed?" "Is thy servant a dog?" would have been the indignant reply to the revolting suggestion. But for the fine-grained timber,

for oaks and cedars, the devil has sharp wedges, as well as coarser instruments for ignoble natures; and here the edge was very fine; a trick—a practical jest—a frolic—but a frolic which, like many fools' firebands, ended in a sad conflagration; in theft and murder, in orphanage and widowhood, in the ruin of a reputation, and in the misery and remorse of the perpetrator.

—*Hamilton*, 1814-1867.

(4725.) If the devil comes to my door with his horns visible, I will never let him in; but if he comes with his hat on as a respectable gentleman, he is at once admitted. The metaphor may be very quaint, but it is quite true. Many a man has taken in an evil thing because it has been varnished and glossed over, and not apparently an evil, and he has thought in his heart there is not much harm in it; so he has let in the little thing, and it has been like the breaking forth of water,—the first drop has brought after it a torrent. The beginning has been but the beginning of a fearful end.

—*Spurgeon.*

3. Are sufficient to overthrow most of us.

(4726.) There be some that will say they were never tempted with kingdoms. It may well be, for it needs not when less will serve. It was Christ only who was thus tempted; in Him lay an heroical mind that could not be allured with small matters. But with us it is nothing so, for we esteem far more basely of ourselves. We set our wares at a very easy price; he may buy us even dagger-cheap, as we say. He need never carry us so high as the mount. The pinnacle is high enough; yea, the lowest steeple in all the town would serve the turn. Or let him but carry us to the leads and gutters of our own houses, nay, let us but stand in our windows or our doors, if he will give us but so much as we can there see, he will tempt us thoroughly; we will accept it and thank him too. He shall not need to come to us with kingdoms. If he would come to us with thirty pieces, I am afraid many of us would play Judas. Nay, less than so much would buy a great sort, even "handfuls of barley and pieces of bread" (Ezekiel xiii. 19). Yea, some will not stick to buy and sell the poor for a pair of shoes, as Amos speaketh. . . . A matter of half-a-crown, or ten groats, a pair of shoes, or some such trifle, will bring us on our knees to the devil. —*Sanderson*, 1587-1662.

VII. *ITS RELATION TO MORAL RESPONSIBILITY.*

1. It is no excuse for sin.

(4727.) We may have leaders into temptation, but it is our fault if we follow them. Nay, to come closer home, do not we tempt ourselves? Satan is not the sole cause of evil. The fowler sets his glass, spreads his net, whistles like the bird; yet cannot all this make the fowl come into his net whether she will or no. If we had not pliable ears and flexible affections, the syrens might sing in vain. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4728.) There is a secret disposition in the heart of all, to all sin; temptation doth not fall on us as a ball of fire on ice or snow, but as a spark on tinder, or lightning on a thatched roof, which presently is on a flame. Hence in Scripture, though tempted by Satan, yet the sin is charged on us, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed." Mark! 'tis Satan *tempts*, but our own lust *draws us*. The fowler lays the shrap, but the bird's own desire betrays it into the net. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4729.) It is useless for the sinner to allege that he is swept away by temptation: "he conceiveth mischief, and he bringeth forth falsehood;" and if he is swept away, it is as the suicide who repairs to the river, stands on its brink, and, leaping in, is swept off to his watery grave. —*Guthrie.*

2. Even this invalid plea of "temptation" is often falsely urged.

(4730.) While I do not deny the influence and agency of evil spirits, I believe that unquestionably Satan is charged with a vast deal of mischief of which he knows nothing, and has need to know nothing. Men usually exempt from the agency of Satan those who probably are the chief objects of his assaults; and they charge Satan with tempting those whom he never would squander any time upon. If a man is a notorious drunkard, and commits a crime, it is said that the devil tempted him. What use was there of the devil's tempting him? How superfluous is temptation under such circumstances! When a man is bent, by the whole stress of his nature, to do wickedly, do you suppose that Satan will take the trouble to work upon him? Time is too precious on his hands. Some men are monstrous liars, and they plead that Satan tempts them to lie. They do not need any temptation to lie. If the wood be green, we use the bellows; but if the wood be dry and inflammable, a spark ignites it, and a man would be foolish indeed that should use a bellows to blow it then. If a man wants to sin, and has the habit of sinning, and loves sin, and will sin, and will not be hindered from sinning, do not say that the devil tempted him. —*Beecher.*

VIII. *HOW IT IS TO BE RESISTED.*

1. Promptly.

(4731.) We are most carefully to withstand Satan's temptations when they are first suggested, and to give him the repulse as soon as we perceive that he is but beginning to make an entrance.

For this gliding serpent, if he can but thrust in his head, will easily make room for his whole body: and therefore we must nip and bruise him in the head, and use his temptations like the serpent's brood, which if men desire to kill, they do not tread upon their tails, for so they would turn again and sting them, but upon their heads, and then they have no power to hurt them. So we are not fondly to think that we can without hurt vanquish Satan's temptations in the end if we have long entertained them: for unless they be nipped in the head, and withstood in the beginning, they will mortally poison us with the sting of sin.

For as thieves coming to break into a house, if they can but find room for the point of their wrench to enter, will easily by turning and winding about the vice make the doors, though very strong, fly open and give them entrance; so if this cunning thief Satan can find any entrance for his first temptations, so as we can be content to think upon them, and revolve them in our minds with any liking,

he will easily burst open the gates of our souls, and entering further will rob us of all God's graces. Let us therefore "give no place to the devil."

As wise citizens, being besieged, do not let their enemies scale the walls and enter the town, with a purpose then to repel and beat them back again; but they withstand them as soon as they give the first assault, and keep them, if they can, from approaching near their walls with sconces and bulwarks; so we are not to suffer Satan our enemy, and the troops of his temptations to enter into our hearts, but to give them the repulse at their first approaching, lest it be too late afterwards when they have surprised and wounded us with sin.

—*Downame*, 1642.

(4732.) As often as a man finds his corruption renewing its assaults, let him set upon it with a renewed opposition. As soon as that stirs let him strike, at no hand suffering it to get ground of him; for every motion of it not resisted gives it an advance. And we know that, after it has made some progress, it is then harder to be subdued than at the first repulsed. When an enemy is but rising, it is easy to knock him to the ground again, but when he is up, and stands upon his legs, he is not then so easily thrown down. It is less difficult to hinder and prevent, than to stop and restrain, the course of sin. —*South*, 1633-1716.

(4733.) Stand in awe, dear brethren, of many things, but of nothing stand more in awe than of your own selves, and of the dread potentialities of evil no less than of good which you bear about with you. Believe me, there is no smallest spark from Satan's stithy, which if duly fanned, or even if left unquenched and not trodden out, might not increase into a flame, which should set on fire in you the whole course of nature; even as in this material world there is in each tiniest spark a possible conflagration, such as should wrap whole forests or cities in a flame. Resist evil at the beginning. Then it is weak and you are strong; but after a little allowance the conditions will be reversed, and you will be weak and it strong. Blessed is he who taketh these little ones of Babylon, and dasheth them against the stones of God's law. Stand in awe, I would say again, of your own selves. He knows very little of himself who does not know that, as there is a possible heaven, so there is a possible hell within him. In the passing thought of impurity there is that which, being admitted, indulged, cherished, followed up whither it seeks to lead, would mould us at last into the hideous likeness of a Tiberius or a Louis XV. In the smallest act, word, or thought of genuine malice, there is shut up a whole world of cruelty, of intensest delight in the suffering of others, such as a Domitian or an Eccelino never surpassed.

—*Trench.*

(4734.) That memorable fire which two centuries ago laid nearly one-half of this city in ashes, which defied for days and days the efforts of thousands of men, there was no doubt a moment when a pitcher of water in the hands of a little child might have quenched it. So, too, the sin which has now grown to such a fearful mastery of a man that it is the tyrant of his life; it was once but a wandering temptation, a vague floating suggestion to evil, against which if he had resolutely shut the door of his heart when it first presented itself for admission, he might perhaps never have heard of it again.

—*Trench.*

(4735.) An enemy who desired to destroy you by your own deed, would not lead you straight to a yawning precipice, and bid you cast yourself down. He would rather lead you along a flowery winding path, until you should insensibly be drawn into a spot which would give way beneath you. Enticements to moral evil will generally take that form. You will not be persuaded all at once to plunge into deeds of darkness, knowing them to be such. Few young men who have enjoyed a religious education come to a sudden stand, and at once turn their back upon God and godliness. Most of those who do fall, diverge at first by imperceptible degrees from the path of righteousness. When it is intended, by a line of rails, to conduct a train off the main trunk, and turn it aside in another direction, the branch line at first runs parallel with the trunk. It goes alongside for a space in the same direction; but when it has thus got fairly off, then it turns more rapidly round, and bounds away at right angles to its former course. As engineers avoid the physical, so the tempters avoid the moral difficulty. An abrupt turn is not attempted in either case. The object is far more surely attained by a gently graduated divergence. The importance of the ancient rule, *Obsta principiis* (resist the beginnings), can never be overrated. —*Arnot.*

(4736.) Temptation is resistible at one time; it is almost irresistible at another. Temptation when it first begins to act upon us may be overcome, I think, I may say, may be easily overcome. And he who, when an evil desire rises within him, flies at once to the throne of grace, who cries out to God to help him, will see his temptation fading away. But when we yield to the temptation, which so easily we might have resisted at first, then it gathers strength, and with each new indulgence its demands are more imperious, its fascinations more seductive, and its thrall more complete; until a day comes when a man wakens up to a new intention, and finds that his power is gone, that he cannot galvanise into vigour a long unused moral organ, that he sees his danger, that he sees the quick-coming ruin, but it is too late—he must, he must; and like a wave that lifts itself wildly over a foundering ship, so does temptation triumph.

W. Page-Roberts.

2. Unhesitatingly.

(4737.) The whole of this probation for the future often depends on some single action that shall determine the character, and that shall send an influence ever onward. Everything seems to be concentrated on a single point. A right or a wrong decision then settles everything. The moment when in the battle at Waterloo the Duke of Wellington could say, "This will do," decided the fate of the battle and of kingdoms. A wrong movement just at that point might have changed the conditions of the world for centuries. In every man's life there are such periods; and probably in the lives of most men their future course is more certainly determined by one such far-reaching and central decision, than by many actions in other circumstances. They are those moments when honour, wealth, usefulness, health, and salvation seem all to depend on a single resolution. It seems to be a small matter for a young man to deliberate

whether he shall or shall not partake of a social glass of intoxicating drink with a friend ; and yet on the result of such a deliberation has depended the whole career of many a man. So it may seem a small matter for him to visit a gambling-room, or a theatre once ; or to form a friendship with some well-introduced and genteel-looking stranger ; and yet the whole of his future destiny may depend on the decision of that moment. The reason is this : it is the crisis of the life. It settles a principle. It determines whether he will listen to the voice of reason and conscience ; to parental counsel and to God, or whether he is to be under the control of passion and appetite. Everything is concentrated on that point—like one of Napoleon's movements at the bridge of Lodi, or at Austerlitz. If that one point is carried, the whole field may soon be won. In the decision which a young man often makes at that point, there is such a breach made on his virtuous principles; there is such an array of temptations pouring into the breach—like an army pouring into a city where a breach is made in a wall—that henceforward there is almost no resistance, and the citadel is taken. Of all those who have become the victims of intemperance, it would be found, probably, that the mischief was done at some such decisive moment in their lives ; and of those who have lived honoured and useful lives, it might also be found that their whole career was determined by some single act of decided resistance to temptation. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

(4738.) Decision of character and promptitude of action, qualities so important on board ship in a storm, in the manœuvring of troops in battle, are indispensable to the Christian life—both to our getting through the "strait gate," and our getting on in the "narrow way." How often, for example, does it happen that to hesitate even for one moment between resisting and yielding to temptation is to fall ! The battle is lost in that moment of vacillation. In such cases, our safety lies in coming to an immediate decision; in promptly resolving to dally with the tempter not an instant, to flee if we can, and if we cannot flee to fight—so resisting the devil that if we cannot flee from him, he shall flee from us, and leave us, as when he spread out his wings and, vanquished at all points, relieved our Lord of his hateful presence. —*Guthrie.*

3. **Uncompromisingly.**

(4739.) As he that casts himself from a steeple does not break his neck till he touch the ground, but yet he is truly said to have killed himself when he threw himself towards the ground ; so in those preparations and invitations to sin we perish, before we perish, before we commit the act, the sin itself,—we perished then, when we opened ourselves to the danger of the sin.

—*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(4740.) The trees of the forest held a solemn parliament, wherein they consulted of the innumerable wrongs which the axe had done them ; they therefore made an act that no tree should hereafter lend the axe an helve, on pain of being cut down. The axe travels up and down the forest, begs wood of the cedar, oak, ash, elm, even of the poplar ; not one would lend him a chip. At last he desired so much as would serve him to cut down the briers and bushes, alleging that such shrubs as they did but suck away the juice of the ground and hinder the growth and obscure the glory of the fair and goodly trees. Hereon they were all content to afford him so much ; he pretends a thorough reformation, but behold a sad deformation ; for when he had got his helve, down went cedar, oak, ash, elm, and all that did but stand in his way. Such are the subtle reaches of sin and sinful men. Give but a little advantage on their fair promises to remove the troubles of the body, and they will cut down the soul also. Therefore *obsta principiis*, crush the cockatrice in the egg, refuse all iniquity at the first, in what extenuation of quantity or colour of quality soever it be offered ; for if Satan cannot get leave for his whole army of lusts, yet he will beg hard for his weak ones—his little ones—sins of weakness and infirmity, which, if once admitted, will soon unbolt the doors of the heart, let in all the rest of their company, and so make a surprisal of the soul and endanger it to all eternity. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4741.) Satan would seem to be mannerly and reasonable ; making as if he would be content with one-half of the heart, whereas God challengeth all or none : as, indeed, He hath most reason to claim all that made all. But this is nothing but a crafty fetch of Satan ; for he knows that if he have any part, God will have none : so the whole falleth to his share alone.

My heart, when it is both whole and at the best, is but a strait and unworthy lodging for God. If it were bigger and better, I would reserve it all for Him. Satan may look in at my doors by a temptation,—but he shall not have so much as one chamber-room set apart for him to sojourn in.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4742.) If you yield to Satan in the least, he will carry you further and further, till he has left you under a stupefied or terrified conscience : stupefied, till thou hast lost all thy tenderness. A stone at the top of a hill, when it begins to roll down, ceases not till it comes to the bottom. Thou thinkest it is but yielding a little, and so by degrees art carried on, till thou hast sinned away all thy profession, and all principles of conscience, by the secret witchery of his temptations.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(4743.) Take heed that you do not yield to anything, that you may be rid of ; that you do not yield to any part of the temptation, that you may be delivered from. It is more easy to keep the enemy out of the town, than to get him out when he is come into it. It is an easy thing to keep a stone on the top of an hill while it lies there ; but when it once begins to roll down, it is a hard thing to stay it, and you cannot say how far it shall go. How many are there that say when they are tempted, "I will yield but once, I will yield but a little, and I will never yield again, this is the last time !" Oh ! but your once yielding, and your yielding but a little, engages your heart to the whole work. You should watch and pray against temptation. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." He does not say, Watch and pray, that you be not tempted ; but, "Watch and pray, that ye *enter* not into temptation." It is one thing for temptation to knock at the door, and another thing to come in :

when temptation enters you, you enter into temptation; take heed of that.
—*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

(4744.) As soldiers by cowardly leaving some outwork they are set to defend, give place to their enemy who enters the same, and from thence doth more easily shoot into the city than he could before. Thus yielding in one temptation, we let the devil into our trench, and give him a fair advantage to do us the more mischief. The angry man, while he is raging and raving, thinks, may be, no more but to ease his passion by disgorging it in some bitter keen words; but, alas! while his fury and wrath is sallying out at the portal of his lips, the devil, finding the door open, enters and hurries him further than he dreamt of. We have not to do with a Hannibal, who, though a great swordsman, yet wanted the art of following and improving the advantages his victories gave him, but with a cunning devil, that will easily lose no ground he gets; our best way, therefore, is to give him no hand-hold.
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4745.) When Satan comes to tempt, he is modest, and asks but a little; he knows he may get that at many times which he should be denied if he asked all at once. A few are let into a city, when an army coming in a body would be shut out; and therefore that he may beget no suspicion, he presents, may be, a few general propositions, which do not discover the depth of this plot; these, like scouts, go before, while his whole body lies hid, as it were, in some swamp at hand. Thus he wriggled into Eve's bosom, whom he doth not at first dash bid take and eat; no, he is more mannerly than so; this would have been so hideous, that as the fish with some sudden noise, by a stone cast into the river, is scared from the bait, so would she have been affrighted from holding parley with such a one; no, he propounds a question which shall make way for this, "Hath God said?" "Art not mistaken? Could this be His meaning whose bounty lets thee eat of the rest, to deny thee the best of all?" Thus he digs about, and loosens the roots of her faith, and then the tree falls the easier the next gust of temptation. This is a dangerous policy indeed. Many have yielded to go a mile with Satan, that never intended to go two; but when once on the way, have been allured further and further, till at last they know not how to leave his company. Thus Satan leads poor creatures down into the depths of sin by winding stairs, that let them not see the bottom whither they are going. First, he presents an object that occasions some thoughts, these set fire on the affections, and these fume up into the brain, and cloud the understanding, which being thus disabled, now Satan dares a little more declare himself, and boldly solicits the creature to that it would even now have denied. Many who at this day lie in open profaneness, never thought they should have rolled so far from their profession, but Satan beguiled them, poor souls, with their modest beginnings. O Christians, give not place to Satan, no, not an inch in his first motions; he that is a beggar, and a modest one without doors, will command the house if let in! Yield at first, and thou givest away thy strength to resist him in the rest; when the hem is worn, the whole garment will ravel out, if that be not mended by timely repentance. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4746.) Every inclination to sin, every compliance with temptation, is a going down the hill. While we keep our standing we may command ourselves; but if we once put ourselves into violent motion downward, we cannot stop when we please.
—*Tillotson*, 1630-1694.

4. Hopefully.

(4747.) The Christian's safety lies in resisting. All the armour here provided is to defend the Christian fighting, none to secure him flying. *Stand, and the day is ours;* fly or yield, and all is lost. Great captains, to make their soldiers more resolute, do sometimes cut off all hope of a safe retreat to them that run away. Thus the Norman Conqueror, as soon as his men were set on English shore, sent away his ships in their sight, that they might resolve to fight or die. God takes away all thought of safety to the coward. Not a piece to be found for the back in all God's armoury. *Stand, and the bullets light all on your armour;* fly, and they enter into your hearts. 'Tis a terrible place (Heb. x. 38): "The just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

IX. *HOW IT IS TO BE OVERCOME.*

1. By being forearmed.

(4748.) "The man that endureth temptation" is the man who has learnt and is enabled to bear up under it; or, as we sometimes express ourselves, he will weather it. He expects it; and, when it comes on him, he is not surprised. He knows that it is impossible to give place to it, in any degree with safety; he resolves, therefore, by the help of God, to make a stand; and though the current may run strong against him, yet he certainly knows that he must either go against the current, or be carried away, and perish for ever. —*Cecil*, 1748-1810.

(4749.) After we have got the better of the tempter, we must do as the mariners in a calm, mend our tackling, as not knowing how soon another storm may come. —*Watson*, 1676.

(4750.) Though no combatant be near, though the deep be calm and clear, a wary warrior is ever on his guard, the wary pilot is never asleep: even in peace and in calm he prepares his arms, trims his sail, ready, whatever chance presents itself, to meet the battle or the gale. —*Metastasio.*

(4751.) I would urge, as another branch of Christian prudence in the resisting of evil, that we do not wait till the temptation comes, and then begin our preparations against it. Arm yourself against it beforehand. What were he for a soldier who, only when the signal of battle had been already given, and when he stood face to face with his foe, began to rivet the joints of his armour, and to put a sharper edge on his sword? Or how would that nation fare that should be providing for the first time fleets and armies and arsenals, when it was already committed to deadly strife with another people as mighty as itself? The conflict is a time for using weapons, not for preparing them. And who can say how suddenly, how fiercely, from what unlooked-for side, a temptation may assail him? How, think you, would it have fared with Joseph, if, cast suddenly as he was into the fiery furnace of temptation, his wanton mistress seeking to entice him to sin, had he not already, and by many

prayers going before, sought and obtained the gift and grace of chastity from God? Do we not feel sure, if he had needed then for the first time to seek His grace, he would not have sought, he would not have obtained it, but have been in that fierce furnace scorched and utterly consumed? Say then often to yourselves, I am in a world full of temptation, the fiery darts of the wicked one are flying thick and fast about me; if one lights not on my heart to-day, it will light to-morrow or the next day; my wisdom, my safety, is to seek betimes that grace which sooner or later I must need. It will be too late then first to seek it when the need of it has actually arrived. Neither content yourself with saying this, but actually seek it, and store it against the evil time which is coming, that you may be able to stand in that evil time, and having done all, to stand. —*Trench.*

2. By turning our attention to other objects.

(4752.) When a temptation arises, do not always stand to answer it in the kind; but sometimes turn your mind and thoughts off it to another object. It is in our deliverance from a temptation, as in our comforts under an affliction: a man hath a great affliction upon him, possibly the death of some friend that is near and dear unto him, and you go to comfort him, and in comforting him, you fall a speaking of his friend departed: whereas the way to comfort him, is not to speak of the person departed, but fall into conference about some other good thing different: and by that time his heart is settled upon some other thing, then you may come back again and speak of the friend departed without grieving of him; but otherwise, even in your comfort you fetch out tears. And so I say in regard of temptation: the way to avoid temptation is not always to apply a salve directly pertinent to the temptation; but turn off your mind and your thoughts to some other good object, and by that time your mind is settled upon other objects, you will be easily able to meet with the temptation.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

3. By considering whether we are able to bear the burden of sin.

(4753.) Porters, when they are called to carry a burthen on their shoulders, first look diligently upon it, then they poise and lift it up, to try whether they shall have strength to carry it when it is once on their backs; and thus should every man do that, for a little pleasure, hath enthralled himself to carry the burthen of sin. He should first prove and assay what a weight sin is, what a burthen the punishment of sin is, which he must bear or sink under it; and by this means he shall soon find himself at a loss, "*For a wounded spirit who can bear?*"

—*Serdonius de Granatensis.*

4. By regarding its ultimate issues.

(4754.) Satan gives Adam an apple, and takes away Paradise. Therefore in all temptations let us consider not what he offers, but what we shall lose.

—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(4755.) When thou seest the fisher baiting his hook, thou mayest think of the policy of the devil, who sugars over his poisoned hooks with seeming profit and pleasures. Eve's apple was candied with Divine knowledge; "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4756.) When you maturely look into the nature and design of temptations, you will find the most taking to be but as so many cheats, which, under the visor of some delight or profit, would rob you of your integrity, and betray you to enmity both with God and yourself. And therefore, when you entertain any temptation to sin, you do as wisely as he who takes those into his house whom he knows are come on purpose to spoil him of what he esteems most precious.

—*Dr. Lancelot Addison*, 1632–1703.

(4757.) Let not that man who would not be fooled in so vast an interest as his salvation, fix his eye either upon the outside or the beginning of a temptation. Ever the beginning of a tragedy is pleasant, but the close of it is not so. Let him not judge of what the tempter intends by what he offers; for be it what it will, look it never so gay or great, can any one, not quite abandoned by common sense, imagine that his mortal, avowed enemy is at all concerned for his pleasure, profit, or preferment? Assuredly nothing less, in all this he is but setting his trap; and no man sets a trap, but he baits it too. He hates most implacably while he offers most plausibly. His drift in every one of his temptations is to separate between the soul and its chief good for ever, and to plunge it into a state of misery both intolerable and unchangeable.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

5. By self-examination.

(4758.) The special trials and temptations of men call for the exercise of their thoughts in a peculiar manner with respect unto them. If a man have a bodily disease, pain, or distemper, it will cause him to think much of it whether he will or no—at least, if he be wise he will do so; nor will he always be complaining of the smart, but he will inquire into the causes, and seek their removal.

—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

6. By humility.

(4759.) Want of humiliation many times brings men to desperate stands, and sometimes to untimely deaths. In time of war, when the great cannon fly off, the only way to avoid them is to lie down in a furrow, and so the bullets fly over. So in all temptations of Satan lie low, and be contented to be at God's disposing, and all these fiery temptations shall not be able to hurt you.

—*Ambrose*, 1664.

7. By instant recourse to the throne of grace.

(4760.) Take heed that you do not stand poring upon your temptations, whatsoever your temptations be. When the children of Israel were stung by the serpents in the wilderness, they did not stand poring upon the arm that was stung, crying out, "Oh, my arm! oh, how it is swelled!" but they looked up upon the brazen serpent. If they had look upon their arm, and stood poring upon that, they had never been cured. So now, if in case we be tempted, the way is not to stand poring upon the temptation, but to look off unto Christ. Set the Lord always before your eyes, His all-sufficiency, His fulness, His grace, His goodness: "I have set the Lord always before me, at my right hand," saith David, "and therefore I shall not fall;" so do you. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(4761.) Think not to comfort or relieve yourself in temptation with mere philosophical or moral

reasons. For the disease of temptation is stronger than that physic. Temptations answered by reason will return again; but temptations dipt in the blood of Christ will return no more, or not with such violence and success. Ye see how it is with a candle that is blown out, it is easily lighted again; but if you put it into water, then it is more hard to light. So temptations blown out with resolutions and moral reasons do easily return; but quenched in Christ's blood do not so. Christ is an universal good; reason can hold forth but a particular good. Now there is that in an universal good which will answer unto all ills; but as for moral reasons, the tempter will say to them, "Christ we know, and the Promise we know, but who are ye?"

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(4762.) As soon as you perceive yourself tempted, follow the example of children, when they see a wolf or a bear in the country; for presently they run into the arms of their father or mother, or at least they call out to them for help or assistance. It is the remedy which our Lord has taught (Matt. xxvi. 41). Pray, lest you enter into temptation.

—*Francis de Sales.*

8. By fervent prayer.

(4763.) Let a man be but as earnest in praying against a temptation as the tempter is in pressing it, and he needs not proceed by a surer measure. He who prays against it coldly and indifferently, gives too shrewd a sign that he neither fears nor hates it; for coldness is, and always will be, a symptom of deadness, especially in prayer, where life and heat are the same thing.

The prayers of the saint are set forth in Scripture at much another rate, not only by calls and cries, cries even to a roaring and vociferation (Ps. xxxviii. 8); and sometimes by "strong cries with tears" (Heb. v. 7); sometimes again by "groanings not to be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26); things too big for vent, too high for expression. In fine, he who prays against his spiritual enemy as he ought to do, is like a man fighting against him upon his knees; and he who fights so, by the very posture of his fighting shows that he neither will nor can run away.

Lip-devotion will not serve the turn: it undervalues the very thing it prays for. It is indeed the begging of a denial, and shall certainly be answered in what it begs; but he who truly and sensibly knows the invaluable happiness of being delivered from temptation, and the unspeakable misery of sinking under it, will pray against it, as a man ready to starve would beg for bread, or a man sentenced to die would entreat for life. Every period, every word, every tittle of such a prayer is all spirit and life, flame and ecstacy; it shoots from one heart into another, from the heart of him who utters to the heart of him who hears it.

And then well may that powerful thing vanquish the tempter, which binds the hands of justice, and opens the hands of mercy, and, in a word, overcomes and prevails over Omnipotence itself; for, "Let Me go," says God to Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 26); and, "Let Me alone," says God to Moses (Exodus xxxii. 10). One would think that there was a kind of trial of strength between the Almighty and them; but whatsoever it was, it shows that there was and is something in prayer which He, who made heaven and earth, neither could nor can resist; and if this be that holy violence which heaven itself (as has been shown) cannot stand out against, no wonder if all the powers of hell must fall before it!

—*South*, 1633–1716.

9. By exercising faith in God.

(4764.) If you would not be discouraged under your temptations, take heed that when you are in temptation you do not expect too much from any one means of help. Over-expectation breeds disappointment; disappointment breeds discouragement. It is not the sadness of your condition, but disappointment that causes discouragement. If a man be in debt, and under an arrest, so long as he thinks he has friends to bail him, or some goods and commodities to make sale of, he is not discouraged; but if he expect much from his friends, and all fail him, and his goods be seized, that he cannot have help to come in at that door, nor from any other means which he expected from, then he is quite discouraged. If a man be in the water, wherein there is danger of drowning, so long as he can get hold of something that will bear him up, he is not discouraged; but if he lay hold of some tuft of grass on the bank-side, and that breaks, he falls back again and is more plunged into the water, and if he be not scared out of all thoughts, he is more discouraged than ever. So here in temptation: we are as in the water, and in fear of drowning, crying out, "We sink, we sink!" Then we fly to some tuft of grass, some means or other, and if that break or fail, then we are quite cast down. Would you not be dejected, therefore, or cast down in temptation? Take heed that you do not lay all your strength upon one tuft of grass,—this or that man's counsel, this or that particular means; but say rather, "I am now indeed in the deep, and in fear of drowning; I see no means of deliverance; but God's ways are in the deep, He has ways and means that I know not of; therefore though I use the means, yet I will not rest on them, and though all tufts of grass break, and anchors come home, yet I will wait upon God." —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(4765.) It was the speech of Taulerus, one that Luther prizeth above all: says he, Though the mariners may make use of their oars in the time of calm, yet when a storm comes down the mariners leave all and fly to their anchor. So, though at other times we may make use of resolutions, and vows, and the like, yet when the storm of temptation comes down, nothing then but fly to the anchor of faith, nothing then like to casting of anchor into the vail. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

10. By quenching it in the blood of Christ.

(4766.) Whether you would overcome, or whether you would prevent temptation; whatever means you use, be sure of this, that you take your temptation and dip it in the blood of Christ. Take a candle that is lighted, and only blow out the candle, the candle is easily lighted again; but when the candle is out, take it and put it into the water, and then it is not so easily lighted again: so now a temptation comes, and you blow it out with a resolution, and you will not yield to it; alas! it is easily lighted again: but now take this candle, take this temptation, and come and dip it in the blood of Jesus Christ, and it will not be so easily lighted again; so you shall be able to prevent temptation for the time to come. Never rest alone in resolving, but, oh! take your temptation and dip it in the blood of Jesus Christ.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

X. *CONSOLATIONS FOR THE TEMPTED.*

1. Temptation is not sin.

(4767.) If a man finds weeds growing in his garden and naturally springing out of his own ground, he taketh much pains to weed them out; but if he seeth that they have no rooting there, and are only cast over the wall by some ill-willer, he careth not much for it, because he can with as small pains cast them out again as they took that cast them in. So, if we perceive that the weeds of temptation are rooted in our sinful nature, and spring from our corrupt flesh, we must take the more care and pains to weed them out; but if they be only injected by the malice of Satan, we are not to be so much moved therewith, but to cast them out of our minds and hearts, as often and as easily as he casts them in.

—*Downame*, 1644.

2. Temptations are specially experienced by God's children.

(4768.) The saints are passed, by the power of God, out of Satan's kingdom, and therefore he does spite them as not of his family; as dogs used to bark and bite, not those of the house they are in, but strangers. —*Bayne*, 1618.

(4769.) As men cherish young plants at first, and fence them about with hedges and other things to keep them from hurt, but when they are grown, they remove these, and leave them to the wind and weather; so God besets His children first with props of inward comforts, but afterwards exposes them to storms and winds, because they are better able to bear it. Therefore let no man think himself the better because he is free from troubles. It is because God sees him not fit to bear greater.

—*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

(4770.) The devil desires to winnow Peter, not Judas. The more faithful servants of God we be, the more doth Satan bruise us with the flail, or grate us with the fan.

The thief does not break into an empty cottage, but into some furnished house or full granary, where the fatness of the booty is a fitness to his desires. This unclean spirit finds no rest in an atheist, usurer, drunkard, swearer, &c. He knows a canker has overrun their consciences already; and that they are as sure as temptation can make them. No prince makes war with his own tractable subjects. What need he tempt them that tempt themselves? The fowler shoots at birds that be wild, not at doves and yard-fowls, tame, and in his own keeping. —*Adams*, 1653.

(4771.) Temptations are rather hopeful evidences that thy estate is good, that thou art dear to God, and that it shall go well with thee for ever, than otherwise. God had but one Son without corruption, but He had none without temptation. Pirates make the fiercest assaults upon those vessels that are the most richly laden; so does Satan upon those souls that are most richly laden with the treasures of grace, with the riches of glory. When nothing will satisfy the soul, but a full departure out of Egypt, from the bondage and slavery of sin, and that the soul is firmly resolved upon a march for Canaan, then Satan, Pharaoh-like, will furiously pursue after the soul with horses and chariots, that is, with a whole army of temptations. Well, a tempted soul, when it is worst with him, may safely argue thus—"If God were not my friend, Satan would not be so much my enemy. If there were not something of God within me, Satan would never make such attempts to storm me. If the love of God were not set upon me, Satan would never shoot so many fiery darts to wound me. If the heart of God were not towards me, the hand of Satan would not be so strong against me." The jailor is quiet when his prisoner is in bolts; but if he be escaped, then he pursues him with hue and cry; you know how to apply it.

—*Brooks*, 1680.

(4772.) Those whom God intends to make choice instruments in His service, are first seasoned with strong temptations, as timber reserved for the strong beams of a building is first exposed to sun and wind, to make it more compact for its proper use.

—*Charnock*, 1628-1680.

(4773.) Satan doth not tempt God's children, because they have sin in them, but because they have grace in them. Had they no grace, the devil would not disturb them: where he keeps possession all is in peace (Luke xi. 21). His temptations are to rob the saints of their grace. A thief will not assault an empty house, but where he thinks there is treasure; a pirate will not set upon an empty ship, but one that is full fraught with spices and jewels; so the devil most assaults the people of God, because he thinks they have a rich treasure of grace in their hearts, and he would rob them of that. What makes so many cudgels be thrown at a tree, but because there is so much fruit hanging upon it? The devil throws his temptations at you, because he sees you have so much fruit of grace growing upon you. Though to be tempted is a trouble, yet to think why you are tempted is a comfort. —*Watson*, 1696.

(4774.) Believers are soldiers: all soldiers, by their profession, are engaged to fight, if called upon, but who shall be called to sustain the hottest service, and be most frequently exposed upon the field of battle, depends upon the will of the general or king. Some of our soldiers are now upon hard service in America, while others are stationed round the palace, see the king's face daily, and have no dangers or hardships to encounter. These, however, are as liable to a call as the others; but if not called upon, they may enjoy with thankfulness the more easy post assigned them. Thus, the Captain of our salvation allots to His soldiers such stations as He thinks proper. He has a right to employ whom He will, and where He will. Some are comparatively at ease; they are not exposed to the fiercest onsets, but live near His presence: others are, to appearance, pressed above measure, beyond strength, so that they despair even of life; yet they are supported, and in the end made more than conquerors through Him that hath loved them. Long observation convinces me that the temptations which some endure are not chastisements brought upon them by unfaithfulness, or for anything remarkably wrong in their spirit or walk; I often rather consider that in this warfare, as in worldly wars, the post of danger and difficulty is the post of honour, and as such assigned to those whom he has favoured with a peculiar measure of His grace. —*Newton*, 1725-1807.

(4775.) If the temptations that beset and assail us do not occupy such a place in our thoughts and

lives—for they give some men no trouble—that admits of an obvious but melancholy explanation. It is not that the man who is without regrets, anxieties, daily and hourly struggles, is a better man than he who has "fightings without and fears within." It is not that he is holy, never tempted, or that he never yields to temptation. On the contrary, it is because he, unresisting, yields to it. What more pleasant and easy than the motion of a vessel that, gliding down the stream, is borne onwards to the cataract that shall hurl it to destruction? But bring the boat's head round, and a struggle begins; peace is gone now; she trembles from stem to stern; and by her violent plunges, the waves that break over her bows, and, shaking every timber, threaten to engulf her, you know the power and presence of a current that had been quietly wafting her on to ruin.

Thus it is with man and temptations so soon as he is converted. No sooner is peace with God through Christ settled, than war is proclaimed, and the man involved in its arduous and life-long struggles. I have seen one that had grown grey in the army, and yet had never been under fire, or seen the serried bayonets glance but on parade. The Captain of our salvation has no such soldiers; His have given and suffered many wounds, and have all a sore fight for it. This conflict begins with conversion; and, if I might borrow an illustration from heathen fables, the infant Hercules has to strangle serpents in his cradle. So soon as a man is new-born, and turns his face heavenward, he has hell to confront and fight with. —*Guthrie.*

(4776.) Alas! there are some here who are not thus tempted, and who are, perhaps, congratulating themselves, and saying, "I was never tempted like that." Ah! you are never emptied from vessel to vessel; you are settled on the lees; and why are you left to be so quiet? Is it not possible there is no spiritual life in you? You are dead in trespasses and sins. You are the devil's own; therefore why should he hunt you? A man does not go forth with a lasso to hunt a horse that stands in his stable ready bridled and saddled for him to ride whenever he likes, but he goes forth to hunt the wild horse that is free. So the devil knows that he has you bridled and saddled, and that he can ride you whenever he pleases, and he does not need to hunt you; but he will hunt the free Christian upon whose back he cannot place a saddle, and into whose mouth he cannot fix a bit. I wish you were tempted. I wish there was something in you worth the devil's efforts.
—*Spurgeon.*

3. Temptation is not necessarily hurtful.

(4777.) It is not the laying the bait hurts the fish, if the fish do not bite. —*Watson*, 1696.

(4778.) "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Temptation is that which puts to the test. Trials sent by God do this. A test is never employed for the purpose of injury. A weight is attached to a rope, not to break but to prove it. Pressure is applied to a boiler, not to burst it, but to certify its power of resistance. The testing process here confers no strength. But when a sailor has to navigate his ship under a heavy gale and in a difficult channel, or when a general has to fight against a superior force and on disadvantageous ground, skill and courage are not only tested but improved. The test has brought experience, and by practice is every faculty perfected. So, faith grows stronger by exercise, and patience by the enduring of sorrow. Thus alone it was that "God did tempt Abraham."
—*Newman Hall.*

(4779.) It is when a child of God is fullest of grace; when he has been declared to be a "son," even a "beloved son" of God; when he has made a public profession of Christianity, that he is most of all exposed to temptation. It seems strange at first thought that it should be so, but a little reflection dissipates the strangeness. Let me try to illustrate this. A toolmaker, I suppose, has finished an instrument, but it is not yet sent forth. Why? Because he has not "tested" it. Well! Enter we his workshop. You look in and observe the process. Your first impression is he is going to break it. But it is not so. Testing is not an injury. The perfect weapon comes out the stronger and receives the stamp that will carry it over the world. Even so the testing and trying of the Christian is not an injury. He who has formed the believer for Himself is not going to break or destroy the work, the beautiful work of His own hands. He is purifying, fitting, fashioning, polishing. Carry this along with you, my dear friends, and you will understand how it comes about that at the very moment of your being "full" of the Holy Ghost, at the very moment of your announced sonship, you are most violently assailed. —*Grosart.*

4. Temptation develops and displays the spiritual excellencies of God's people.

(4780.) Man is a ship: if God be the Pilot, sitting at the helm and steering the vessel, the voyage is safe and happy; but if concupiscence hold the stern, all runs to ruin. There are not more unruly mariners in a ship than members in the body: let the soul look to all, that must answer for all. St. Paul prays for his Thessalonians, that their whole spirit, and soul, and body may be sanctified. By spirit, conceive the understanding; by soul, the will and affections; by the body, itself with all the members. Turn man into a bark; and then the steersman is reason, or rather religion and grace; the sails are the affections, the helm is the will. The sails are apt to take every wind, and to carry the ship as that drives them. If the pilot let all alone,—sleep, revel, and never mind it,—there will be sudden destruction. But let him sit at the stern, fix his eye on the compass, and guide his hand by his eye, and the vessel by his hand; thus he shall even cheat the wind, and as it were compel it to blow for him. Such is the power of grace, that it makes the object of temptation become the matter of humiliation; and we prove the better even by that which would have made us worse.
—*Adams*, 1653.

(4781.) Temptation to faith is as fire to gold (1 Peter i. 7). The fire doth not only discover which is true gold, but makes the true gold more pure; it comes out maybe less in bulk and weight, (because severed from that soil and dross which embased it), but more in value and worth.
—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4782.) Satan by his temptations aims at the defiling of the Christian's conscience, and disfigur-

ing that beautiful face of God's image, which is engraven with holiness in the Christian's bosom; he is an unclean spirit himself, and would have them such, that he might glory in their shame; but God outwits him, for He turneth the temptations of Satan to sin to the purging them from sin; they are the black soap with which God washeth His saints white. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4783.) There may some perplexing temptations befall the mind of a believer, or some corruption take advantage to break loose for a season, it may be for a long season, which may gall the soul with its suggestions, and so trouble, disturb, and unquiet it, as that it shall not be able to make a right judgment of its grace and progress in holiness. A ship may be so tossed in a storm at sea as that the most skilful mariner may not be able to discern whether they make any way in their intended course and voyage, whilst they are carried on with success and speed. In such cases, grace in its exercise is principally engaged in an opposition to its enemy, which it has to conflict withal, and so its thriving other ways is not discernible.

If it should be inquired how we may discern when grace is exercised and thrives in opposition to corruptions and temptations, I say that, as great winds and storms sometimes contribute to the fruit-bearing of trees and plants, so do corruptions and temptations to the fruitfulness of grace and holiness. The wind comes with violence on the tree, ruffles its boughs, it may be breaks some of them, beats off its buds, loosens and shakes its roots, and threatens to cast the whole to the ground; but by this means the earth is opened and loosed about it, and the tree gets its roots deeper into the earth, whereby it receives more and fresh nourishment, which renders it fruitful, though it bring not forth fruit visibly, it may be, till a good while after. In the assaults of temptations and corruptions the soul is wofully ruffled and disordered—its leaves of profession are much blasted, and its beginnings of fruit-bearing much broken and retarded; but, in the meantime, it secretly and invisibly casts out its roots of humility, self-abasement, and mourning, in a hidden and continual labouring of faith and love after that grace, whereby holiness really increases, and way made for future visible fruitfulness.
—*Owen*, 1616–1683.

(4784.) Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them we shall find a nest of honey within them.
—*Bunyan*, 1628–1688.

(4785.) Godly temptations cause the increase of grace. *Unus Christianus temptatus mille:* "one tempted Christian (saith Luther) is worth a thousand." He grows more in grace: as the bellows increaseth the flame, so the bellows of a temptation doth increase the flame of grace.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(4786.) That is precious faith which, like the star, shines brightest in the darkest night. 'Tis good that our graces should be brought to a trial; thus we have comfort, and the Gospel honour.
—*Watson*, 1696.

(4787.) Yes! multitudinous temptations are, indeed, a great dignity, as helping to assimilate us to the image of Christ; and if we comport ourselves well under them, a great means of spiritual advancement. When a hard winter sets in, and the earth is covered with a mantle of snow, and each little knot and spray in the hedgerow is encrusted with icicles, vegetation seems to be killed, and every green thing blighted. But it is not so. The genial forces of the earth are driven inward and working deep in her bosom. The snow mantle is doing for her what the fur mantle does for the human frame,—concentrating and preserving the vital heat within. So it is in temptation: the time of temptation is a cheerless and dreary hour, when everything seems at a standstill, and the spiritual pulse can no longer be felt, it beats so faintly to the outward touch; but if the will is faithful and true, and the soul patient, the life is really concentrating itself, and rallying its forces within. The cheerless outward aspect is nothing: there are hidden agencies at work, which in due time shall bring out the full bloom and redolence of a spiritual spring. There have been moderate Christians, there have been shallow Christians, without very much temptation; but there never yet was a saintly Christian, never yet one who pressed to the higher summits of the spiritual life, never one whose banner bore the strange device, "Excelsior," who was not made the victim of manifold temptations. —*Goulburn.*

(4788.) It is quite true that even from these temptations themselves we may derive good; that they, even with issues sorrowful for the time as these, may yet be to us sources of ultimate strength; that thus it may prove with us as with the oyster, which stops with a precious pearl the hole in the shell which was originally a disease; as with the broken limb, which, having been set, *may* be stronger than if it had never been broken. It may fare with us as islanders of the Southern Ocean fancy that it fares with them; counting, as they do, that the strength and valour of the warrior whom they have slain in battle passes into themselves, as their rightful inheritance; for so it proves indeed with the Christian man and the temptations which he conquers and slays; and this even though the victory may have been won not without hurts to himself, gotten in the conflict. The strength which lay in the temptation has shifted its seat, and passed over into the man who has overcome the temptation.
—*Trench.*

5. God sympathises with His tempted people.

(4789.) If God our Father pities His children under their temptations, and the more they are tempted by Satan, the more they are pitied by God, then have they no reason to be discouraged, whatever their temptations be. How is it with yourselves? If you had two children, one that is in your house with you at home, and another that is in Spain or Italy, abroad, exposed to great temptations, is not your pity most towards that child that is abroad, and exposed to most temptations? Your love may be expressed to him that is at home as much another way, but your pitying love is most to him that is abroad. As in the time of a storm, great rain or hail, if you have one child lying in your bosom, or sitting up on your knee; and another that is abroad in the open field; though your love, in one kind, may run out to him that is upon your knee, yet does not your pitying love run out more to him that is abroad in the open fields?

Thus it is with God: He has two sorts of children, some that are exposed to more temptations, and some that are exposed to less; though His grace and love may run out more in one kind to them that are tempted, yet His pitying love runs out most to those that are most tempted. And upon this account you will find in Scripture, that when God saw any of His children were to go into any sad temptation, He did either immediately before, in, or after, more than ordinarily reveal Himself to them. The more you are tempted by Satan, the more you are pitied by God. Why, then, should you be discouraged, although your temptations be never so great? —*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

(4790.) What it was "to be tempted," our Saviour knew of old, by the sure, but sharp convictions of His own experience; and therefore treats such as are tempted with all sympathising tenderness, that fellowship in suffering can produce in a mind infinitely merciful of itself; as it is expressly affirmed: "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour those also who are tempted." To which we may add these words, "That He liveth for ever, to make intercession for us." And from both together we have all that comfort that a boundless compassion, supported by an infinite power and an endless duration, can afford.

And this is that invaluable advantage which we reap from having such an "High Priest, as can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." For as he who has broke a limb, having his choice of several chirurgeons equally skilful, would much rather choose one who had not only cured many others, but had also suffered the same disaster, and felt the same pain and anguish of a broken limb himself: for that from such a hand he might rationally expect not only a sound, but a gentle cure; a cure in which compassion should combine with skill, and make one ingredient in every application.

In like manner, it is not so much the greatness, the power, and majesty of our Intercessor that should animate persons under a temptation to address Him, as His "having drank of the same cup," and passed through the same furnace Himself. From which one endearing consideration it is, that the prayers of such persons find stronger arguments to enforce them in the breast of Him who hears, than they can drive from the heart of him who makes them. For as it is commonly, and perhaps very truly, said, that none knows the heart of a father but he who has been a father; so none knows what it is to be pursued and worried with the restless buffets of an impure spirit, but he who has endured the same terrible conflict himself. Christ has endured it, and His experience moves His compassion, and His compassion engages His prayers: and where He has promised us His prayers, we may promise ourselves the success.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

6. God succours His tempted people.

(4791.) Thou art weak? thy God is strong. Dost thou not see the feeble child that finds he cannot go alone, how fast he clings to the hand of his mother, more trusting to her help than to his own strength? Do thou so to thy God; and say, with the blessed Psalmist, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe. Uphold me according to Thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope." Peter was a bold man, that durst step forth and set his foot upon the liquid face of the waters: but he that ventured to walk there upon the strength of his faith, when he felt the stiff wind and saw the great billow, began to sink in his weakness; but no sooner had Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him than he takes courage, and walks now with the same confidence upon the sea that he wont to walk upon the land. Together with a check, he receives more supportation from Christ than his own legs could afford him. Fear no miscarriage through thine own weakness while thou art held up by that strong Helper. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(4792.) If the Lord Jesus Christ be a succouring Christ, then why should we yield unto our sins and to our temptations? Though the siege be strait, and violent, and fierce, if a city be beleagured, if it have but hopes that succour and relief will come, it will hold it out; and if it know for certain that succour will come, it will hold out unto great extremity. There is never a temptation, but you are beleagured by it: and when your temptation is about you, say, "O my soul, be quiet, yield not; the Lord Jesus Christ is a succouring Christ, and succour will come, and therefore hold out." Shall the Lord Jesus Christ succour me against my temptations with His bosom, and shall I take my sins and temptations into mine own bosom? Shall He come to succour me against my sins, and shall I succour my sins that He comes against? What a mighty argument is here to keep us from all our sins, and from yielding to our temptations. Jesus Christ is a succouring Christ to tempted souls.

—*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

(4793.) This is no small support that Christ succours the tempted. The mother succours the child most when it is sick; she sits by its bedside, brings it cordials; so when a soul is most assaulted, it shall be most assisted. —*Watson*, 1696.

(4794.) Christ succours His people by taking off the tempter. A shepherd, when the sheep begin to straggle, may set the dog on the sheep to bring it nearer the fold, but then he calls off the dog again. —*Watson*, 1696.

7. Temptations are of short duration.

(4795.) Let this encourage thee, O Christian, in thy conflict with Satan; the skirmish may be sharp, but it cannot be long. Let him tempt thee, and his wicked instruments trounce thee, 'tis but a little while, and thou shalt be rid of both their evil neighbourhoods. The cloud while it drops is rolling over thy head, and then comes fair weather and eternal sunshine of glory. Canst thou not watch with Christ one hour or two? keep the field a few days? If thou yield, thou art undone for ever; persevere but while the battle is over, and thine enemy shall never rally more. Bid faith look through the key-hole of the promise, and tell thee what it sees there laid up for him that overcomes; bid it listen and tell thee, whether it cannot hear the shouts of those crowned saints, as of those that are dividing the spoil, and receiving the reward of all their services and sufferings here on earth; and dost thou stand on the other side, afraid to wet

thy foot with those sufferings and temptations, which like a little plash of water run between thee and glory? —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

8. Temptations promote God's glory.

(4796.) He that would know the skill of the pilot must not look on him lying quietly in his bed in a safe port, nor sailing in a fair sea with a prosperous wind, but when he is in the midst of syrtes and sands, tossed and endangered with boisterous storms and cruel tempests—then to quit his ship and self out of these perils, and to bring it safe into the wished-for haven, argues the greatness of his skill, and gains him the reputation of a cunning mariner. And therefore the Lord brings us into a sea of miseries, and tosses us with the tempest of temptations, that by well acquitting ourselves in these perils, our skill, wherewith He has endued us, may be manifested and approved.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(4797.) The Lord tries His people, and by trial discovers both His gifts to them and the measure of them, chiefly for His own glory. For as the art of the shipwright appears when the ship brooks all weathers, continues firm and strong in all storms and tempests, and sails well with all winds in every sea; and as the cutler's and armourer's skill is made manifest, not whilst the sword hangs by the side in a velvet scabbard, or whilst the armour is clean kept and well oiled in the armoury, but when the one is tried in fight, or by smiting the anvil or bar of iron, and the other in the field with the culiver or musket shot: so the works of God's Spirit, these sanctifying and saving graces, do then most commend their Workmaster, when they come to be tried in this sea of misery and with these bullets of temptation; for if they then hold out, and neither leak nor sink, and being neither pierced nor much battered, do preserve us from all outward violence in this combat against our spiritual enemies, then the wisdom and skill, power and bounty of God, who both made and gave them, clearly shine and manifestly appear. —*Downame*, 1644.

(4798.) God suffers His children to be tempted, that so those spiritual graces which He has bestowed upon them may the more clearly shine to His glory. For who can know whether they be God's golden vessels before they be brought to the touchstone of temptation? Who could know the faith, patience, and valour of God's soldiers, if they always lay quietly in garrison and never came to skirmish? Who could feel the odoriferous smell of these aromatical spices, if they were not pounded and bruised in the mortar of afflictions? Who would have discerned Abraham's faith, Job's patience, Paul's courage and constancy, if they had never been tempted, which now, to the glory of God, shine to all the world? —*Downame*, 1644.

(4799.) "Let no man, when he is tempted, say, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted of evil; neither tempteth He any man." God tempteth thee not, my son: yet know that being His, thou couldst not be tempted without Him; but permitting and ordering that temptation to His own glory and thy good. That grace which thy God hath given thee He will have thus exercised, thus manifested. So we have known some indulgent father, who, being assured of the skill and valour of his dear son, puts him upon tiltings, and barriers, and public duels; and looks on with contentment, as well knowing that he will come off with honour. How had we known the admirable continency of good Joseph if he had not been strongly solicited by a wanton mistress? How had we known David's valour if the Philistines had not had a giantly challenger to encounter him? How had we known the invincible piety of the three children if there had not been a furnace to try them? or of Daniel if there had been no lions to accompany him? Be confident, thy glory shall be according to the proportion of thy trial: neither couldst thou ever be so happy, if thou hadst not been beholden to temptations.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4800.) "The Lord knows them that are His, and no weapon formed against them can prosper." That this may appear with the fullest evidence, Satan is allowed to assault them. We handle vessels of glass or china with caution, and endeavour to preserve them from falls and blows, because we know they are easily broken. But if a man had the art of making glass malleable, and, like iron, capable of bearing the stroke of a hammer without breaking, it is probable that instead of locking it carefully up, he would rather, for the commendation of his skill, permit many to attempt to break it, when he knew their attempts would be in vain. Believers are compared to earthen vessels, liable in themselves to be destroyed by a small blow; but they are so strengthened and tempered by the power and supply of divine grace, that the fiercest efforts of their fiercest enemies against them may be compared to the dashing of waves against a rock. And that this may be known and noticed, they are exposed to many trials; but the united and repeated assaults of the men of the world, and the powers of darkness, afford but the more incontestible demonstration, that the Lord is with them of a truth, and that His strength is made perfect in their weakness. Surely this thought, my friend, will afford you consolation; and you will be content to suffer, if God may be glorified by you and in you. —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

XI. *DUTIES OF THE TEMPTED.*

1. They are not to permit temptation to cause them to doubt their sonship.

(4801.) Suppose that your father should leave you a great estate, and give you good evidences; and a cunning lawyer comes and writes upon the back side of your evidence, Naught, naught: will ye because of that, join with him and say that your father hath given you nothing? Christ hath given you a great estate of mercy, and hath given you good evidences for it; and Satan now comes and writes upon the back side of your evidence, and says, This is naught. Will you join with him against God and Christ? what wrong is this to His love? think of it, I pray, you that are the saints and people of God. Be humbled under every temptation, though it be never so small; but never question your condition, though your temptation be never so great. —*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(4802.) But suppose there seem to be no obedience, neither in your own nor in another's eye; yet the root of the matter may be in you. Ye know how it is with the fish that are in the water in a

windy and a stormy day. Ye put many fish into a pond, and in a fair sunshiny day ye see them playing upon the water, upon the uppermost part of the water; but in a rainy and stormy day ye see none of them there, but yet you say they are all there, they are in the water, they are at the bottom, though you see them not. And so, it may be, in this stormy time of temptation, your obedience and profiting is not seen, but it may be there as heretofore. Satan does never more press a child of God to try himself by signs of grace drawn from his own conversation than in the time of temptation.

—*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

(4803.) God had one Son without sin; but He has no son without temptation. —*Spurgeon.*

2. More earnest prayer.

(4804.) If temptation do arise, be sure that you make some improvement of it for the better. If an enemy come and make an assault against one of your garrison towns, and he goes away and gets no hurt, he is encouraged and invited to come again; for, says he, "Though I did not carry the town, yet I lost nothing." But now, if upon his assault he loses many men and his ordnance; "I will come no more there," says he, "for there I had such and such a great loss." Thus it is with Satan when he comes before a soul with his temptations: "There is a soul," says he, "I came before him with my temptations, and though, indeed, I did not get the thing I would, yet I lost nothing, and therefore I will go again. But there is a soul, I came before him with my temptations, and I confess I lost much: I tempted and he prayed, and the more I tempted the more he prayed, and the more I tempted still, the more he did go to Jesus Christ, and therefore I will tempt him no more." —*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

3. Confidence in the sufficiency of divine grace.

(4805.) The torchlight of faith shall be kept burning, notwithstanding the winds of temptation continue blowing. —*Watson*, 1696.

XII. *DELIVERANCE FROM TEMPTATION.*

1. Is an undeserved mercy.

(4806.) God promises deliverance out of temptation to the godly, and yet their godliness is not the cause of this deliverance, any more than of God's making such a promise. It is indeed the qualification of the person who is to be delivered; so that without it the deliverance (upon a federal account, as was said before would not be; but still the cause of it is quite another thing.

A prince, for instance, has a hundred of his subjects in captivity, and makes a declaration that he will redeem so many of them as are of such a certain age, taking no notice of the rest. Now, in this case, we cannot say that their being of such an age was the first impulsive cause inducing their prince to redeem them; but his own good pleasure, which first made him take up a resolution to redeem such persons, and to make this the condition of it. Their being indeed of such an age is the qualifying condition, rendering them the proper objects of such a redemption; so that such, and none but such, are redeemed: but the cause of that redemption is not, that being (as we have shown) to be sought for elsewhere.

Now the case is much the same, where God vouchsafes to deliver men out of temptation. Whence is it, that, upon such trials befalling men, some few escape, and in the issue are brought off without ruin, while "thousands fall at their right hand and at their left"? Is it the extreme misery of our condition moving God's compassion, or the worthiness of their persons requiring this of His justice, which causes their deliverance? No; these are not, cannot be the cause, for the reasons before mentioned; they are indeed the proper qualifications rendering them fit to be delivered, but the free mercy or good pleasure of God is the main, leading, impulsive cause that actually they are delivered.

The thing, therefore, which is eminent from first to last in the whole transaction is mercy; mercy, which is its own argument; mercy, the first and grand motive of which is itself. For if it were not so, what could there be in a sinful, polluted creature to engage it? There is indeed enough to need, but nothing to deserve it. But the divine compassion, wheresoever it fixes, removes all obstacles, answers all objections, and needs no other reason of its actings, but its own sovereign, absolute, unaccountable freedom. —*South*, 1633-1716.

XIII. *IMMUNITY FROM TEMPTATION.*

1. How it is to be secured.

(1.) *By filling the heart with the thoughts of the love of Christ.*

(4807.) Beloved in the Lord, labour to keep the sense of His love warm upon your hearts. Look as it is with water in winter; so with your hearts in this respect: so long as the fire is under the water, and the water is hot, it freezes not; but when the heat goes off, and the water is cold, then ice comes upon it. And so long as your heart is kept up in the sense of Christ's love, and warm with Christ's love; so long the ice comes not, the temptation comes not. The slumber of grace is a preparation to temptation.

—*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

(2.) *By growth in grace.*

(4808.) Gardeners know that fumigations of tobacco are inadequate devices of getting rid of aphides that cluster on plants. The truest remedy for these things is to make the plant outgrow them. Give it nourishment so that it shall grow faster than they can take possession of it, and its growth will deliver it from all insect invasion. And there are ten thousand insect, pestiferous temptations, that creep in and trouble the soul, which can be most easily overcome by moral growth. Mould and mildew collect on plants where there is no vigour and no growth, but where there is vigour and wholesome growth the plant goes bravely on to blossom and fruit.

—*Beecher.*

TRINITY, THE.

1. An object of faith.

(4809.) "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; there are three distinct persons: in the Name, not names; there is

one essence. The Holy Ghost is called the finger of God, Christ the hand of the Father: now, as the finger is in the hand, and the hand on the body; so of one and the same most pure and simple essence is the Father, Son, and Spirit. But as it was reported of Alanus, when he promised his auditory to discourse the next Sunday more clearly of the Trinity, and to make plain that mystery; while he was studying the point by the sea-side, he spied a boy very busy with a little spoon, trudging often between the sea and a small hole he had digged in the ground. Alanus asked him what he meant. The boy answered, I intend to bring all the sea into this pit. Alanus replies, Why dost thou attempt such impossibilities, and misspend thy time? The boy answers, So dost thou, Alanus: I shall as soon bring all the sea into this hole, as thou bring all the knowledge of the Trinity into thy head. All is equally possible: we have begun together, we shall finish together; saving of the two my labour hath more hope and possibility of taking effect. I conclude with, It is rashness to search, godliness to believe, safeness to preach, and eternal blessedness to know the Trinity: yet let us know to praise the Trinity in the words of our Church; "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." And let all answer, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." —*Adams*, 1653.

(4810.) The Trinity is purely an object of faith, the plumb-line of reason is too short to fathom this mystery; but where reason cannot wade, there faith must swim. There are some truths in religion may be demonstrated by reason; as that there is a God: but the Trinity of persons in the unity of essence is wholly supernatural, and must be believed by faith. This sacred doctrine, though it be not against reason, yet it is above reason.

—*Watson*, 1696.

2. It is incomprehensible by us.

(4811.) As to the point of Divine *subsistence*, *Jehovah Elohim*, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: three persons, but one God; or in Leo's expression —*one God without division in a Trinity of persons, and three persons without confusion in an unity of essence*—it is a discovery altogether supernatural. Yea, nature is so far from finding it out, that now when Scripture has revealed it, she cannot by all the help of art comprehend, or set it forth as she does other things: grammar itself wanting proper and full words whereby to express; logic strong demonstrations whereby to prove; and rhetoric apt similitudes whereby to clear so mysterious a truth. The terms essence, persons, Trinity, generation, procession, and such like, which are commonly made use of for want of better, have been and will be cavilled at as short of fully reaching the mystery in all its dimensions.

Of the similitudes usually brought for its illustration that which Hilary said is most true. "They may gratify the understanding of man, but none of them exactly suit with the nature of God." For example, not that of a root, a trunk, and a branch, the trunk proceeding from the root, the branch from both, yet but one tree; because a root may for some time be without a trunk, and a trunk without a branch; but God the Father never was without His Son, nor the Father and Son without their co-eternal Spirit. Neither that of a crystal ball held in a river on a sunshiny day, in which case there would be a sun in the firmament, begetting another sun upon the crystal ball, and a third sun proceeding from both the former, appearing in the surface of the water, yet but one sun on all; for in this comparison two of the suns are but imaginary, none real save that in heaven; whereas the Father, Word, and Spirit are distinct Persons indeed, but each of them truly and really God.

Well, therefore, may rhetoricians say, "It is not in us and in our similitudes fully to clear this high point." Logicians also, "It is not in us and in our demonstrations fully to prove it." For however reason be able from the creatures to demonstrate a Godhead, yet it cannot from thence a Trinity, no more than he who looks upon a curious picture can tell whether it was drawn by an Englishman or an Italian, only that the piece had an artificer, and such an one as was a prime master in that faculty; because the limner drew it as he was an artist, not as one of this or that nation. So the world is a production of that *essence* which is common to all Three, not any *personal emanation* from this or that subsistent, which is the reason why a Deity may be inferred from thence, but not any distinction of Persons, much less the determinate number of a Trinity. The doctrine whereof is like a temple filled with smoke, such smoke as not only hinders the view of the quickest eye, but hurts the sight of such as dare with undue curiosity pry into it. A mystery which my faith embraces as revealed in the Word, but my reason cannot fathom. Whilst others run themselves on ground, and dispute it till their understanding be nonplussed, may I be enabled to believe what Scripture testifies! Verily this light is dazzling, and our eyes are weak. It is a case wherein the wisest clerks are punies, and the ablest orators infants. Yet is the mystery itself written in Scripture as it were with the sunbeams.

—*Arrowsmith*, 1602–1659.

(4812.) Our narrow thoughts can no more comprehend the Trinity in Unity, than a little nutshell will hold all the water in the sea.

—*Watson*, 1696.

3. Yet it is not incredible. [*See also* §§ 851, 852, 2229–2240.]

(4813.) Respecting the doctrines to be believed, it is objected that they are *mysterious;* they relate to persons and things in another world, which are therefore *hidden* from us. What, then, is to be done? Why, certainly, we must believe the account which God, by His prophets and apostles, has been pleased to give us: and we must form our notions of them, as well as we can, by comparison with those things which are the objects of our senses. Our state, with regard to God and the glories of His heavenly kingdom, is exactly like the state of a blind man, with regard to the sun and the light thereof. He cannot see the sun, or the light that issues from it; yet he would be unreasonable should he refuse to believe what his friends, who do see it, tell him concerning it; though, after all, they can give him but a very poor, imperfect idea of it. If it pleased God to open his eyes, and bestow on him the blessing of sight, he would know more of the matter in one single moment, than description, study, and meditation could have

taught him in a hundred years, or a thousand years, or ten thousand years. Such is our case. We cannot see God; we cannot see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; we cannot see how they are three, and how they are one. But shall we therefore, in opposition to the authority and word of God Himself, deny that they are so? We may reason and dispute upon the subject for ages: but in that instant, when we are admitted to His presence, and "see Him as He is," every doubt and difficulty will vanish at once; and we shall know—how little we *did* know, or possibly *could* know before.

Tell a blind man your sight can travel over the space of one hundred millions of miles as soon as it can move the distance of ten yards, how full of absurdity, contradiction, and impossibility must this assertion appear to him, who can perceive of motion only in slow succession! yet it is a certain truth; for let a person be led forth, in a clear night, with his eyes closed; on opening them he will see the remotest star in the firmament that can be seen at all as soon as he will see a candle at the distance only of a few yards from him.

This instance may serve to show how very ill qualified we are to dispute with our Maker concerning His own nature and existence, and the things of another and invisible world. Of the truth of revelation we have the most decisive evidence, of the senses, in the miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles, of which the eyes and ears of men were sufficient judges. Knowing, therefore, assuredly, that God hath spoken, and giving diligent attention to that which He hath spoken, it is our part, at present, to believe what we shall one day be permitted to see. —*Horne*, 1730–1792.

(4814.) A distinction in the divine nature, inconceivable by us but plainly revealed in terms, must be admitted upon the testimony and authority of Him who alone can instruct us in what we are concerned to know of His adorable essence. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one" (1 John v. 7). To each of these three the perfections of Deity are attributed and ascribed in various parts of Scripture. Each of them therefore is God; and yet we are sure, both from Scripture and reason, there is, there can be, but one God. Thus far we can go safely; and that we can go no farther, that our thoughts are lost and overwhelmed, if we attempt to represent to ourselves how or in what manner three are one, and one are three, may be easily accounted for, if any just reason can be given why a worm cannot comprehend infinity. Let us first, if we can, account for the nature, essence, and properties of the things with which, as to their effects, we are familiarly acquainted. Let us explain the growth of a blade of grass, or the virtues of the loadstone. Till we are able to do this, it becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

4. The difficulty of defining "Unity."

(4815.) The word "unity" is ambiguous and difficult to define. It may mean merely the numerical basis of calculation; the contrast between one thing and two or more things of the same kind. But if used in the sense of a unit, it is clear that every one thing is made up of many parts, possesses many qualities, stands in various relations, and though in itself only one thing, is also a part of many other things. By unity is often meant more than the antithesis of many. Though the unity of God means that there is only one God, in opposition to the claims of lords many and gods many, yet the phrase implies that whatever internal distinctions there may be in the essence of the Most High, that essence is one essence—a whole, a unity in itself. Unity is individuality in spite of the recognitions of the multiplicity of elements of which it is compounded. Thus a crystal of quartz of any magnitude is a unity distinct from all other crystals. It is one thing, as distinct from the hand that holds it, or the sun that shines upon it. It possesses a multitude of curious properties as long as it remains that one thing, pure and simple, undivided, and unanalysed. But let me dash it on a rock and break it into a thousand pieces, large and small, and it might soon be proved that every fragment, even to the minutest dust of quartz adhering to each one of the particles, was preserving the same peculiar shape as the original unbroken crystal, and possessed in its measure all its properties. Yet these fragments, though many, previously formed one whole. Consider, again, a tree or plant; its root and stem, its branches and leaves, and flowers and seed, form one whole of mysterious beauty; and though each twig and leaflet is a perfect creation, having an independent life in itself, yet the many parts do not fail to form a well-appreciated and comprehended unity. Further, playing in the branches of this tree there is a world of more mysterious life. Every leaf has its colony of insects, every bough its parasitical growth; the bees are humming in its fragrant flowers, and the birds are building their nests in its branches. But each lichen and moss, each insect and animalcule, each bee and bird, is as wonderful in its mysterious combination of many opposites, and subordinate and dependent structures, and wondrous balancing of powers, as was the forest tree itself. But while I am considering crystal and tree, and insect and bird, I find that I myself am just such a combination of many parts, faculties, passions, and relations, each of which is sufficiently individual, and yet the whole of which seem all but indispensable to constitute my self-conscious unity. I am a strange combination of body, soul, and spirit; and yet I am reckoned as one man in this world of ours. My senses, reflections, and passions, my body, understanding, and will, seem at times capable of individualisation, and to be unities in themselves; but it is the mutual relation and dependence of the parts that constitute the unity of the whole.

With this self-consciousness of multiplicity in unity to help me, the revelation that the blessed God has made of His threefold nature is less perplexing than it otherwise would be. The unity of the Divine nature, like the unity of all other things, is a unity consistent with the self-inclusions of various constituent elements. In the case of the Divine Being, the unity and the multiplicity are more expressly intimated and maintained than in any other unity, so that we actually use words which seem almost self-contradictory in order adequately to express that wondrous "unity in Trinity" which "neither divides the substance nor confounds the persons" of the adorable Godhead.

—*Reynolds.*

5. Various attempts to illustrate the mystery of the Trinity.*

(4816.) That Trinity is One God, not so that the Father be the same Person, who is also the Son and the Holy Ghost; but that the Father be the Father, and the Son be the Son, and the Holy Ghost be the Holy Ghost, and this Trinity one God, as it is written, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is One God."

Nor is it wonderful that these things are said concerning an ineffable nature, when even in those very things which we see with the eyes of the body, and judge of by the sense of the body, some such thing happens.

For when as being asked concerning the fountain, we cannot say that it is itself the river; nor, being asked concerning the river, can we call it the fountain; and again, the draught which is of the fountain or river, we can neither call the river nor the fountain. Yet in this trinity, we use the word "waters," and when the question is put concerning such, we answer of each, Water. For, if I ask whether it be water in the fountain, it is answered, Water: and if we ask whether it be water in the river, there is no other answer made, and in that draught no other answer will be possible; and yet we call them not three waters, but one.

Certainly, good heed must be taken, that no one so think of the ineffable substance of that Majesty as of a visible and corporeal fountain, or river, or draught. For in these the water, which is now in the fountain, goes forth into the river, and abides not in itself; and, when it passes from the river, or from the fountain, into the draught, it abides not there, whence it is taken. Therefore it may be that the same water belongs at one time to the term fountain, at another to the term river, at another to the term draught: whereas in that Trinity we said, that it cannot be that the Father at one time is the Son, at another the Holy Ghost: as in a tree, the root is nothing else than the root, nor the trunk anything else than the trunk, nor the boughs anything else than the boughs; for what is called root, that cannot be called trunk and boughs; nor can that wood which pertains to the root by any passage be at one time in the root, at another in the trunk, at another in the branches; that rule of the name remaining, that the root is wood, and the trunk wood, and the boughs wood; and yet they are not called three woods, but one wood.

Or, if these have some dissimilitude, so that they may be not absurdly called three woods, by reason of difference in solidity, yet that other at any rate all allow, if from out one fountain three cups be filled, that they may be called three cups, but cannot be called three waters, but altogether one water; although when asked concerning each several cup, you answer that in any one of them is water; although there in this case take place no passage, such as we were just now speaking of, from the fountain into the river.

But these instances in bodies have been given, *not by reason of their likeness to that Divine nature*, but because of the unity even in things visible, that it might be understood to be possible that some three things, not only singly, but also together, may have one single name; and that no one wonder, or think it absurd, that we call the Father God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God, and yet that we worship not three Gods in that Trinity, but One God, and One Substance. —*Augustine*, 353-429.

(4817.) Let no man deceive himself so as to say or to believe that there are three Gods, or that any person in the Holy Trinity is less mighty than other. Each of the three is God, yet they are all one God; for they have all one nature, and one Godhead, and one substance, and one counsel, and one work, and one majesty, and like glory, and co-eternal rule. But the Son alone was incarnate and born to man of the holy maiden Mary. The Father was not invested with human nature, but yet He sent His Son for our redemption, and was ever with Him, both in life and in passion, and at His resurrection, and at His ascension. Also all the Church of God confesses, according to true faith, that Christ was born of the pure maiden Mary, and of the Holy Ghost. Yet is not the Holy Ghost the Father of Christ; never shall any Christian man believe that: but the Holy Ghost is the Will of the Father and of the Son; therefore it is very rightly written in our belief, that Christ's humanity was accomplished by the Holy Ghost.

Behold the sun with attention, in which there is heat and brightness; but the heat dries, and the brightness gives light. The heat does one thing, and the brightness another; and though they cannot be separated, the heating, nevertheless, belongs to the heat, and the giving light to the brightness. In like manner Christ alone assumed human nature, and not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost: they were, nevertheless, ever with Him in all His works and in all His course.

We speak of God, mortals of the Immortal, feeble of the Almighty, miserable beings of the Merciful; but who may worthily speak of that which is unspeakable? He is without measure; because He is everywhere. He is without number, for He is ever. He is without weight, for He holds all creatures without toil; and He disposed them all in three things, that is, in measure, and in number, and in weight. But know ye that no man can speak fully concerning God, when we cannot even investigate or reckon the creatures which He has created. Who by words can tell the ornaments of heaven? Or who the fruitfulness of earth? Or who shall adequately praise the circuit of all the seasons? Or who all other things, when we cannot even fully comprehend with our sight the bodily things on which we look? Behold thou seest the man before thee, but at the time thou

* It is sometimes erroneously supposed that such illustrations as this are intended to *explain* how the sacred mystery in question is possible, whereas they are merely intended to show that the words we use concerning it are not *self-contradictory*, which is the objection most commonly brought against them. To say that the doctrine of the Son's generation does not entrench upon the Father's perfection and immutability seems at first inconsistent with what the words Father and Son mean, till another image is adduced, such as the sun and radiance, in which that alleged contradiction is seen to exist in fact. Here one image corrects another; and the accumulation of images is not, as is often thought, the restless and fruitless effort of the mind *to enter into the mystery*, but is a *safeguard* against any one image, nay, any collection of images, being supposed *sufficient*. If it be said that the language used concerning the sun and its radiance is but popular, not philosophical, so again the Catholic language concerning the Holy Trinity may, nay, must be economical, not adequate, conveying the truth, not in the tongues of angels, but under human modes of thought and speech.—*John Henry Newman*.

seest his face, thou seest not his back. So also if thou lookest at a cloth, thou canst not see it all together, but turnest it about, that thou mayest see it all. What wonder is it, if the Almighty God is unspeakable and incomprehensible, who is everywhere all, and nowhere divided?

—*Ælfric*, 1051.

(4818.) The sun which shines over us is a bodily creature, and has, nevertheless, three properties in itself: one is the bodily substance, that is the sun's orb; the second is the beam or brightness ever of the sun, which illumines all the earth; the third is the heat, which with the beam comes to us. The beam is ever of the sun, and with it; and the Son of Almighty God is ever of the Father begotten, and ever with Him existing, of whom the Apostle said, that He was the brightness of His Father's glory. The heat of the sun proceeds from it and from its beam; and the Holy Ghost proceeds ever from the Father and from the Son equally.

Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, may not be named together, but yet they are nowhere separated. The Almighty God is not threefold, but is Trinity.

—*Ælfric*, 1051.

(4819.) As there is in man the soul, the spirit, and the body, three distinct substances, which nevertheless do make but one man and not three; in the soul there is the mind, the understanding, and the will, but these do not make three souls, but one; in the sun there is the very substance of it, the heat and the light, and yet these be not thereby made three suns, but one; if the light and shining be taken from the sun, we should then see the body of it no more; and if the heat or warmth be taken from the sun, we should then not feel whether there were any sun in the sky or no: even so, if the Word and Spirit be taken from God, we should then come by no knowledge of Him at all; therefore, whereas the Son and the Holy Ghost are joined unto the Father, it doth further nothing to the making of many Gods, but to the manifesting of one true God in nature and essence, and three in persons and properties, which manifestation was to be spread throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel.

Like as the sun in the firmament hath three distinct and sundry things, of which every one differeth from the other—as the globe, the light, and the heat; and although every one of these keep severally their properties, yet it is but one sun, and is not divided into three suns: so, in the Deity, the unity of essence is not taken away by the distinction of persons, and yet for all that is there no confounding of persons or changing of one into another. For as there is but one sun in and through the whole world, no more is there but one God. And as the sun showeth himself by his beams: even so God, as Father, doth show Himself by His Son Jesus Christ, who is His Word and eternal wisdom. And as the sun by his heat doth make us feel his force: even so God maketh us feel His virtue by His Holy Spirit, which is His infinite power.

As reason, will, and memory are not three souls, but one and the same soul: so the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three, distinct in property, and yet one God. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4820.) In a fired coal there is the substance of the coal, the light of the coal, the heat of the coal, and yet but one fired coal: so soon as the coal is fired there are these three—substance, light, and heat. So in the Divine Essence, though in a more transcendent way, is there the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Again, it may be shadowed out in a man's self: as soon as ever he is born into this world he is a creature to God, a child to his parents, a subject to his prince, and yet he is but one. So, so soon as ever that God is—that is, from all eternity—He is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet but one God. —*Abbot*, 1562–1635.

(4821.) It is a threefold way in which God has revealed Himself to man—as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. First, as a Father in opposition to that doctrine which taught that the whole universe is God, and every part of the universe is a portion of God. He is the Father who hath made this universe—God distinct from us: outside of us: the Creator distinguished from the creation. Secondly, God has revealed Himself as a Son, as manifested in Humanity, chiefly in Christ. Throughout the ages past there has been a mediatorial Humanity. Man is in a way the reflection of God's nature—the father to the child. The prophets, the lawgivers, and especially Moses, are called mediators, through whom God's name was known. The mediatorial system culminated in Christ, attained the acme of perfection in one—the man Christ Jesus—the express image of His Father. The Son is the human side of the mind of God. Thirdly, God has revealed Himself as the Holy Spirit: not as a Father external to us, nor as reflected in Humanity still outside us, but as God within us mingling with our being. The body of man is His temple. "In Him we live and move, and have our being." This is the dispensation of the Spirit: He has told us that every holy aspiration, every thought and act that has been on the side of right against wrong, is a part of His holy essence, of His Spirit in us. This is the threefold manifestation made of Himself to us by God. But this is not all, for this alone would not be the doctrine of the Trinity. It is quite conceivable that there might be one Living Force manifested in three different ways, without its being a Trinity. Let us try and understand this by an illustration. Conceive a circular thin plate of metal; above it you would see it such; at some yards distance as an oval; sideways, edgeways, a line. This might be the account of God's different aspects: in one relationship to us seen as the Father, in another as the Son, in another as the Spirit; but this is not the doctrine of the Trinity, it is a heresy, known in old times by the name of Sabellianism or modal Trinity, depending on our position in reference to Him. Further, this is not merely the same *part* of His nature, seen in different aspects, but diverse parts of His complex being—persons—three causes of this manifestation. Just as our reason, our memory, our imagination, are not the same, but really ourselves. Let us take another illustration. A single white ray of light falling on a certain object appears red; on another, blue; on another, yellow. That is, the red alone in one case is thrown out, the blue or yellow in another. So the different parts of the one ray by turns become visible; each is a complete ray, yet the original white ray is but one. So we believe that in that Unity of Essence there are three living Powers which we call Persons, distinct from each other. It is in virtue of His own incommunicable Essence that God is the

Father. It is the human side of His nature by which He is revealed as the Son, so that it was not, so to speak, a matter of choice whether the Son or the Father should redeem the world. We believe that from all eternity there was that in the mind of God which I have called its human side, which made it possible for Him to be imaged in Humanity; and that again named the Spirit, by which He could mix and mingle Himself with us. This is the doctrine of the Trinity, explained now, not to point the damnatory clause of the Athanasian creed, but only in order to seize joyfully the annual opportunity of professing a firm belief in the dogmatic truth of the Trinity.

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

TRUTH.

1. Its characteristics.

(1.) *It is simple.*

(4822.) That is a very ill cause which wants colourable reason for it; that is a very ill reason which wants a Tertullus to plead it; and he is an ill Tertullus that wants words to defend it. Yea, error hath always most words, like a rotten house that needs most props and crutches to uphold it. Simple truth evermore requires least cost, like a beautiful face that needs no painting, or a comely body which any decent apparel becomes. We plaster over rotten posts and ragged walls; substantial buildings are able to grace themselves. We cannot but suspect that cause whereon the lawyer wastes so much of his time and tongue. Multitude of words is not unlike the thick painting in some popish church windows, a mere device to keep out the light. —*Adams*, 1654.

(2.) *It is harmonious.*

(4823.) All truths are reducible to an unity; like lines, they lovingly meet in one centre, the God of truth, and so far from jostling and clashing, that (as stones in an arch) they uphold one another. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3.) *It is self-manifesting.*

(4824.) Divine truth exerts on the mind of man at once a restorative and self-manifesting power. It creates in the mind the capacity by which it is discerned. As light opens the close-shut flower-bud to receive light, or as the sunbeam, playing on a sleeper's eyes, by its gentle irritation opens them to see its own brightness; so the truth of God, shining on the soul, quickens and stirs into activity the faculty by which that very truth is to be perceived. —*Caird.*

(4.) *It appeals to the understanding.*

(4825.) Though error, like a thief, comes thus in at the window; yet truth, like the true owner of the house, delights to enter at the right door of understanding, from thence into the conscience, and so passeth into the will and affections. Indeed, he that hits upon truth, and takes up the profession of it, before he is brought into the acquaintance of its excellency and heavenly beauty by his understanding, cannot entertain it becoming its heavenly birth and descent; 'tis as a prince that travels in a disguise, not *known*, therefore not *honoured*. Truth is loved and prized only of those that know it; and not to desire to know it, is to despise it, as much as knowing it, to reject it. It were not hard to cheat that man of truth who knows not what he hath. Truth and error are all one to the ignorant man, so it hath but the name of truth. You have, may be, heard of the covetous man that hugged himself in the many bags of gold he had, but never opened them, or used them; when the thief took away his gold, and left him his bags full of pebbles in the room, he was as happy as when he had his gold, for he looked not of the one or other. And verily an ignorant person is in a manner no better with truth, than error on his side: both are alike to him, day and night, all one to a blind man.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5.) *It is always and everywhere the same.*

(4826.) Truth is the same in all ages; not like an almanac, to be changed every year, or calculated peculiarly for one meridian.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

(6.) *It is infinite.*

(4827.) The Truth is infinite as the firmament above you. In childhood, both seem near and measurable: but with years they grow and grow; and seem further off, and further, and grander, and deeper, and vaster, as God Himself; till you smile to remember how you thought you could touch the sky, and blush to recollect the proud and self-sufficient way in which you used to talk of knowing or preaching "The Truth."

—*F. W. Robertson*, 1816–1853.

(7.) *It is invincible and immortal.*

(4828.) It lies not in the power of men, or malice of devils, to disgrace the truth; for it shall shine glorious, when heaven and earth perish, and all her maligners subjected under her conquering feet. It is of the nature that God Himself is, whose glory is not capable of any augmentation, nor passive of any diminution. He is said to be dishonoured by our sins, to be magnified and glorified by our good works. But let our works be good or evil, still Thou continuest holy, O Thou Worship of Israel. Whether the Turks despise Jesus, or the Christians adore Him, still He abides the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Such is the immutability of truth, the patrons of it make it not greater, the opposers make it not less; as the splendour of the sun is not enlarged by them that bless it, nor eclipsed by them that hate it. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4829.) Besides the men of weak nerve and strong fears, there are not wanting others who, from their observatory, tell us that sceptical philosophy is rolling onward to interpose between the orb of pure evangelism and the Church. It may be so, I am afraid it is so; but of one thing I am certain, and in that assurance I am as calm and confident as I am when looking upon the obscuration of the sun, that it will prove only an eclipse, not an extinction; and an eclipse partial, and not total. The great luminary of evangelic truth, sustained, irradiated, and guided by the hand of its divine Author, will emerge from the shadow, and hold on its resplendent course, when the cause of its temporary obscuration shall have passed away.

—*James.*

(4830.) There is vitality in truth. Neither the sword of the tyrant, nor the pen of the infidel, can

slay it. From both it is safe, under the protection of its divine Author. It still lives in the very region of death, incorruptible, indestructible, immortal. The seed which the Egyptians buried with their mummies, though enclosed in the catacomb, though held in the grasp or laid in the bosom of death for thousands of years, still retains its germ of vitality; and on being exhumed after its long interment, sowed in congenial soils, and exposed to the action of the heavens, vegetates as certainly and as luxuriantly as if but yesterday it had dropped from the plant. What are some churches but ecclesiastical mummies, in which the incorruptible seed of the kingdom has been shut up for ages in the icy hand of death, yet all the while retaining its own imperishable life, and when brought out from its grave, and sown in the earth, displaying its power and producing its kind? The doctrine of justification by faith, when brought by Luther out of the catacomb of Rome, was as vigorous and fruitful as when first preached by the great apostle of the Gentiles. Yes; and though now entombed in the rationalism of the continent, or the Puseyism of our country, it preserves even there the living germ, and shall come forth to prove its power and to produce its fruit. —*James.*

(4831.) The excellent Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was obliged to quit the city in consequence of the increasing persecutions; he went with his faithful disciple Crescens to the region in the vicinity of Smyrna.—And in the cool of the evening the bishop was walking under the shade of the magnificent trees which stood in front of his rural abode. Here he found Crescens sitting under an oak tree, leaning his head on his hands and weeping. Then the old man said, "My son, why weepest thou?" Crescens lifted up his head, and said, "Shall I not mourn and weep, when I think of the kingdom of truth on earth? Tempests and storms are gathering round, and will destroy it in its beginning. Many of its adherents have become apostates and have denied and abused the truth, proving that unworthy men may confess it with their lips, though their heart is far from it. This fills my soul with sorrow, and my eyes with tears." Thus replied Crescens.

Then Polycarp smiled and answered: "My dear son, the kingdom of Divine truth is like unto a tree that a countryman reared in his garden. He set the seed secretly and quietly in the ground and left it; the seed put forth leaves, and the young tree grew up among weeds and thorns. Soon the tree reared itself above them, and the weeds died, because the shadow of the branches overcame them. The tree grew, and the winds blew on it and shook it; but its roots clung firmer and firmer to the ground, taking hold of the rocks downwards, and its branches reached unto heaven. Thus the tempest served to increase the firmness and strength of the tree. When it grew up higher, and its shadow spread further, then the thorns and the weeds grew again around the tree; but it heeded them not in its loftiness; there it stood in calm peaceful grandeur—a tree of God."

Thus said the excellent bishop; then stretching out his hand to his disciple, he continued smiling: "When thou art lifting up thy eyes to the summit of the tree, wilt thou regard the weeds that cling about its roots? Trust in Him who planted it.

Then Crescens arose, and his heart was gladdened; for the venerable father walked by his side. Bent was he with years; but his spirit and his countenance were as those of a youth.

—*F. A. Krummacher.*

(4832.) It is defeat that turns bone to flint; it is defeat that turns gristle to muscle; it is defeat that makes men invincible; it is defeat that has made those heroic natures that are now in the ascendancy, and that has given the sweet law of liberty for the bitter law of oppression. Do not, therefore, be afraid of defeat. You are never so near victory as when you are defeated in a good cause. For then they had Christ when they kissed Him; but that kiss, so foul on Judas' lips, on the face of Christ shone like a jewel. Yes, then they had Him when they hauled Him before the Sanhedrim at midnight; but it was like a triumphal march. Then, when they led Him toward Calvary, they had Him. And then, when to the music of hammers they lifted Him up, and He hung suspended and groaning, and with implorations of unutterable agony died, and the heavens were dark, their victory was accomplished, and so was their everlasting defeat; for not till He died could He live, or we in Him. It was slaying Him that gave Him power. And so of everything that has the nature of Christ in it—every truth, every cause, every sanctity, every noble thing. Slay it if you can, and, like the gashes of Milton's angels, its wounds will close by the healing, heavenly virtues of its own nature, and it will stand forth with even greater power than before. —*Beecher.*

2. Its relations to goodness.

(4833.) The apostle joins the spirit of power and a sound mind together (2 Tim. i. 7). Holiness in practice depends much on a sound judgment. Godliness is the child of truth, and it must be nursed by its own mother. "Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4834.) God, who gives an eye to see truth, must give a hand to hold it. What we have from God we cannot keep without God; keep, therefore, thy acquaintance with God, or else truth will not keep her acquaintance with thee. God is light; thou art going into the dark, as soon as thou turnest thy back upon Him. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4835.) When men have orthodox judgments and heterodox hearts, there must needs be little love to truth, because the judgment and will are so unequally yoked. Thus, like a scolding couple, they may dwell together a while, but being dissatisfied with each other, the wretch is easily persuaded to give truth a bill of divorce at last, that he may espouse other principles better suited to his corrupt heart. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4836.) There is a natural affinity between all truths and all forms of goodness. They may be separable as they are distinct; but when any one great truth is held fast, it wards off some evil influences; when any good, loving habit is retained, it keeps the heart open to truth. In the highest sphere of being truth and goodness are one; and in our nature they are not easily disjoined. As the nerves of perception and sensation are distinct yet mutually dependent, as the rays of light and heat are distinct yet all but inextricably intertwined, while both are indispensable alike to the most

important functions of animal life and the development of organised existences, so truth and goodness by their commingled influence quicken and sustain the inner man, keep together their hold upon our spirit, and can only be held fast when thus conjoined. —*F. C. Cook.*

3. **Its relation to the human mind.**

(1.) *The mind craves for it.*

(4837.) The mind has its wants, and perhaps as numerous as those of the body. It longs for knowledge; everything that can be known is necessary to it; and nothing proves more clearly that truth is its pole-star, nothing perhaps reflects more glory upon it, than the charm which it feels, and sometimes in spite of itself, in the driest and most thorny investigations of algebra. —*Fontenelle.*

(2.) *Yet it is often unpopular.*

(4838.) As the friar wittily told the people, that the truth he then preached unto them seemed to be like holy water, which every one called for apace, yet, when it came to be cast upon them, they turned aside their faces as though they did not like it. Just so it is that almost every man calls fast for truth, commends truth, nothing will down but truth, yet they cannot endure to have it cast in their faces. They love truth when it only pleads itself, and shows itself; but they cannot abide it, when it presses upon them and shows them themselves; they would have it shine out unto all the world in its glory, but by no means so much as peep out to reprove their own errors. —*Senhouse*, 1618.

(4839.) Something sure is in it, that impostors find such quick return for their ware, while truth hangs upon the hand. And is it not this? that they offer to sell heaven cheaper to their disciples than Christ will to His? He that sells cheapest will have the most customers, though at last the best will be the cheapest; truth with self-denial will be a better pennyworth than error with flesh-pleasing. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4840.) Truth is so connatural to the mind of man, that it would certainly be entertained by all men, did it not by accident contradict some beloved interest or other. The thief hates the break of day; not but that he naturally loves the light as well as other men; but his condition makes him dread and abhor that which, of all things, he knows to be the likeliest means of his discovery.
—*South*, 1633–1716.

(3.) *It is difficult to fix it in the mind.*

(4841.) When Daguerre was working upon his sun-pictures, his greatest difficulty was to fix them. The light would imprint his image, but as soon as the tablet was taken from the camera the image vanished. At last he discovered a chemical solution which would fix the image and give him a permanent picture. So the truth is hard to *fix* in man's heart.

4. **Its importance.**

(1.) *All truth is important.*

(4842.) The doctrine of the gospel is like a bridge, by which alone men can go from this valley of misery to the regions of bliss and happiness; and the principles of religion, or truths of the gospel, are like so many arches which, united together, make up this bridge: and therefore these errors that overturn any of these principles do, as it were, cut out an arch from the bridge, whereby a breach is made, and the passage by it into heaven is either cut off, if the error be fundamental, or greatly obstructed, if it nearly concerns the fundamentals of religion. —*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(4843.) The least truth ought to be sacred to every one of us, who are called to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good; for, the loss of the least truth, whether you reckon it fundamental or not, is of dangerous consequence: the loss of the least divine truth, is as the loss of a diamond out of a ring; or of a jewel out of the Mediator's crown. The gospel is like a ladder that hath so many steps, or rounds; every truth is like a round of the ladder; and by these rounds we climb up to heaven: if you break off any round, you are in danger of falling; and your climbing up is rendered either difficult or impossible. The truths of the gospel are like stepping-stones over a deep water; take away any of these stones, and you make such a wide and dangerous step that you are in hazard of falling into the deep.
—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(2.) *Yet all truths are not all equal in value.*

(4844.) There is as much difference in the value of truths, as there is of coins: whereof one piece is but a farthing, another no less than a pound, yet both current, and in their kind useful.
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(3.) *Some truths are vital.*

(4845.) I can conceive a living man without an arm or a leg, but not without a head or a heart; so there are some truths essential to vital religion, and which all awakened souls are taught.
—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(4.) *The most important truths are within the reach of all.*

(4846.) God hath graciously ordered it, that the most useful and necessary truths for afflicted saints hang, as I may so say, on the lower boughs of this tree of life (the Bible), within the reach of a poor Christian, who is but of an ordinary stature in knowledge. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5.) *Seemingly slight departures from truth are not slight evils.*

(4847.) To take away from truth the smallest portion of itself, is paving the way for its utter loss and annihilation. In this respect truth resembles the insect which is said to die if deprived of its antennæ. Truth requires to be entire and perfect in all its members, in order to the manifestation of that power by which it is able to gain wide and salutary victories, and extend its triumphs to future ages. Blending a little error with truth, is like casting a grain of poison into a full dish; that grain suffices to change the quality of the food, and death, slow but certain, is the result. —*D'Aubigné.*

(4848.) The carpenter's gimblet makes but a small hole, but it enables him to drive a great nail. May we not here see a representation of those minor departures from the truth which prepare the minds of men for grievous errors, and of those thoughts of

sin which open a way for the worst of crimes? Beware, then, of Satan's gimblet. —*Spurgeon.*

5. Controversaries concerning truth.

(1.) *Are not to be entered upon rashly.*

(4849.) Every man is not a proper champion for truth, nor fit to take up the gauntlet in the cause of verity: many from the ignorance of these maxims, and an inconsiderate zeal for truth, have too rashly charged the troops of error, and remain as trophies unto the enemies of truth. A man may be in as just possession of truth as of a city, and yet be forced to surrender: 'tis therefore far better to enjoy her with peace than to hazard her on a battle: if therefore there rise any doubts in my way, I do forget them, or at least defer them, till my better settled judgment and more manly reason be able to resolve them.

—*Sir T. Browne*, 1605–1682.

(2.) *Are not to deter us from the service of God.*

(4850.) Though there be many sects and heresies, many false religions, and but one Truth, this must not make us neglect all till there be an universal agreement; for as well may we reconcile light and darkness, the children of God, with the children of the devil, grace and natural corruption, truth and error, as the true religion with those which are false, or the professors of the one with the professors of the other.

Those who have important business abroad do not stay at home and refuse to travel because some have gone out of the way. But therefore they are the more careful to inform themselves of every turning in their journey, because they would not err with others.

Those that have a desire to live do not refuse all meat because some surfeit and die by eating that which is unwholesome. But rather hereby they are made more wary in making good choice of such diet as is fit for the preservation of their health.

Those also who are sick do not neglect all physic because there are many cozening and unlearned empirics who kill instead of curing. But this makes them with more circumspection to find out a skilful and learned physician.

Let us therefore follow the like practice in spiritual things. And seeing there is but one direct way which leads unto heaven, and many by-ways which lead to destruction, let not this keep us from travelling this heavenly journey, but rather move us with more diligence to inquire the right way. Seeing also there are many who offer us poison, instead of the wholesome food and physic of our souls, let us learn with more care to make choice, and to put a difference between the one and the other. —*Downame*, 1644.

(4851.) Look thou takest not offence at the difference of judgments and opinions that are found amongst the professors of religion. It is a stone which the Papist throws (in these divided times especially) before our feet. How know you, saith he, which is truth, when there are so many judgments and ways amongst you? Some have so stumbled at this, that they have quit the truth they once professed, and by the storm of dissensions in matters of religion, have been, if not thrown upon the rock of atheism, yet driven to and fro in a fluctuation of mind, not willing to cast anchor anywhere in their judgment, till they see this tempest over, and those that are scattered from one another by diversity of judgment, meet together in an unity, and joint consent of persuasions in matters of religion. A resolution, as one saith very well, as foolish and pernicious to the soul, if not more, than it would be to the body, if a man should vow he would not eat till all the clocks in the city should strike twelve just together; the latter might sooner be expected than the former.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3.) *Are no excuse for an irreligious life.*

(4852.) *Objection.* There are so many ways and religions that we know not which to be of; and therefore we will be even as we are.

Answer. Because there are many will you be of that way that you may be sure is wrong? None are farther out of the way, than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners. For they do not err in this or that opinion as many sects do; but in the very scope and drift of their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you stop or turn again because you meet some cross-ways, or because you see some travellers go the horse-way, and some the foot-way, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and some miss the way? Or would you not rather be more careful to inquire the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful, would you take it well at any of the rest that would therefore be idle and do you no service, because they see the rest so bad?

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

6. How it is to be sought.

(1.) *Diligently.*

(4853.) Like as nature hath hid very deep in the ground stones precious and of much value, but others of no virtue are everywhere to be found: so things of estimation and price, as virtue and learning, are known but unto few, neither can they be obtained without great labour and study.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(2.) *Sincerely.*

(4854.) Let thy aim be sincere in embracing truths. A false naughty heart, and an unsound judgment, like ice and water, are produced mutually by one another. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(3.) *Impartially.*

(4855.) That man only stands fair for the entertainment of truth, who is under the dominion of no vice or lust; because he hath nothing to corrupt or bribe him, to seduce him, to draw him aside in his inquiry after truth, he hath no interest but to find the truth, and follow it; he is inquiring after the way to heaven and eternal happiness, and he hath the indifference of a traveller who is not inclined to go this way rather than another, for his concernment is to find out the right way, and to walk in it: such an indifferency of mind hath every good man who sincerely desires to do the will of God; he stands ready to receive truth when sufficient evidence is offered to convince him of it; because he hath no manner of concernment that the contrary proposition should be true. As in mathematics a man is ready to give his assent to any proposition that is sufficiently demonstrated to him, because he hath no inclination or affection to one side of the question more than to the other; all his design and concern-

ment is to find out the truth on which side soever it lies; and he is like to find it because he is so indifferent and impartial. But if a man be biassed by any lust, and addicted to any vicious practice, he is then an interested person, and concerned to be partial in his judgment of things, and is under a great temptation to infidelity when the truths of God are proposed to him, because, whatever the evidence for them be, he cannot but be unwilling to own the truth of that doctrine which is so contrary to his inclination and interest. —*Tillotson*, 1630-1694.

(4.) *Prayerfully.*

(4856.) We stand at better advantage to find truth, and keep it also, when devoutly praying for it, than fiercely wrangling and contending about it. Disputes roil the soul, and raise the dust of passion; prayer sweetly composeth the mind, and lays the passions which disputes draw forth; and I am sure a man may see further in a still clear day, than in a windy and cloudy. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(5.) *Courageously.*

(4857.) I persuade myself that the life and faculties of man, at the best but short and limited, cannot be employed more rationally or laudably than in the search of knowledge: and especially of that sort which relates to our duty, and conduces to our happiness. In these inquiries, therefore, wherever I perceive any glimmering of truth before me, I readily pursue and endeavour to trace it to its source, without any reserve or caution of pushing the discovery too far, or opening too great a glare of it to the public. I look upon the discovery of anything which is true, as a valuable acquisition of society, which cannot possibly hurt or obstruct the good effect of any other truth whatsoever; for they all partake of one common essence, and necessarily coincide with each other; and like the drops of rain which fall separately into the river, mix themselves at once with the stream, and strengthen the general current. —*Middleton*, 1683-1750.

(6.) *Perseveringly.*

(4858.) Let no man, upon a weak conceit of sobriety or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain that a man can search too far, or be too well studied in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works,—divinity or philosophy: but rather let men endeavour an endless progress or proficience in both: only let men beware that they apply both to charity, and not to swelling, to use, and not to ostentation; and again, that they do not unwisely mingle or confound these learnings together.
—*Bacon*, 1560-1626.

(4859.) The old tree adds a new ring to its girth each year, and the old mind can do the same unless it turns into a fossil. Humboldt began studying a language at eighty. —*Augusta Larned.*

7. Must be personally applied.

(4860.) Truths are food. If food be not taken, what good does it do without application? The word of God is a sword: what will a sword do if it hangs up in a man's chamber? or if it be not used when the enemy approaches? The application of the sword of the Spirit gives the virtue to it. It is to no purpose else. Divine truths are physic. If it be not applied, what use is there of physic?
—*Sibbes*, 1577-1635.

(4861.) If you carry a candle with you in the open air, you have to cover the flame with your hand, and to keep your eye upon it; any wind may blow it out. But a lamp is safe from the wind; and, if you carry it, your eye is left free. Truth that you only acknowledge, and have not secured by the habit of your life, is like the flame of the candle. You wish the aid of its light to guide you when out in dark places of the world; but, in order to shield it, you have so to look to it that you cannot see by it. Any wind of opposing influence may extinguish it. Put your thought into a habit, and instead of a glaring candle you will have a steady lamp. —*Lynch*, 1818-1871.

(4862.) Man's fickle mind treats universal truths that come from heaven as the eye treats the visible heaven itself. At a distance from the observer, all around the blue canopy seems to descend and lean upon the earth, but where he stands it is far above, out of his sight. It touches him not at all; and when he goes forward to the line where now it seems to touch other men, he finds it still far above, and the point which applies to this lower world is as distant as ever.

Heavenly truth, like heaven, seems to touch all the world around, but not his own immediate sphere, or himself, its centre. The grandest truths are practically lost in this way when they are left whole. We must rightly divide the word, and let the bits come into every crook of our own character. Besides the assent to general truth, there must be specific personal application. A man may own omniscience, and yet live without God in the world.
—*Arnot.*

(4863.) We, as Christians, have more than an *external* relation to Gospel truth—even an *internal* one. We have an external relation to every truth known to the mind—the relation of knowledge, of intellectual apprehension, of mental discernment. Such is the relation which thousands have to the truth of Scripture. Intellectually they believe it. They have a connection with Christianity, and yet are not Christians. They take the Bible very much as the ice takes the sun. They give it a surface-reception: they take it *upon* themselves, not *into* themselves. But the Christian takes the truth as it is in Christ, not as the ice, but as the earth takes the sun—*into* himself. His connection with it is not an external, but an *internal*, a *responsive* connection. When the sun comes creeping up the eastern sky in winter, how coldly he is received! The earth gives no greeting; makes no response as he approaches. His beams can send no thrill along the ice; can start no pulsation amid the snow; can quicken no energy in the leafless trees; can bring no flush to the face of the sky. He shines in vain, because his rays elicit no response, quicken no germinant power. And yet the ice, and snow, and trees, and sky have a relation to the sun, even in midwinter; but it is not a warm, lively relation, but a cold and lifeless one—an external relation only. So it is with many touching Gospel truths. It shines upon them; but it stirs no response in their hearts: it sheds itself down upon them; but they give nothing back to it: it brings them out of darkness, even as the sun brings the ice out of the gloom of night; but they keep their fixed, frozen, insensible state still. Their relation to it is a mere external, unsympathetic, accidental relation. But

consider the sun when he comes wheeling his way back from the south in the glad spring-season. How the earth hails him each morning with a greeting warmer and sweeter at each repetition! The ice repents of its coldness, and weeps its iciness away; the snow hurries along in rivulets, as if glad to lose its own life in ministering to others; the trees lose their rigidity, and no longer resist the breezes, but yield coquettishly to them: everything seems compliant. And how powerful the sun is! How the earth-pulses beat at his coming! How the ground thrills and heaves with up-pushing growth! How the grasses multiply themselves! and the flowers—how they bud and blossom! The leaves thicken along the landscape, and the earth hails the sun in its wealth of overflowing life. It is true the earth would be nothing without the sun; but how it glorifies him! how sweetly it responds to his solicitation! and how it pays him back for all his ministrations to it! Its relation to him, you see, friends, is far other than it was in winter. It is now an internal, a vital, a responsive relation—a relation powerful in its effects, and beautiful in its results. And so, when Christ comes up in all the glory and warmth of His love, stands over a man, and, in a thousand convictions and ten thousand promptings, sheds Himself down upon him, and the man opens his nature to Him, and receives Him, he is quickened in all the forces of his nature. He begins to flower out morally, and be clothed upon in beauty. His relation to Christ is no longer an external one; it is no longer inefficient; it is an internal, a vital, and a vitalising relation. He does more than apprehend truth; he loves it. Heart, hand, eye, every sense and faculty, are capable of new and happy sensations. Christ is no longer afar off, a being to discuss and speculate about; He is in him as the leaven is in the loaf—a power whose workings are felt, and whose effects are seen.

—*Murray.*

8. When once attained is never to be surrendered.

(1.) *Not even when its advocates prove inconsistent and unworthy.*

(4864.) Truths in many professors' minds, are not as stars fixed in the heavens, but like meteors that dance in the air; they are not as characters engraven in marble, but writ in the dust, which every wind and idle breath of seducers deface. Many entertain opinions, as some entertain suitors, not that they mean to marry them, but cast them off as soon as new ones come.

—*Gurnall,* 1617–1679.

(4865.) No man that is himself sober will think the worst name of whosoever shall have said the same thing were a prejudice to it, or should more oblige him to reject it, than we should think ourselves obliged to throw away gold or diamonds, because an impure hand has touched them, or to deny Christ, because the devils confessed Him.

—*Howe,* 1630–1705.

(4866.) You should be careful not to slight any truth because some weak person may happen to hold it, or some bad character may chance to defend it, or because it may be spoken to you in a wrong temper, or at an improper season. Recollect that a guinea is exactly of the same value to you in whatever way it is presented. Regardless of the mind of the giver, you would say—"Gold is gold." Now I only ask that you would, in the same way, reflect that truth is truth, and that truth will serve you where gold cannot. "Buy thou," therefore "the truth, and sell it not" on any account whatever. Stand by it, and it will stand by thee; truth is great, and shall prevail! *Cecil,* 1748–1810.

(2.) *Not even when it is assailed by doubt.*

(4867.) When the ship shakes, do not throw yourself into the sea. When storms of doubt assault spiritual truth, do not abandon yourself to the wild evil of the world that "cannot rest." The ship rolls in the wind, but by the wind advances. —*Lynch,* 1818–1871.

(4868.) We must not let go manifest truths because we cannot answer all questions about them. —*Jeremy Collier,* 1650–1726.

(3.) *Not even when its evidences are for a time obscured.*

(4869.) When, upon sober trial, you have discerned the evidences of the Christian verity, record what you have found true; and judge not the next time against those evidences, till you have equal opportunity for a full consideration of them.

In this case the tempter much abuseth many injudicious souls: when, by good advice and most sober meditation, they have seen the evidence of truth in satisfying clearness, he will after surprise them when their minds are darker, or their thoughts more scattered, or the former evidence is out of mind, and push them on suddenly then to judge of the matters of immortality and of the Christian cause, that what he cannot get by truth of argument, he may get by the incapacity of the disputant; as if a man that once saw a mountain some miles distant from him in a clear day, should be tempted to believe that he was deceived, because he seeth it not in a misty day, or when he is in a valley, or within the house; or as if a man that in many days' hard study hath cast up an intricate, large account, and set it right under his hand, should be called suddenly to give up the same account anew, without looking on that which he before cast up, when, as if his first account be lost, he must have equal time, and help, and fitness, before he can set it as right again. Take it not, therefore, as any disparagement to the Christian truth, if you cannot on a sudden give yourselves so satisfactory an account of it as formerly, in more clearness and by greater studies you have done.

—*Baxter,* 1615–1691.

(4870.) If a man came to you, and began by inuendos, and insinuations, or even by explicit assertions for which he offered proof, to endeavour to destroy your confidence in an old and tried friend, what would you do? Why, I suppose you would indignantly refuse to listen to that man; you would turn him out. So, I often think, it ought to be with an old tried doctrine, a vital part of our Christian faith. Might we not in such a case say?—"Now, I shall not listen to anything against that. I am sure it is true. I made sure of that long ago. I have my proofs at hand, ready for production: but once upon a time I went fully into them, and satisfied myself: and I will not be made restless and unhappy by having my confidence in that old truth assailed and shaken."

I do not say that the right course is the same for every one here. Doubtless there are those whose vocation it is to face and examine and answer each new objection as it is raised ; who have the time, the learning, the training, that are needful; who would shamefully fail of their duty if they failed to do so. But surely the ordinary believer, who can live by the faith of which he would make but a poor defender, may fitly say that there are truths about which he will not reason, as there are dear friends against whom he will not hear a word.

—*Boyd.*

(4.) *Not even when our reasons for holding it are disproved.*

(4871.) There is not one Christian of many thousands that at first hath a full sight of the solid evidences of the Christian doctrine; but must grow more and more in discerning those reasons for the truth which he believeth, which in the beginning he did not well discern. It is not the most confident belief that is always the strongest confirmed belief; but there must be sound grounds and evidence to support that confidence, or else the confidence may soon be shaken ; and is not sound, even while it seems unshaken. And here young beginners must be forewarned of a most dangerous snare of the deceiver, because at first the truth itself is commonly received upon feeble and defective grounds or evidence. It is the custom of the devil and his deceiving instruments to show the young Christian the weakness of those grounds, and thence to conclude that his case is naught. For it is too easy to persuade such that the cause have no better grounds than they have seen. For having not seen any better, they can have no particular knowledge of them. And they are too apt to think over-highly of their knowledge, as if there were no more reasons for the truth than they themselves have reached to, and other men did see no more than they. And thus poor souls forsake the truth, which they should be built up and confirmed in ; and take that for a reason against the truth, which is but a proof of their own infirmity. I meet with very few that turn to any heresy or sect, but this is the cause. They were at first of the right mind, but not upon sound and well-laid grounds ; but held the truth upon insufficient reasons. And then comes some deceiver and beats them out of their former grounds, and so having no better, they let go the truth and conclude that they were all this while mistaken. Just as if, in my infancy, I should know my own father only by clothes, and when I grow a little bigger one should tell me that I was deceived, this is not my father, and to convince me should put his clothes upon another, or tell me that another may have such clothes, and hereupon I should be so foolish as to yield that I was mistaken, and that this man is not my father. As if the thing were false because my reasons were insufficient. Or as if you should ask the right way in your travel, and one should tell you that by such and such marks you may know your way ; and think you have found those marks a mile or two short of the place where they are ; but when you understand that those are not the marks that you were told of, you turn back again before you come at them, and conclude that you have missed the way. So it is with these poor deluded souls, that think all discoveries of their own imperfections, and every confutation of their own silly arguments, to be a confutation of the truths of God which they did hold ; when, alas, a strong, well-grounded Christian would make nothing of defending the cause which they give up against more strong and subtle enemies, or, at least, would hold it fast themselves. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

9. Importance of a comprehensive and methodical study of truth.

(4872.) I beseech you, Christians, consider of this weighty truth ; it is not the knowledge of the truth that will serve your turns, without a true and solid knowledge of that truth ; nor is it the hearing or understanding of the best grounds and reasons, or proofs in the world, that will serve the turn, unless you have a deep and solid apprehension of those proofs and reasons. A man that hath the best arguments may forsake the truth, because he hath not a good understanding of those arguments. As a man that hath the best weapons in the world may be killed for want of strength and skill to use them. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4873.) It is a rare thing to have young professors to understand the necessary truths methodically. And this is a very great defect. For a great part of the usefulness and excellency of particular truths consisteth in the respect they have to one another. This, therefore, will be a considerable part of your confirmation and growth to your understandings, to see the body of Christian doctrine, as it were, at one view, as the several parts of it are united in one perfect frame ; and to know what aspect one point hath upon another, and which are their due places. There is a great difference between the sight of the several parts of a clock or watch, as they are disjointed, and scattered about, and the seeing them conjoined, and in use and motion. To see here a pin, and there a wheel, and not know how to set them all together, nor ever see them in their due places, will give but little satisfaction. It is the frame and design of holy doctrine that must be known, and every part should be discerned as it hath its particular use to that design, and as it is connected with the other parts. By this means only can the true nature of theology, together with the harmony and perfection of truth, be clearly understood. And every single truth also will be much better perceived by him that seeth its place and order, than by any other. For one truth exceedingly illustrates and leads in another into our understanding. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4874.) There has seldom been an error which did not include some important truth ; but just as surely as it included some truth, so it excluded others. And just as oxygen alone will never make the atmosphere, or hydrogen alone will never make the ocean, or red beams alone will never make the sun, so one fact, or one set of ideas, will never make the truth. A truth, by abiding alone, becomes to all intents an error.

—*Hamilton*, 1814–1867.

10. Its gradual development.

(4875.) God hath several truths for several ages and generations : as in a great house there are hangings for every room, and the hangings of this room are not fit for that, and the hangings of that are not fit for another ; so God hath several hangings of truth, to furnish several generations ; and those that are fit for this, are not fit for that. Says Luther : " I see many things that were not seen by

Augustine ; and those that come after me shall see many things that I see not." "Oh," says Augustine, "there is such a depth in Scripture, that I am ignorant of more things than I know." Ye see how it is in a room where there are many pictures; though ye see some of them presently, yet others have a silken curtain drawn before them, which ye see not immediately ; so here, though God do reveal much unto you, yet there is a silken curtain that is still drawn before some truths, and therefore even a good man may be much mistaken.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

11. New truths are to be welcomed.

(4876.) Pray, friends, why should we be afraid of new lights? for why should there not be new lights found out in the firmament of the Scripture, as well as the astrologers find out new stars in heaven? Be not afraid to set open your windows for any light that God shall make known unto you.

—*Bridge*, 1600–1670.

(4877.) It is a profound mistake to think everything has been discovered ; it is the same as to consider the horizon to be the boundary of the world. —*Lemierre.*

(4878.) Truth is many sided, like a cube ; and we should never be so tenacious of the aspect of it which is familiar to us, as not to be ready to come round and view it under another man's aspect. And as for lamenting that progress of thought, which is continually presenting the truth in different aspects, such lamentations are as foolish as they are fruitless. Must the forms of thought, which satisfied men in a former generation, necessarily content us now? Before they can be expected to do so, you must lay a prohibition upon the intellectual growth of the species, and bid the human mind, as Joshua bade the sun, stand still. —*Goulburn.*

WATCHFULNESS.

I. *EXPLAINED.*

(4879.) The term is one of varied significancy. It seems to mean, sometimes, only alertness ; then vigilance, or that state of attention to one's duty which we familiarly style *being wide awake*—a state in which a man is prepared for every instant duty. It signifies, also, outlooking, apprehension of danger, as when a sailor is on the outlook, or as when a sentinel is peering on every side, suspicious of some lurking foe. It also includes forecast, a kind of minor prophecy of prudence and sagacity, by which one anticipates dangers or needs, and provides for them before they happen. In short, watching includes every shade of that state which puts a mind in earnest to avoid evil and secure good. It represents a man roused up, and making his moral goodness an object of constant, thorough attention. —*Beecher.*

II. *WHY WATCHFULNESS IS NECESSARY.*

1. Because our enemy is always awake.

(4880.) Consider, the devil is always awake; is it time for them in the city to sleep when the enemy without watch, and may be are climbing the walls? Our Saviour takes it for granted that if "the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up ;" of all nights in the year, he would not then have slept. Would Saul have slept in his trench if he had thought David had been so near? or Sisera have lain down to rest if he had seen the hammer and nail in Jael's hand? "Hannibal is at the gates!" was enough to wake the whole city of Rome, and call them to their arms ; and is not "The devil is at thy door," enough to keep thee out of thy bed of sloth and negligence?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

2. Because no man is free from temptation.

(4881.) A countryman was riding with an unknown traveller (whom he conceived honest) over a dangerous plain—"This place," said he, "is infamous for robbery ; but, for my own part, though often riding over it early and late, I never saw anything worse than myself." "In good time," replied the other ; and presently demanded his purse and robbed him. Thus it is that no place, no company, no age, no person is temptation-free. Let no man brag that he was never tempted, let him not be high-minded, but fear, for he may be surprised in that very instant wherein he boasteth that he was never tempted at all.

—*Fuller*, 1608–1661.

(4882.) All men's faults are not written on their foreheads, and it's quite as well they are not, or hats would need wide brims ; yet as sure as eggs are eggs, faults of some sort nestle in every man's bosom. There's no telling when a man's sins may show themselves, for hares pop out of the ditch just when you are not looking for them. A horse that is weak in the legs may not stumble for a mile or two, but it is in him, and the rider had better hold him up well. The tabby cat is not lapping milk just now, but leave the dairy door open, and we will see if she is not as bad a thief as the kitten. There's fire in the flint, cool as it looks : wait till the steel gets a knock at it, and you will see. Everybody can read that riddle, but it is not everybody that will remember to keep his gunpowder out of the way of the candle. —*Spurgeon.*

3. Because we are never safe from temptation.

(4883.) If we would not be surprised and foiled by Satan, we must, after we have resisted him in one temptation, be prepared to withstand another ; we are not securely to give ourselves to rest, as though the war were at an end ; but as soldiers besieged, after they have sustained one assault and given the enemy the repulse, do not securely give themselves to idleness and sleep, but prepare all things ready for the next conflict, so we, in the intermission of the spiritual conflict, are to prepare ourselves for the next assault, using all means to confirm our strength where we discerned in the time of the fight we were most weak. Our enemy, like a roaring lion, continually ranges about, seeking whom he will devour ; his malice will not let him rest. Even when he seems to entertain a truce, he is most busy in plotting means whereby he may work our final destruction ; and, therefore, we are never more carefully to stand upon our guard than when this enemy seems to proclaim a peace, or fleetn away as though he were vanquished. The Christian soldier must avoid two evils—he must not faint or yield in the time of fight, and after a

victory he must not wax insolent and secure. When he has overcome, he is so to behave himself as though he were presently again to be assaulted. For Satan's temptations, like the waves of the sea, do follow one in the neck of the other; and when one is past, another is ready to overwhelm us, if, like skilful pilots, we be not ready to break the violence of that which follows, as well as of that which went before. —*Downame*, 1642.

(4884.) When the soul puts her danger furthest off, and lies most secure, then 'tis nearest; therefore labour to be constant in thy holy care—the want of this spoils all. Some you shall have, that after a great fall into a sin that hath bruised them sorely, will seem very careful for a time where they set their foot, how they walk, and what company they come in, but as soon as the soreness of their consciences wears off, their watch breaks up, and they are as careless as ever; like one that is very careful to shut up his shop strongly, and maybe sit up late to watch it also, for two or three nights after it hath been robbed, but then minds it no more. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

4. Because the path of duty is so narrow.

(4885.) He had need be awake that walks upon the brim of a deep river or brow of a steep hill. The Christian's path is so narrow, and the danger is so great, as calls for both a minute eye to discern and a steady eye to direct; but a sleepy eye can do neither. Look upon any duty or grace, and you will find it lie between Scylla and Charybdis—two extremes alike dangerous. Faith cuts its way between the Mountain of Presumption and the Gulf of Despair; patience, between stupidity and discontent. The like we may say of the rest. No truth but hath some error next door to her; no duty can be performed without approaching very near the enemy's quarters, who soon takes the alarm, and comes out to oppose the Christian. Ought he not then to have always his heart on the watch? —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

5. Because of the difficulty of the Christian's task.

(4886.) The Christian's work is too curious to be done well between sleeping and waking, and too important to be done ill, and slubbered over, no matter how. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

6. Because of the tendency of the heart to recur to its old sins.

(4887.) So long as you bear about these sinful bodies, never count any corruption to be so dead in you that you are perfectly safe from it henceforth. Much that seems dead, by a sad experience, will be shown to have been only sleeping; like snakes, which, frozen in winter, lose for a while their power to harm, appear as though there were no life in them, but, brought to warmth, can hiss and sting again. How many an old corruption is perhaps at this very moment thus torpid within us, which yet only waits the returning warmth of a suitable temptation to revive in all its malignant strength. —*Trench.*

7. Because one hour of heedlessness may be the ruin of the soul.

(4888.) A scrivener, after he has spent many days and taken much pains upon a large patent or lease, may at the last word make such a blot that he shall be forced to write it all over again. So some foul and enormous crime may dash and obliterate the fair copy of a virtuous life—may raze all the golden characters of Divine graces printed in the soul. As one drop of ink colloureth a whole glass of clear water, so one sinful and shameful action staineth all the former good life; all our fastings and prayers, all our sufferings for righteousness, all the good thoughts we ever conceived, all the good words we ever uttered, all the good works we ever performed, are lost at the very instant of our backsliding. —*Featley*, 1582-1644.

(4889.) We are always alert and watchful when carrying the body among its ten thousand adversaries. This is the only way for the body. Danger must be avoided, and not healed in its effects. Life is not long enough to afford time to patch up all the mischiefs which would ensue if one did not foresee and avoid danger.

But the soul is more sensitive than the body. It has a greater surface, it has more branches, it has more arms and feet, it has more nerves, it has more injurable attributes, than the body. It carries them, too, amidst flying missiles, countless, endless in succession. When the fire touches gauze, it is too late then to interfere; you must not let it touch it. When the rap is given to the crystal vase, it is too late then to save it; you must keep it free from the blow. When the frost has struck the flower, watching is then remediless: you must keep it where the frost cannot reach it. We must keep sensitive things free from rude contacts. That is true wisdom in practical life. And when this task respects the whole soul, and all its tenuous, invisible, super-sensitive faculties, how much more important is pre-vigilance! —*Beecher.*

(4890.) There is great need, also, of watchfulness on account of dispositions which act subtly, and whose nature is to be instantaneous. When a man has once got into the rapids at Niagara, the next thing he will do will be to go over the Falls. Having once got in, there is no possibility of his getting out. The way for him to escape going over the Falls is not to get into the rapids. When a man has once got a spark in his powder, he need not clap his hand on it to keep it from going off. It will do no good. The only way for him to keep it from going off, is to keep the spark away from it. Many men can let the cup alone if they keep away from it, who cannot if they go where it is. Many men can abstain from lust if they do not go within the circuit of its malaria, who cannot free themselves from it after they have once become infected by it. Many men can control their temper so long as they avoid everything calculated to arouse it, who have no power over it after it has once become aroused. Many of our dispositions must be taken care of beforehand—not afterwards. And when they have led us into wrong courses, our sin consists in the fact that we did not learn enough about ourselves to know that some parts of our nature were not to be exposed—that some parts of our nature can be carried with watching, with vigilant forelooking. It is as if there had been written, in letters of fire, on the signal-posts of life, by the hand of God, the words, "Watch! Watch unto prayer! Watch and pray! Watch unto the end!" to take away the excuses of men for the evils they

commit under the influence of their inflammatory dispositions. —*Beecher.*

III. *OUR VIGILANCE MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE.*

(4891.) A doe that had but one eye used to graze near the sea; and that she might be the more secure from harm, she kept her blind side towards the water, from whence she had no apprehension of danger, and with the other surveyed the country as she fed. By this vigilance and precaution, she thought herself in the utmost security, when a sly fellow with two or three of his companions, who had been poaching after her for several days to no purpose, at last took a boat, and, fetching a compass upon the sea, came gently down upon her and shot her. The doe, in the agonies of death, breathed out this doleful complaint, "O hard fate! that I should receive my death-wound from that side whence I expected no ill, and be safe in that part where I looked for most danger."
—*Æsop's Fables.*

(4892.) Watch *universally;* watch thy whole man. The honest watchman walks the rounds, and compasseth the whole town. He doth not limit his care to this house or that. So do thou watch over thy whole man. A pore in thy body is a door wide enough to let in a disease, if God command; and any one faculty of thy soul, or member of thy body, to let in an enemy that may endanger thy spiritual welfare.
—*Gurnall,* 1617–1679.

(4893.) The city cannot be safe, unless the whole line be kept, it is all one whether the enemy breaks in at the front, flank, or rear of an army; or whether the ship be taken at sea, or sink in the haven when the voyage is over. —*Gurnall,* 1617–1679.

(4894.) Many a city has been taken on its strongest side, which was counted so strong that no watch was kept, even as no danger was dreaded there. We think that we are not exposed to one particular form of temptation; let none be too sure of this; and in resisting one form of evil, never let us forget that there are others in the world. Fleshly sins may be watched against, and yet room be given in the heart for spiritual wickedness, pride, self-righteousness, and the like. The victories gained over the lusts of the flesh may minister to those subtler mischiefs of the spirit; and our fate may be like that of the hero in the Maccabees, who was crushed by the falling elephant himself had slain. There is a white devil of spiritual pride as well as a black devil of fleshly lusts; and if only Satan can ruin us, it is all the same to him by what engines he does it; it is all the same to him whether we go down into hell as gross carnal sinners or as elated self-righteous saints. Set a watch, therefore, all round your heart; not on one side only, but on all; for you can never be sure on which side temptation will assail. —*Trench.*

IV. *THINGS AGAINST WHICH WE NEED TO BE ESPECIALLY WATCHFUL.*

1. Our senses.

(4895.) Set a strong guard about thy outward senses: these are Satan's landing places, especially the eye and the ear. —*Gurnall,* 1617–1679.

2. Our weak places.

(4896.) The old Greek poet sang of Achilles that his mother dipped him when a child in the river Lethe, and thereby rendered his whole body invulnerable, except only his heel, by which she held him. He went to Troy, and wrought prodigies of valour in the war; till at last an arrow hit him in the one weak point, and he fell.

This old story has too often its parallel in the Church of God. Some veteran in the Lord's army, who has long fought bravely and successfully for his Captain, suddenly falls, and all men marvel at his fall. There was some weak point in his "breastplate." The devil saw it and smote him there. Thus it was with Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Peter, and a host of eminent saints since. Every Christian man, however holy, has one or more weak points in his character, and over these it behoves him to keep especial guard.
—*Aubrey C. Price.*

3. Little sins.

(4897.) The truly pious is never at rest in his mind but when he stands upon his guard against the most minute and unobservable encroaches of sin, as knowing them upon this account more dangerous than greater; that the enemy that is least feared is usually the soonest felt. For as in the robbing of a house, it is the custom for the sturdiest thieves to put in some little boy at the window, who being once within may easily open the doors and let them in too, so the tempter, in rifling the soul, despairs for the most part to attempt his entrance by some gross sin, and therefore employs a lesser, that may slide into it insensibly; which yet, little as it is, will so unlock the bars of conscience that the most enormous abominations shall at length make their entrance, and take possession of it. Let no man measure the smallness of his danger by the smallness of any sin; for the smaller the sin the greater may be the stratagem. Some have been choked by a fly, a crumb, a grape-stone: such contemptible things carry in them the causes of death; and the soul may be destroyed by sinful desires, idle words, officious lies, as well as by perjuries, blasphemies, and murders. Those who consider in how many ways a soul may be ruined, will not count it scrupulosity to beware of the least and slenderest instruments of damnation. —*South,* 1633–1716.

(4898.) Watch against *little sins.* So we call them; but in fact no transgression of the laws of an infinite and holy God can be really little. The authority they violate, the majesty they insult, magnifies their guilt. And little sins are the beginnings of great ones. The explosion is in the spark, the upas-tree is in its seed, the fiery serpent is in the smooth egg, the fierce tiger is in the playful cub. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:" and "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." By many little wounds death may be caused as surely as one deep gash. Yes, and through one small vein, if kept open, the heart's blood may flow not less fatally than through a main artery. A few drops oozing through an embankment may make a passage for the whole lake of waters. The tiny streams percolating the mountain side may gather in some hidden chamber until (with strength intensified by every inch of the watery column which enters it from above, though

that column be composed of but single drops) by hydraulic pressure it heaves up the solid rocks with earthquake strength. A green log is safe in the company of a candle; but if a few shavings are just lighted, and then some dry sticks, the green log will not long resist the flames. How often has a character which seemed steadfast been destroyed by little sins: Satan seldom assails in the first instance with great temptations. Skilful general! he makes his approaches gradually, and by zig-zag trenches creeps towards the fortress he intends at length to storm. —*Newman Hall.*

4. Our old sins.

(4899.) Watch against *old sins.* Sitting on a flowery bank, a viper crawled forth and bit us. Great were the pain and the peril before the wound was healed. Shall we carelessly choose that very bank on which again to rest? Would it be wise to let the pale primrose and the fragrant violet tempt us where deadly reptiles may still make their nest? Let us watch against the delusion that there is no longer need to watch. After a severe struggle the victory was won over our reigning lusts, and we fancy that the peril is past. But let us watch. The rebellion has been put down; but though its armies have been scattered and its prince dethroned, many traitors lurk in secret places watching for opportunities to renew the struggle. The embankment is weak where it once gave way; and though the breach has been repaired it must be diligently watched. The flames have been put out, but the ashes are still smouldering; and, if the wind rises, the fire may burst forth anew.

—*Newman Hall.*

5. Beloved and besetting sins.

(4900.) Look upon a city besieged, how wise governors will take care of every postern-door and of every part of the wall, and repair the least decays thereof, but if one gate be more likely to be entered than another, or if any part of the wall be weaker or more easily to be thrown down than another, they will be sure to set the strongest watch in that place where the danger is most. And so it is, or should be, with us in respect of our most precious souls: we have here a fort to keep, which is every day assaulted by our enemies, and we have a diseased soul of our own, distempered with many spiritual maladies; but some of them are worse than others, and some parts of the fort are weaker and more in danger than others are—that is, there are some sins, as sins whereunto by constitution of body we are most inclined, such as are Delilah, bosom-beloved sins, by which the devil more easily surpriseth and captivateth our souls; and therefore, as we should set diligent watch against all sins, so we should especially bend our forces against those that do or may in a more especial manner breed our harm and hinder our salvation.

—*Marshall,* 1655.

6. New sins.

(4901.) Watch against *new sins.* "We have turned every one to *his own way.*" But paths hitherto unattractive may allure us. Many a Christian, through lack of watchfulness, has been overpowered by temptations which, before his conversion, never assailed him. That we have never yielded to a particular sin is no proof that we never shall. No act of David's former life rendered conceivable the treacherous murder of his brave and faithful captain; nor could Peter or his companions have imagined that he, the most zealous of them all, would ever, through shame and cowardice, disclaim his discipleship. None can tell what possibilities of wickedness lurk within. We may indignantly ask, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Yet when the foe finds us slumbering there is no kind of sin by which we may not, like Peter, deny that we know the Lord. He is an unwise commander who plants no sentries in quarters which the foe has never yet assailed. While a show of attack is kept up on yonder bastions, and cannon vainly thunder against the main entrance over which the banner of the garrison flutters defiance, a small but resolute band, without drums and trumpets, without waving plumes and flashing scarlet, but with deadly weapons concealed beneath their gray disguises, are creeping unobserved amongst those rocky crags in the rear, which, because never yet scaled, were supposed to be inaccessible. No sentry above is peering down to detect the coming danger, and in the roar of the sham attack, the accidental noises made by the real assailants are unheard. And now they reach the summit and seize the citadel, while its commander still dreams he is successfully resisting the attack. Ah, how many a fortress has been captured on the side which seemed too safe to need defence!

—*Newman Hall.*

V. *TIMES WHEN WATCHFULNESS IS SPECIALLY NECESSARY.*

(4902.) Satan tempts after some discoveries of God's love. As a pirate sets on the ship that is richly laden, so when a soul hath been laden with spiritual comforts the devil will be shooting at him, to rob him of all. The devil envies to see a soul feasted with spiritual joy. Joseph's party-coloured coat made his brethren envy him and plot against him. After David had the good news of the pardon of his sin, which must needs have filled him with consolation, Satan presently tempted him to a new sin in numbering the people; and so all his comfort was spilt. —*Watson,* 1696.

(4903.) Be as careful, Christian, after extraordinary prayer, as a man would be after taking strong physic; a little disorder in thy walking may be of sad consequence. Thou mayest soon do thyself more mischief than all the devils in hell can do thee.

—*Gurnall,* 1617–1679.

(4904.) There are critical times of danger. After great services, honours, and consolations, we should stand upon our guard. Noah, Lot, David, and Solomon fell in these circumstances. Satan is a foot-pad: a foot-pad will not attack a man going to the bank, but in returning with his pocket full of money. —*Newton,* 1725–1807.

(4905.) Demean thyself more warily in thy study than in the street. If thy public actions have a hundred witnesses, thy private have a thousand. The multitude looks but *upon* thy actions; thy conscience looks *into* them: the multitude may chance to excuse thee, if not acquit thee; thy conscience will accuse thee, if not condemn thee.

—*Quarles,* 1592–1644.

VI. *MUST BE CONJOINED WITH PRAYER.*

(4906.) He that prays, and does not follow it with watching, is like him that sows his field with

precious seed, but leaves the gate open for swine to come and rout it up. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(4907.) Watchfulness without prayer is presumption, and prayer without watchfulness is a mockery; by the first a man invades God's part in this great work, and by the latter he neglects his own. Prayer not assisted by practice is laziness, and contradicted by practice is hypocrisy; it is indeed of mighty force and use within its proper compass, but it was never designed to supply the room of watchfulness, or to make wish serve instead of endeavour.

God generally gives spiritual blessings and deliverance as He does temporal, that is, by the mediation of an active and vigorous industry. The fruits of the earth are the gift of God, and we pray for them as such; but yet we plant, and we sow, and we plough for all that; and the hands which are sometimes lifted up in prayer, must at other times be put to the plough, or the husbandman must expect no crop. Everything must be effected in the way proper to its nature, with the concurrent influence of the divine grace, not to supersede the means, but to prosper and make them effectual.

And upon this account men deceive themselves most grossly and wretchedly, when they expect that from prayer which God never intended for it. He who hopes to be delivered from temptation merely by praying against it, affronts God, and deludes himself, and might to as much purpose fall asleep in the midst of his prayers as do nothing but sleep after them. Some ruin their souls by neglect of prayer, and some perhaps do them as much mischief by adoring it, while, by placing their whole entire confidence in it, they commit an old piece of idolatry and make a god of their very devotions. I have heard of one, and him none of the strictest livers, who yet would be sure to say his prayers every morning, and when he had done bid the devil do his worst, thus using prayer as a kind of spell or charm; but the old serpent was not to be charmed thus; and so no wonder if the devil took him at his word, and used him accordingly.

—*South*, 1633–1716.

(4908.) Let watchfulness and prayerfulness keep pace with each other. Some are very vigilant, but too self-reliant. They resemble a sentinel who, in the dark night, discovers the foe approaching, and goes forth alone to meet an armed multitude. They lift up brave hands against their spiritual foes, but do not lift up holy hands without doubting to the Captain of our salvation. Others are very devout, but not so circumspect as they might be.

—*T. K. Stevenson.*

(4909.) In respect to all your faults, you must watch. Prayer will not help you unless you have done that. It will not have time to help you. Praying is a good thing; but after the boiler is burst, and you are thirty feet in air, it is not exactly the time to pray. You should have watched the steam-gauge, and seen to it that the boiler did not burst. —*Beecher.*

(4910.) With this vigilance prayer is to be joined. When fleets near the coast at night, they give and receive signals. It is not enough that lighthouses warn them of danger; so they throw up rockets as signals, to be answered by other signals from the land. Now I think these signals are much like our prayers and the answers to them which we receive. God has set lighthouses of promises all through the Bible; but we want something more than these; so He permits us to throw up rockets of desire; and He signals back to us. Therefore watch and pray; watch as those that are talking with God; watch as those that have felt the affinity of God's soul with theirs, and are living as in the presence of the invisible One. Then watching will become easy; and then it will become potent.

—*Beecher.*

VII. *ITS ADVANTAGES.*

(4911.) In Tynedale, where I was born, not far from the Scottish borders, I have known my countrymen to watch every night and day in their harness, such as they had, and their spears in their hands, especially when they had any privy warning of the coming of the Scots. And so doing, although at every such beckoning some of them spent their lives, yet by such means they defended their country. And those that so died, I think that before God they died in a good quarrel. Shall we not go always armed, ever looking when our adversary shall come upon us by our slothfulness?

—*Ridley*, 1554.

(4912.) By thy watchfulness thou shalt best learn the evil of a sleepy state; one asleep is not sensible of his own snoring, how uncomely and troublesome it is to others; but he that is awake is apprehensive of both. So, while thou art spiritually awake, thou wilt observe many uncomely passages in the lives of drowsy professors, which will put thee on thy guard against the same drowsiness.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

VIII. *WATCHFULNESS AND HAPPINESS ARE NOT INCOMPATIBLE.*

(4913.) Watch unto prayer! Many have supposed that it was impossible to be in this state of watchfulness, and yet be a buoyant singing Christian. Just as though a man could not whistle while acting as a sentinel! Just as though he could not think of home, of his lady-love, and of a thousand things beside, while faithfully watching at his post. —*Beecher.*

IX. *A CAUTION.*

(4914.) Natures that are constitutionally overprone to vigilance, are apt conscientiously to redouble that which they do not need in such measure. They are of opinion that fear is almost a positive Christian grace. They not only set a needless number of sentinels about the dwelling of their soul, but they seem to frequent the company of the sentinels without more than that of guests that are, or should be, within. Many a man has little time for Christ inside, because he is so busy watching the devil outside. Theirs is a religion which is more in fear of evil than in enjoyment of good. There are a great many men that have never yet known the profound philosophy of the command: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." The way to overcome evil is, sometimes, to watch it; but a man who does nothing but watch evil will never overcome it. —*Beecher.*

WICKED. THE

I. *THEIR GUILT.*

1. They are practical atheists.

(4915.) As a scholar, if his master should stand in a corner of the school to watch what he will do, will behave himself while he seeth him not as if he were not there: he will play with his fellows and talk to them, as if there were no master in the school; so do the ungodly live in the world, as if there were no God in the world; they think, and speak, and deal with the world, as if there were nothing but the world for them to converse with. As for God, they know Him not, but carry themselves as if they had nothing to do with Him, and ask in their hearts, as Pharaoh once did, "Who is the Lord that I should serve Him?" And perhaps this made David say, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

2. Their moral nature is corrupt.

(4916.) The heart of the wicked swarms with sins like an ant-hill with ants. It is like a piece of bad meat full of worms. —*Vianney.*

3. They cleave to the world as the chief good.

(4917.) The heart of man cannot be in this world without a hope; and if it hath no hope for heaven, it must of necessity take in at earth, and borrow one there, such as it can afford. What indeed can suit an earthly heart better than an earthly hope? And that which is a man's hope (though poor and pedling) is highly prized, and hardly parted with; as we see in a man like to drown, and hath only some weed or bough by the bank's side to hold by, he'll die with it in his hand rather than let go; he'll endure blows and wounds, rather than lose his hold: nothing can take him from it, but that which he hopes may serve better to save him from drowning. Thus it is with a man whose hope is set upon the world, and who expects his happiness to be paid in from thence. Oh how such a one hugs and hangs about the world! you may as soon persuade a fox to come out of his hole, where he hath taken sanctuary from the dogs. Such a one to cast off his hopes! no, he is undone without this pelf, and that honour; it is that he hath laid up his hopes in, and hope and life are ever kept in the same hand; scare and threaten him with what you will, still the man's heart will hold its own. Yea, throw hell-fire into his bosom, and tell him this love of the world, and making gold his hope, will damn him another day, still he will hold to his way. Felix is a fit instance for this. Paul preached a thundering sermon before him; and though the preacher was at the bar, and Felix on the bench, yet God so armed the word, that he trembled to hear the prisoner *speak of righteousness, and judgment to come:* yet this man, notwithstanding his conscience was struggling with the fears of judgment, and some sparks of divine vengeance had taken fire on him, could at the same time be sending out his heart on a covetous errand, to look for a bribe, for want of which he left that blessed servant of God in his bloody enemies' hands; for it is said, "*He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him.*" —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

4. They reject Christ and His salvation.

(4918.) If a wretched thief shall have committed many thefts and murders, and after that his wicked deeds were known the son of a king should be brought to be arraigned and condemned for the same, and so bear the punishment thereof, and this thief to be discharged and pardoned—if, hereupon, the thief should rejoice and make a scoff at him, when he seeth a son of the king to be put to death and suffer the punishment that he deserved, such a caitiff deserveth a most horrible death: even so at this present it fareth with us. Behold our Saviour Christ, the only Son of God, is imprisoned, and we delivered; He condemned, and we pardoned; He put to death, and to all shame, and we received to honour. It is not, therefore, for us to be drowsy-headed, and live securely, and to flatter ourselves in our sins and iniquities. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

II. *THEIR FOLLY.*

1. In neglecting the great calling of their life.

(4919.) Do we count him a wise man, who is wise in anything but in his own proper profession and employment, wise for everybody but himself? who is ingenious to contrive his own misery and to do himself a mischief, but is dull and stupid as to the designing of any real benefit and advantage to himself? Such a one is he who is ingenious in his calling, but a bad Christian, for Christianity is more our proper calling and profession than the very trades we live upon: and such is every sinner who is "wise to do evil, but to do good hath no understanding." —*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

2. In sacrificing eternity to time.

(4920.) Take a man that is most addicted to his pleasures, and bring him to the mouth of a furnace red-hot and flaming, and ask him, "How much pleasure wouldst thou take to continue burning in this furnace for one day?" He would answer undoubtedly, "I will not be tormented in it one day, to gain the whole world and all the pleasures of it." Ask him a second time, "What reward would you take to endure this fire half a day?" Propound what reward you will, there is nothing so precious which he could buy at so dear a rate as these torments; and yet how comes it to pass, O God, that for a little gain, and that vile; for a little honour, and that fugitive; for a little pleasure, and that fading; men so little regard hell-fire, which is eternal? —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4921.) To them who believe another life after this, an eternal state of happiness or misery in another world (which is but a reasonable postulatum or demand among Christians), there is nothing in mathematics more demonstrable than the folly of wicked men; for it is not a clearer and more evident principle, that the whole is greater than a part, than that eternity, and the concernments of it, are to be preferred before time.

I will therefore put the matter into a temporal case, that wicked men who understand anything of the rules and principles of worldly wisdom may see the imprudence of an irreligious and sinful course, and be convinced that this their way is their folly, even themselves being judges.

Is that man wise, as to his body and his health, who only clothes his hands, but leaves his whole body naked? who provides only against the tooth-ache, and neglects whole troops of mortal diseases that are ready to rush in upon him? Just thus does he who takes care only for this vile body, but

neglects his precious and immortal soul; who is very solicitous to prevent small and temporal inconveniences, but takes no care to escape the damnation of hell.

Is he a prudent man, as to his temporal estate, that lays designs only for a day, without any prospect to, or provision for, the remaining part of his life? even so does he that provides for the short time of his life, but takes no care for all eternity,—which is to be wise for a moment, but a fool for ever, and to act as untowardly and as crossly to the reason of things as can be imagined—to regard time as if it were eternity, and to neglect eternity as if it were but a short time. —*Tillotson*, 1630-1694.

3. In provoking God to anger.

(4922.) Is it wisdom in any man to neglect and disoblige Him who is his best friend, and can be his sorest enemy? or with one weak troop to go out to meet him that comes against him with thousands of thousands? to fly a small danger and run upon a greater? Thus does every wicked man that neglects and contemns God who can save or destroy him; who strives with his Maker and provoketh the Lord to jealousy, and with the small and inconsiderable forces of a man takes the field against the mighty God, the Lord of hosts; who fears them that can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but fears not Him who, after He hath killed, can destroy both body and soul in hell; and thus does he who, for fear of anything in this world, ventures to displease God; for, in so doing, he runs away from men, and falls into the hands of the living God: he flies from a temporal danger, and leaps into hell. —*Tillotson*, 1630-1694.

4. In deferring repentance.

(4923) Is not he an imprudent man, who in matters of greatest moment and concernment, neglects opportunities never to be retrieved; who, standing upon the shore, and seeing the tide making haste towards him apace, and that he hath but a few minutes to save himself, yet will lay himself to sleep there till the cruel sea rush in upon him and overwhelm him? And is he any better, who trifles away this day of God's grace and patience, and foolishly adjourns the necessary work of repentance and the weighty business of religion to a dying hour. —*Tillotson*, 1630-1694.

5. In despising God's threatenings.

(4924.) "The wicked," says the Psalmist, "contemn God;" and why? "because they say, He will not require." Where, they ask, is the promise of His coming? Ah, they forget that it is as true of God's threatenings as of His promises, that although He delays, He does not deny them. A reprieve is not a pardon. It defers the execution; but does not necessarily cancel the sentence. And how many men in business, hard pressed for money, and tottering on the edge of bankruptcy, have known too well that the bill which they had got the money-lender to renew was not thereby paid? that, however often renewed, it has still to be paid? and that the oftener, indeed, it is renewed, with interest added to the capital, the debt but grows the larger, the payment grows the heavier? Just so shall it be with you if you persist in rejecting the Saviour, whom in God's name I now press on your acceptance. Every day of mercy here will but aggravate the misery of hereafter, and the reckoning, by being long of coming, will be the more terrible when it comes—as that storm roars with the loudest thunder which has been the longest gathering.

—*Guthrie.*

6. In thoughtlessly following the multitude who do evil.

(4925.) I remember a passage a gentleman told me he saw upon a bridge over the Severn. A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream, and the rest seeing him did one after another leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought that they might venture to follow their companions. But as soon as they were over the wall and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men—one dieth by them and drops into hell, and another follows the same way, and yet they will go after them because they think not whither they are going. Oh! but when death has once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were? —*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

7. In their heedlessness of the plainest warnings.

(4926.) Alas! how few thoughts do unholy wretches spend with themselves, in considering what is doing in another world? They see sinners die daily in the prosecution of their lusts, but do no more think what is become of them (that they are in hell burning and roaring for their sin), than the fish in the river do think what is become of their fellows that were twicht up by their gills from them, even now with the angler's hook, and cast into the seething pot or frying-pan alive. No, as those silly creatures are ready still to nibble and bite at the same hook that struck their fellows, even so are men and women forward to catch at those baits still of sinful pleasures, and wages of unrighteousness, by which so many millions of souls before them have been hooked into hell and damnation.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4927.) A recent traveller, relating the incidents of his voyage to India, writes:—"Flocks of greedy albatrosses, petrels, and Cape pigeons, crowded around the ship's stern. A hook was baited with fat, when upwards of a dozen albatrosses instantly rushed at it, and as one after another was being hauled on deck, the remainder, regardless of the struggles of the captured, and the vociferations of the crew, kept swimming about the stern. Not even did those birds which were indifferently hooked and made their escape, desist from seizing the bait a second time." Thus to the letter do ungodly men rush at the baits of Satan; they see others perish, but remain careless, and even when they are all but destroyed themselves they persist in their infatuation.

—*Spurgeon.*

8. In wasting upon trifles the time that should be used in securing the salvation of the soul.

(4928.) Miserable man, and art thou cutting thy short life out into chips, and spending thy little time upon trifles, when the salvation of thy soul is yet to

be wrought out? Art thou tricking and trimming thy slimy carcass, while thy soul is dropping into hell? What is this, but to be painting the door, when the house is on fire; for a man to be curious about trimming his face, when he is not sure his head shall stand a day on his shoulders! It was an unseasonable time for Belshazzar to be feasting and quaffing, when his kingdom lay at stake, and an enemy at the gates. It would have become a wise prince to have been rather fighting on the wall, than feasting in his palace, and fatting himself for his own slaughter, which soon befell him (Dan. v. 30). And it would become thee better to call upon thy God, poor sinner, and lie in tears for thy sins at His foot, if yet haply thy pardon may be obtained, than by wallowing in thy sensual pleasures, to stupify thy conscience, and lay it asleep, by which thou canst only gain a little ease from the troublesome thoughts of thy approaching misery.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

9. In using that time to prepare for themselves future misery.

(4929.) My children, if you saw a man prepare a great pile of wood, heaping up fagots one upon another, and when you asked him what he was doing, he were to answer you, I am preparing the fire that is to burn me, what would you think? And if you saw this same man set fire to the pile, and when it was lighted throw himself upon it, what would you say? This is what we do when we commit sin. It is not God who casts us into hell; we cast ourselves into it by our sins.

—*Vianney.*

10. In shrinking from hell but not from sin.

(4930.) You would not burn in hell, but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils in hell, but you will do that which will certainly procure it in despite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, "I will drink this ratsbane, or other poison, but yet I would not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, but yet I will not burn it." Just so it is with wicked men. They will be wicked, and live after the flesh and the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know, that the means do lead unto the end? and that God hath, by His righteous law, concluded, that ye must repent or perish? He that will take poison may as well say, "I will kill myself;" for it will prove no better in the end; though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it, and would not be persuaded it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceits and confidence that will save his life. So if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, "We will be damned;" for so you shall be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief or murderer that would say, "I would steal or kill, but I will not be hanged;" when he knows, that if he do the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done. If he says, "I will steal and murder," he may as well say plainly, "I will be hanged;" so if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, "We will go to hell."

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

11. In glorying in their prosperity.

(4931.) A man that is going to the gallows, for the present is well, has a great guard to attend him, an innumerable multitude of people to follow him. You would think that hardly could a man be such a sot and fool as to think all this should be done for his honour, and not for his punishment, and should only consider how he is accompanied, but not whither he goes. Many such fools there are in the world, that only consider how they are attended and provided for, but never consider whither they are going. "O wretch! whither goest thou?" we may say to one that should pride himself in the resort of company to his execution; "dost thou not see thou art led to punishment, and after an hour or two these will leave thee hanging and perishing infamously as the just reward of thine offences?" So many that shine now in the pomp and splendour of worldly accommodations, and are merry and jocund as if all would do well. Alas! poor creatures, whither are they going? "They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down into hell." Ye still live, and are going to punishment, but mind it not; but your wealth, and honours, and servants, and friends, will leave you to your own doom; and yet you are merry and jocund as if your journey would never end, or not so dismally; as if you were hastening to a kingdom, and not to an eternal prison. One moment puts an end to all their joy for ever.

—*Manton*, 1620–1667.

12. In mistaking their prosperity for an evidence of the Divine favour.

(4932.) No marvel if the worldling escape earthly afflictions. God corrects him not, because He loves him not. He is base born and begot. God will not do him the favour to whip him. The worlds afflicts him not, because it loves him: for each man is indulgent to his own. God uses not the rod where He means to use the Word. The pillory or scourge is for those malefactors that shall escape execution.

—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4933.) I do not wonder that the wicked think they have God's blessings, because they are in the warm sun. They are like little children, who think every one loves them that gives them sugar-plums.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

13. In expecting at last to be admitted to heaven.

(4934.) Is he wise, who hopes to attain the end without the means, nay, by means that are quite contrary to it? such is every wicked man who hopes to be blessed hereafter without being holy here, and to be happy, that is, to find a pleasure in the enjoyment of God, and in the company of holy spirits, by rendering himself as unsuitable and unlike to them as he can.

—*Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

III. *THEIR MISERY.*

1. They are ignorant of the Author of their being, the purpose of their existence, and the source of true joy; and are thus pitiable as moral idiots.

(4935.) An ungodly man knoweth not that which he was made for. He is like a knife that cannot cut; a ship that will not endure the water; a house

that is not fit to dwell in. What is a man's wit worth, but for its proper end? If man was made but to eat, and drink, and play, and sleep, and build, and plant, and stir awhile about the earth, and have his will over others, and his fleshly pleasure, and then die, then the ungodly may be called wise; but if he be made to prepare for another world, and to know, and love, and live to God, they are worse than bedlams, and more dangerously beside themselves.

—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

(4936.) Abraham sat one day in the grove at Mamre, leaning his head on his hand, and sorrowing. Then his son Isaac came to him and said, "My father, why mournest thou? what aileth thee?"

Abraham answered and said: "My soul mourneth for the people of Canaan, that they know not the Lord, but walk in their own ways, in darkness and foolishness."

"Oh, my father," answered the son, "is it only this? Let not thy heart be sorrowful, for are not these their own ways?"

Then the patriarch rose up from his seat, and said: "Come, and follow me." And he led the youth to a hut, and said to him: "Behold!"

There was a child which was imbecile, and the mother sat weeping by it. Abraham asked her: "Why weepest thou?"

Then the mother said: "Alas, this my son eateth and drinketh, and we minister unto him; but he knows not the face of his father nor of his mother. Thus his life is lost, and the source of joy is sealed to him."

Thus said the mother weeping; and Abraham went and preached the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. —*F. A. Krummacher.*

2. They are morally short-sighted.

(4937.) It is the misfortune of some to be afflicted with that kind of defective sight which prevents them from seeing to an ordinary distance; they are unable to distinguish the most towering and colossal objects if placed at a short remove, while the merest atom brought close to the eye is magnified as with a microscope. An affliction analogous to this in the moral sight, but pregnant with incomparably greater danger, is the universal malady of mankind; and our Lord insists on the urgency of its removal. He finds them mistaking phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms; calling an atom a world, and a world an atom; practising on themselves an endless succession of delusions; and He gives them the alternative of a remedy, or death. He approaches them while gazing on the near prospectus of time, and by raising and extending the point of sight He adds eternity to the view, and leaves them lost in the contemplation of a boundless eternity. —*Harris.*

3. They are excluded from the Divine promises, and exposed to the Divine wrath.

(4938.) He is Almighty to pardon; but He will not use it for thee an impenitent sinner. Thou hast not a friend on the bench, not an attribute in all God's name will speak for thee: Mercy itself will sit and vote with the rest of its fellow-attributes for thy damnation. God is able to save and help in a time of need; but upon what acquaintance is it that thou art so bold with God, as to expect His saving arm to be stretched forth for thee? Though a man will rise at midnight to let in a child that cries and knocks at his door, yet he will not take so much pains for a dog that lies howling there. This presents thy condition, sinner, sad enough, yet this is to tell thy story fairest; for that almighty power of God which is engaged for the believer's salvation, is as deeply obliged to bring thee to thy execution and damnation. What greater tie than an oath? God Himself is under an oath to be the destruction of every impenitent soul. That oath which God sware in His wrath against the unbelieving Israelites, that they should not enter into His rest, concerns every unbeliever to the end of the world. In the name of God consider, were it but the oath of a man, or a company of men, that like those in the Acts, should swear to be the death of such an one, and thou wert the man, would it not fill thee with fear and trembling night and day, and take away the quiet of thy life, till they were made friends? What then are their pillows stuffed with, who can sleep so soundly without any horror or amazement, though they be told, that the almighty God is under an oath of damning them body and soul, without timely repentance?

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

4. Their happiness is short-lived, and full of drawbacks while it lasts.

(4939.) In all their jollity in this world, they are but as a book fairly bound, which when it is opened is full of nothing but tragedies. So when the book of their consciences shall be once opened, there is nothing to be read but lamentations and woes. —*Sibbes*, 1571-1635.

(4940.) This world is indeed "present" to you, sinners, for you cannot say it will be yours the next moment. Were it not wisdom before you truck with the devil, to inquire what title he can give you to earthly joy? Ere long you will have nothing but *caveat emptor*. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4941.) Many sinners who seem so jocund in our eyes, have not such merry lives as you think for. A book may be fairly bound and gilded, yet have but sad stories writ within it. Sinners will not tell us all the secret rebukes that conscience from the Word gives them. If you will judge of Herod by the jollity of his feast, you may think he wanted no joy; but at another time we see that John's ghost walked in his conscience: and so doth the Word haunt many a one, who to us appear to lay nothing to heart; in the midst of their laughter their heart is sad; you see the lightning in their face, but hear not the thunder that rumbles in their conscience.

—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4942.) Who would think, now, that sees how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live, that they must very shortly lie roaring in everlasting flames? They go about their work as cheerfully, they talk as pleasantly as if nothing ailed them, or as if they were as far out of danger as an obedient believer. Like a man that hath the falling sickness, you would little think while he is labouring as strongly and talking as heartily as another man, how he will presently fall down, lie gasping and foaming, and beating his breast in torment; so it is with these men. They are as free from the fears of hell as others; yea, and for the most part, they have less doubts and disquiet of mind than those who shall

be saved. They are now in their own element, as the fish in the water; but little knows that silly creature when he is most fearlessly and delightfully swallowing down the bait, how suddenly he shall be snatched out and lie dead upon the bank. And as little think these careless sinners what a change they are near. The sheep or the ox is driven quietly to the slaughter, because he knows not whither he goes; if he knew it were to his death, you could not drive him so easily. How contented is the swine when the butcher's knife is shaving his throat, little thinking that it is to prepare for his death! Why, it is even so with these sensual careless men. They fear the mischief least when they are nearest to it, because they see it not.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

5. Their prosperity is short-lived, and an evidence of God's abhorrence of them.

(4943.) Prosperity to the wicked is as wind to a bladder, which swells it until it burst; like a ship when she is top and top-gallant, soonest cast away; like a spider in a king's house, soonest swept down. When a wicked man is at the highest, then he is nearest his fall; and usually when he is in the ruff of all his bravery, God so orders it that he is humbled on a sudden. —*De Trugillo.*

(4944.) The pleasures of the world are God's common gifts, which He bestows as well on the wicked and reprobate, as upon His own children and servants. Yea, in truth much more plentifully have the enemies of God and His grace enjoyed them, from the beginning of the world to this day, than those who have feared and served the Lord. For seeing they are to us, by reason of our corruption, like knives in the hands of children, and sweet and lickerous meats, whereon they are apt to surfeit; therefore the Lord suffering wicked men, as it were slaves and vassals, to take their liberty and use what diet they list, as not regarding their spiritual health and life, nor caring what becomes of them, has always had special care of His own children, dieting them with such a small pittance as they may well digest without impairing the health of their souls, and mixing these delicious drinks of pleasures in the bitter cup of afflictions, whereby He has still purged away these gross humours of corruption, when they began to abound with them through their dainty fare. . . . In which respect the Lord deals with mankind as the wise physician with his sick patients; those over whom he is most careful, in regard both of the love he bears them and the hope he conceives of their recovery, he straitly diets, forbidding them the use of those meats and drinks which, by reason of their disease, they love and desire; and gives them many a bitter potion and troublesome plaster, that he may hereby restore them to health; whereas contrariwise those whom he neglects, because their diseases are desperate and past hope of cure, are permitted to use what diet they list without restraint. And thus the Lord gives to His dear servants whom He intends to cure the bitter potions of afflictions, and restrains them from worldly pleasures which are so delightful to their carnal appetites; whereas He suffers reprobate men who are desperately sick in sin, to glut themselves with these fleshly delights, and to have their own carnal appetite as the rule and direction of their diet. —*Downame*, 1644.

(4945.) I have seen the wicked (saith David) in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. And why like a green bay tree? Because in the winter, when all other trees, as the vine tree, fig tree, apple tree, &c., which are more profitable trees, are withered and naked, yet the bay continueth as green in the winter as the summer. So fareth it with wicked men, when the children of God, in the storms of persecutions and afflictions, seem withered, and, as it were, dead, yet the wicked all that time flourish, and do appear green in the eyes of the world; they wallow in worldly wealth, but it is for their destruction; they wax fat, but it is for the day of slaughter. —*Spencer*, 1658.

(4946.) Suppose a man were in prison, committed for some great offence, and condemned to die under the displeasure of his prince or state; and his servant should come to him, saying, "Sir, be of good comfort, your wife is well at home, you have very sweet children, an excellent crop of corn, your neighbours love you dearly, your sheep and cattle thrive, and all your houses are in good repair and order." Would he not answer that servant, and say, "What is all this, so long as I am condemned to die?"

Thus it is with every wicked man. He is under the displeasure of the great God, a condemned man, and God is angry with him every day; and if his heart were open to be sensible of it, he would say, "You tell me of my friends, and goods, and name, and trade; but what is all this, so long as I am a condemned person, and God is angry with me every day I rise?" —*Bridge*, 1600-1670.

(4947.) Heaviness to a saint may endure for the night of this life, but joy will come in the morning of death; whereas, the freshest streams of sinful delights will end in a salt sea of sorrows and tears. The most prosperous sinner is but like a thief that goeth through a pleasant meadow to the gallows.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4948.) A striking illustration of the folly of counting God out of one's plans for life is given in the course of William M. Tweed, whose death is recently announced. Here was a man who sought wealth and power, and who for a time seemed successful in their pursuit. Apparently he did not propose to obey God or to live for a life to come. What he wanted was worldly prosperity. He thought he had it. He went to Congress. He gathered his millions. He controlled the material interests of the metropolis of his country. He openly defied public sentiment and courts of justice in the prosecution of his plans. He was a brilliant and therefore a dangerous example of successful villany. But the promise of prosperity for even the life which now is, is only to the godly. As William M. Tweed lay dying in a prison-house in the city he once ruled, his confession of bitter disappointment was, "My life has been a failure in everything. There is nothing I am proud of." If any young man wants to come to an end like this, the way to it is simple and plain. "The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool and rewardeth transgressors." "The way of the wicked He turneth upside down."—*American Sunday-School Times, April 20th*, 1878.

6. Their consciences are seared.

(4949.) As that man's disease is most perilous who lies sick and feels not his sickness, nor cannot

complain of one part more than another, for then the disease hath equally troubled the whole body: so, likewise, they who live wallowing in sin, so forgetting God and all goodness that they feel no remorse of conscience for their sins, are desperate, and almost past all recovery. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

7. Even to Divine influences they are insensible.

(4950.) Take a dead man, and put fire to his flesh, pinch him with pincers, prick him with needles, he feels it not; scourge him, and he cries not; shout in his ear, he hears not; threaten him or speak him fair, he regards not, he answers not. This is the condition of one that is spiritually dead in sin: let the judgments of God and terrors of the law be laid home to his conscience, let the flames of hell-fire flash in his soul, he regards it not; he is sermon-proof and judgment-proof. He hears of judgments abroad and sees judgments on others, nay, let judgments come home to his own doors, yet he thinks all is well. Like Solomon's fool, he outstands all reproof. Let the minister hit him never so home, "They have stricken me," says he, "but I was not sick; they have beaten me, but they might as well have beaten the air." Such and so deplorable is the sad condition of every senseless sinner. —*De Trugillo.*

(4951.) The prophet Isaiah, describing his wretched countrymen, in their state of apostacy and obduracy of heart, says of them, "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes." Present the most finished and beautiful picture before the eyes of a person asleep; he sees no more of it than if it was not there. And how often are the pictures of our sin and deformity, and the righteousness and beauty of the Redeemer, drawn by the pencil of the Spirit in the Scriptures of truth, how often are they offered to the understandings of men, who yet see neither? And why? Because "a spirit of deep sleep," induced by their attachment to something in the world, that comes in competition with the doctrines or precepts of the gospel, "is fallen upon them," so that, "having eyes, they see not."

Go into the chamber of him that sleepeth, and read to him a piece of the most interesting news, play him the sweetest notes on the finest instrument, or sound the loudest and shrillest trumpet: while he sleeps, he hears nothing. To as little purpose do the ministers of the gospel preach to the obdurate worldling the "glad tidings of great joy, that unto us is born a Saviour," or the awful tidings of as great terror, that "He cometh to execute judgment on all that are ungodly." The heavenly strains of love and mercy sounded forth by the harp of David, when breathed on by the spirit of the Holy One, or the piercing trumpet of eternal judgment, waxing louder and louder on the top of Sinai, are equally unheard by him. He sleeps on still, and takes his rest; and therefore, "having ears, he hears not."

Offer to the nostrils of one who sleepeth the most fragrant flowers that grow, the rose and the lily in their highest perfection, or the richest spices produced in the warmest climes: the flowers have no fragrance, the spices no odours for him. And are there not, who take no delight in that blessed Person, from the comfort and refreshment He affordeth to the drooping soul, as well as from His matchless beauty and perfection, styled "The Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valley"? who can perceive no "sweet-smelling savour of life unto life" in that gospel of peace, which is compared unto "myrrh, and frankincense, and all powders of the merchant"?

Open the mouth of him that sleepeth, and fill it with the choicest honey; you have no thanks from him, for he tasteth it not. As little relish hath one in a state of sin and worldly-mindedness for those promises which, when the penitent believer tasteth, he crieth out in transport, "O how sweet are Thy words unto my mouth: yea, sweeter than honey unto my throat!"

Lastly, a person during the time of sleep feels no wounds or bruises, and passes imperceptibly into the regions of death. And this is the very apostolical description of hardened sinners, who have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness: they are said to be "past feeling, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." —*Horne*, 1730–1792.

(4952.) The person spoken of (Eph. v. 14) is first said to be asleep; and surely this gives the idea of one who may be surrounded by danger without knowing it; may be approached by enemies without perceiving it; may have the assassin's blow aimed at his heart without attempting to repel it. In like manner, those by whom he is best loved may watch beside his pillow, and he is unconscious of their presence. "A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," may be spread before him, yet his appetite is not awakened; riches and honours may be placed within his reach, yet his hand is not stretched forth to grasp them. And why? Because he is asleep. His eyes are closed, his ears are dulled, his senses are locked up by the power of slumber; and forgetfulness of his best interest, and inattention to outward objects, have come upon him.

And thus is it with the unconverted man. He is surrounded by dangers which he heeds not; by enemies whom he regards not. The murderer of souls has struck at his heart, and he has made no resistance. He may be active in worldly matters, and eager for worldly objects; but he has no eagerness, no activity for spiritual concerns. Wrath, and that eternal, is even now pursuing him;—the bottomless abyss has yawned at his very feet—and is ready to engulph him;—the thunders of the law are pealing forth their denunciations against him;—and this immortal being remains heedless and unconcerned when there is but one step between him and the lake of fire. And there is an eye of love watching over him for good; there is a voice of mercy appealing to his soul;—there is the marriage supper of the Lamb spread, and he is invited thereto;—there are the unsearchable riches of Christ placed within his reach, with this encouraging inscription, "Ask, and ye shall receive,"—yet he hears not the voice which cries, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved;"—he sees not the bleeding form which stands between us and the stroke of Divine justice; the famished wretch hastens not to taste the feast; the beggar's hand is not put forth to lay hold on the boundless treasures. He is asleep; and feels not, sees not, hears not, knows not these things.

And yet he is often not devoid of strong feeling with respect to the things of this world; nor desti-

tute of regard for the decencies of life. He may find, or think he finds, happiness in this very forgetfulness of God; nay, in his own way, he may make a profession of religion, and have a dreamy prospect of salvation to be hereafter received. He thinks that he may now give his faculties to earthly objects and to self-indulgence,—that he may offer to God the service of the lip whilst his own passions and inclinations receive the adoration of the heart; —and he flatters himself that he is happy now, and that he shall, unconverted and separated from the love of God as he is, be happy in His presence eternally. Alas! how delusive is this dream, springing as it does from the sleep of carnal security. When for a moment he thinks seriously, he finds himself not really happy, and when that hour comes in which the unawakened sinner shall be called into the presence of his Judge, where shall be all the joys either on earth or in heaven, which he promised to himself; "It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he is faint and his soul hath appetite;" his anticipations were but a dream, founded on self-delusion, and ending in bitter and irretrievable disappointment. —*Kyle.*

(4953.) He is further said to be dead; and if the image of sleep expresses his unconcern about spiritual things, that of death denotes no less forcibly the absence of every principle of spiritual exertion, every source of spiritual good. He is dead, not bodily, but spiritually, "in trespasses and sins." He may indeed appear respectable and decent in his outward conversation; he may exhibit many virtues in the course of his life; but these, though they may deceive his fellow-creatures, are seen by the all-discerning eye of God to be "of the earth earthy." In truth, even as in natural death, there is a difference between one corpse and another in the tokens of mortality, in proportion as corruption has advanced more or less in the work of destruction, so is it with respect to spiritual deadness. Some appear still alive—others lately dead—others so full of corruption as to be absolutely disgusting; but these are only varieties, while the state in which they are is one and the same. They are bodies without souls, incapable of seeing, or hearing, or feeling, or acting—ready to return to the dust and never to move, or breathe, or think again, until they shall hear from their graves the voice of the Son of Man, and rise to stand before His judgment seat. And even thus there may be, and there are, many degrees of spiritual corruption between the open, abandoned profligate, and the amiable, pleasing, but still unconverted sinner; but no matter how dissimilar may be the way in which death has touched them, their state is the same, for "he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." In truth, the great want of the unconverted is, the absence of the Spirit of God from his soul; and whilst this is difficult, it is in vain that he may exhibit the most brilliant powers of fancy, the widest grasp of understanding, the hand open to the calls of poverty, or the heart warmed and affectionate to his family and his friends. Lacking the great principle of spiritual life; the love of God in Christ, these are but the embroideries of the pall which covers the carcass, but the flowers twined round that naked skeleton on whose dry bones the Spirit has not yet breathed. He feels not, and therefore struggles not against the burden of his sins, even as the lifeless body feels not, and struggles not against the mound that is heaped over its grave; and even as that corpse cannot raise itself again to life, so his condition, as expressed in our Tenth Article, "is such, that he cannot turn" and prepare himself by his own natural strength "and good works, to faith and calling upon God." He is dead—he is lost—and except a power from without himself quickens him, he is only preparing for "the second death." —*Kyle.*

8. They are led captive by the devil at his will.

(4954.) Thou who art in the kingdom of darkness, knowest not whither thou goest. As the ox is driven to the shambles, but he knows not whither he goes; so the devil is driving thee before him to hell, but thou knowest not whither thou goest. —*Watson*, 1696.

9. They carry with them the elements of misery.

(4955.) The wicked carry their prison about with them wherever they go; because their own heart is a dark dungeon, their passions adamantine chains, and scourges to the soul; whilst, on the contrary, those whom Jesus Christ has delivered, and who have renounced the world, experience the liberty of the children of God, even in the midst of bonds. —*St. Marthe.*

10. There awaits them a terrible hour when they will be undeceived as to their true state.

(4956.) Like as a man living in health, wealth, and all manner of pleasure, should have this of a sudden made known unto him, that he is condemned of treason committed against his prince and country, and that therefore he is forthwith to be deprived of life and of all those pleasures which he doth enjoy, there being no hope of pardon—we cannot fully conceive in mind, or express in word, the greatness of his grief, sorrow, and fear: even so much more grievous and fearful a thing it will be to incur the displeasure and anger of God, the loss of eternal joy and happiness, together with those endless pains which are prepared for the wicked. —*Cawdray*, 1609.

(4957.) The misery of such as have not God for their God, in how sad a condition are they, when an hour of distress comes! This was Saul's case: "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and the Lord has departed from me." A wicked man, in time of trouble, is like a vessel tossed on the sea without an anchor, it falls on rocks or sands: a sinner not having God to be his God, though he makes a shift while health and estate last, yet, when these crutches, which he leaned upon, are broken, his heart sinks. It is with a wicked man as it is with the old world, when the flood came; the waters at first came to the valleys, but then the people would get to the hills and mountains, but when the waters came to the mountains, then there might be some trees on the high hills, and they would climb up to them: ay, but then the waters did rise up to the tops of the trees: now all hopes of being saved were gone, their hearts failed them. So it is with a man that hath not God to be his God: if one comfort be taken away, he hath another; if he lose a child, he hath an estate; ay, but when the waters rise higher, death comes and takes away all; now he hath nothing to help him-

self with, no God to go to, he must needs die despairing. —*Watson*, 1696.

11. Their destruction is sure.

(4958.) A pack-horse, which all the day long hath gone noddling with abundance of treasure, hath at night all taken from him, and is turned a-grazing, or put into a stable, so that all the benefit he hath gained by it is that he hath only felt the weight of it, and probably got a galled back for his labour. Thus many rapacious, wretched rich men, such as are little better than pack-horses, who all their life long carry the things of this world, lade themselves with thick clay, rise early and late, and eat the bread of carefulness to get a little pelf, and a galled conscience to boot, are on a sudden either for ill using or ill getting their wealth, turned, unless God be more merciful, into a filthy stable, into hell, where their pay is everlasting torment.

—*Drexelius.*

(4959.) As the stone naturally inclines to the centre, the proper place and home; so the wicked are never at home, and in their proper place, till they be in hell. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4960.) "*Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker.*" 'Tis easy to tell which of these will be worsted. What can he do, but break his shins, that dasheth them against a rock? A goodly battle there is like to be, when thorns contest with stubble, and stubble with fire.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

12. Hence their temporary prosperity is not to lead us to envy them.

(4961.) Would it not be accounted folly in a man that is heir to many thousands per annum that he should envy a stage-player, clothed in the habit of a king, and yet not heir to one foot of land?—who, though he have the form, respect, and apparel of a king or nobleman, yet he is, at the same time, a very beggar, and worth nothing. Thus, wicked men, though they are arrayed gorgeously, and fare deliciously, wanting nothing, and having more than heart can wish, yet they are but only possessors: the godly Christian is the heir. What good doth all their prosperity do them? It doth but hasten their ruin, not their reward. The ox that is the labouring ox is the longer lived than the ox that is put into the pasture; the very putting of him there doth but hasten his slaughter; and when God puts wicked men into fat pastures, into places of honour and power, it is but to hasten their ruin. Let no man, therefore, fret himself because of evil-doers, nor be envious at the prosperity of the wicked; for the candle of the wicked shall be put into everlasting darkness: they shall soon be cut off, and wither as a green herb.

—*Ludovicus de Carbonensis*, 1579.

(4962.) When a soldier was to die for taking a bunch of grapes against the general's command, and going to execution he went eating his grapes, one of his fellows rebuked him, saying, "What! are you eating your grapes now?" The poor man answers, "I prithee, friend, do not envy me these grapes, for they do cost me dear;" so they did indeed, for they cost him his life. Thus, let no man envy the prosperity of the wicked, nor fret at the men of this world who live in pleasure and wallow in the sensual delights of this life; they know no better, they seek after no better things. There is little cause why any man should grudge what they have, for they must give a sad account of what they have received, and pay dear at the last—even without God's preventing mercy—the loss of their immortal souls to all eternity.

—*Burroughs*, 1599–1646.

(4963.) "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." There are snares in all their mercies, and curses and crosses attend all their comforts, both at home and abroad. What is a fine suit of clothes with the plague in it? And what is a golden cup when there is poison at the bottom? The curse of God always attends sinners walking in a way of wickedness. —*Brooks*, 1628–1680.

(4964.) O sirs, do wicked men purchase their present pleasures at so dear a rate as eternal torments! and do we envy their enjoyment of them so short a time? Would any envy a man going to execution, because he saw him in a prison, nobly feasted, and nobly attended, and bravely courted? or because he saw him go up the ladder with a gold chain about his neck, and a scarlet gown upon his back? or because he saw him walk to execution through pleasant fields, or delightsome gardens? or because there went before him drums beating, colours flying, and trumpets sounding? &c. Surely no! Oh, no more should we envy the grandeur of the men of the day, for every step they take is but a step to an eternal execution.

—*Brooks*, 1628–1680.

(4965.) The world is a stage; every man an actor, and plays his part here, either in a comedy or tragedy. The good man is a comedian, when, however he begins, ends merrily; but the wicked man acts a tragedy, and, therefore, ever ends in horror. Thou seest a wicked man vaunt himself on his stage, stay till the last act, and look to his end, as David did, and see whether that be peace. Thou wouldst make strange tragedies if thou wouldst have but one act. Who sees an ox, grazing in a fat and rank pasture, and thinks not that he is near to the slaughter? whereas, the lean beast, that toils under the yoke, is far enough from the shambles. The best wicked man cannot be so envied in his first shows as he is pitiable in the conclusion. —*Hall*, 1574–1656.

(4966.) Let us not envy the prosperity of the wicked. They are the wicked of the earth; here they flourish. As nettles will more easily grow than choicer plants, the soil brings them forth of its own accord, so do wicked men thrive here. But you need not envy them; not only our hopes are much better than their possessions, but our present condition is much better. (Ps. xvii. 14.)

"Fret not thyself because of the evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither like the green herb." Though they seem to be in a very prosperous condition for the present—as grass, while it is standing, is very green—yet they are soon cut down by the scythe of Providence, then presently fade, and are carried away from the place where they grew. You think Providence does not deal righteously because the unworthy are exalted, and the worthy depressed. Do but tarry awhile, and you will have no cause to complain, or to grow weary of godliness, or to cry up a confederacy with evil men; they are never

nearer their own ruin than when they come to the height of their exaltation, as the sun declines presently when he comes to the highest point of the zenith. Who would envy those that climb up a ladder for execution; or are carried to the top of a rock that they may be thrown down from thence to be broken in pieces? "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places, Thou didst cast them down into destruction." —*Manton*, 1620-1667.

WORLD. THE.

I. *ITS HONOURS AND PLEASURES.*

1. We can call very few of them really our own.

(4967.) He that is the greatest possessor in the world enjoys its best and most noble parts, and those which are of most excellent perfection, but in common with inferior persons, and the most despicable of his kingdom. Can the greatest prince enclose the sun, and set one little star in his cabinet for his own use, or secure to himself the gentle and benign influences of one constellation? Are not his subjects' fields bedewed with the same showers that water his pleasure garden?

Nay, those things which he esteems his ornament, and the singularity of his possessions, are they not of more use to others than to himself? For suppose his garments splendid and shining, like the robe of a cherub, or the clothing of the fields; all that he that wears them enjoys is, that they keep him warm, and clean, and modest; and all this is done by clean and less pompous vestments; and the beauty of them, which distinguishes him from others, is made to please the eyes of the beholders; and he is like a fair bird, or the meretricious painting of a wanton woman, made wholly to be looked on, that is, to be enjoyed by every one but himself: and the fairest face and the sparkling eye cannot perceive or enjoy their own beauties but by reflection. It is I that am pleased with beholding his gaiety; and the gay man, in his greatest bravery, is only pleased because I am pleased with the sight; so borrowing his little and imaginary complacency from the delight that I have, not from any inherency of his own possession.

The poorest artisan of Rome, walking in Cæsar's gardens, had the same pleasures which they ministered to his lord; and although it may be, he was put to gather fruits to eat from another place, yet his other senses were delighted equally with Cæsar's; the birds made him as sweet music, the flowers gave him as sweet smells; he there sucked as good air and delighted in the beauty and order of the place, for the same reason and on the same perception as the prince himself; save, only, that Cæsar paid for all that pleasure vast sums of money, the blood and treasure of a province, which the poor man had for nothing.

—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612-1667.

(4968.) Suppose a man lord of all the world: yet, since everything is received, not according to its own greatness and worth, but according to the capacity of the receiver, it signifies very little as to our content or to the riches of our possession. If any man should give to a lion a fair meadowful of hay, or a thousand quince trees; or should give to goodly bull, the master and fairest of the whole herd, a thousand fair stags; if a man should present to a child a ship laden with Persian carpets, and the ingredients of the rich scarlet; all these being disproportionate either to the appetite or the understanding, could add nothing to the content, and might declare the freeness of the giver, but they upbraid the incapacity of the receiver. And so it does if God should give the whole world to any man; he can use nothing but meat, and drink, and clothes; and infinite riches, that can give him changes of raiment every day and a full table, do but give him a clean trencher every bit he eats; it signifies no more but wantonness and variety, to the same, not to any new purposes. He to whom the world can be given to any purpose greater than a private estate can minister, must have new capacities created in him; he needs the understanding of an angel, to take the accounts of his estate; he had need have a stomach like fire or the grave, for else he can eat no more than one of his healthful subjects; and unless he hath an eye like the sun, and a motion like that of a thought, and a bulk as big as one of the orbs of heaven, the pleasures of his eye can be no greater than to behold the beauty of a little prospect from a hill, or to look on the heap of gold packed up in a little room, or to dote on a cabinet of jewels, better than which there is no man that sees at all, but sees every day. For, not to name the beauties and sparkling diamonds of heaven, a man's, or a woman's, or a hawk's eye, is more beauteous and excellent than all the jewels of his crown. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612-1667.

2. They are unsatisfying.

(4969.) Let us not foolishly imagine that our minds can be satisfied and filled with worldly vanities, nor greedily affect and seek after a greater measure, when we are not satisfied with a less, supposing that the access of quantity may bring contentment; seeing the hunger which we feel in our hearts proceeds not from want of earthly abundance, but because it is unnatural nourishment for the mind of man, so that it can no more satisfy our souls' hunger, than it can satisfy our bodies to feed upon the wind. And therefore as his folly were ridiculous, who being an hungered should seek to satisfy his appetite by gaping after the wind, and finding that a lesser gale would not suffice, should run to the windmill to receive a greater: so no less foolish are those worldly men, who, finding their hearts empty and tormented with the hunger of greedy concupiscence, do think to stay their appetite by feeding upon this wind of worldly vanities; and failing of their expectation in a lesser quantity, think to attain unto their hope, when they have heaped up to themselves a greater. For the defect is not in the matter, but in the nature and quality of the nourishment, there being no similitude or proportion between a spiritual soul and corporal substances.

They do indeed for the present seem to satisfy and assuage the hunger, but afterwards it is enraged with greater greediness; even as cold drink doth give some present cooling and refreshing to him who is in a fit of burning fever, but soon after the heat returning with greater violence brings with it more intolerable thirst. And as the fire, at the first casting on of wood or oil, has for the instant the heat thereof somewhat abated, but presently after, having caught hold of the matter, it waxes much more hot than it was before: so worldly men pursuing these earthly vanities, after they have attained unto their hopes, have for the instant some

contentment; but within awhile the rage of their concupiscence revives and increases, tormenting their souls with more unquenchable thirstiness than that which they felt before they tasted them.

If, therefore, we would have such sufficiency of these worldly things as may bring contentment, we must attain unto it by moderating our affections, rather than by multiplying these vanities. If we would have this aguish thirst slaked and abated, it must not be by larger drinking of these unsatisfying drinks, which will but increase our appetite, but by purging away the fretting choler of worldly concupiscence, which is the true cause of our insatiableness; and if we would have this devouring fire of our greedy desires quenched, let us not foolishly heap upon it more of that matter whereby it is nourished, but rather cast on it the water of careless contempt, whereby this flaming heat will be soon extinguished.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(4970.) The world is like sharp sauce, which doth not fill, but provoke the stomach to call for more. The voice of those guests whom it makes most welcome is like the daughters of the horseleech, "Give, give;" but the infinite God, like solid food, doth satisfy the soul fully ("in my Father's house is bread enough"), and causeth it to cry out, "I have enough." —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4971.) The countryman in the fable would needs stay till the river was run away, and then go over dry-shod; but the river still ran on, and he was deceived in his expectation. Such are the worldling's inordinate desires. The deceitful heart promises to see them run over and gone, when they are attained to such a measure; and then they are stronger and wider, more potent and unruly than before. For a covetous heart grasps at no less than the whole world; would fain be master of all, and dwell alone, like a wen in the body, which draws all to itself; let it never have so much, it will reach after more, add house to house, and field to field, till there be no more place to compass; like a bladder, it swells wider and wider, the more of this empty world is put into it; so boundless, so endless, so inordinate are the corrupt desires of worldly-minded men.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(4972.) Men that are in the valley think, if they were at the top of such a hill, they should touch the heavens. Men that are in the bottom of poverty, or disgrace, or pain, think, if they could get up to such a mountain, such a measure of riches, and honours, and delights, they could reach happiness. Now Solomon had got to the top of this hill, and seeing so many scrambling and labouring so hard, nay, riding on one another's necks, and pressing one another to death to get foremost, doth seem thus to bespeak them: "Sirs, ye are all deceived in your expectations; I see the pains ye take to get up to this place, thinking, that when you come hither, ye shall touch the heavens, and reach happiness: but I am before you at the top of the hill—I have treasures, and honours, and pleasures in variety and abundance (Eccles. ii. 11, 12), and I find the hill full of quagmires instead of delights, and so far from giving me satisfaction, that it causeth much vexation; therefore be advised to spare your pains, and spend your strength for that which will turn to more profit; for, believe it, you do but work at the labour in vain." "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," saith the Preacher. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4973.) Worldly comforts, though sweet, yet in time grow stale: a down-bed pleaseth awhile, but within awhile we are weary and would rise.

—*Watson*, 1696.

(4974.) The following extract from a letter of a late nobleman of loose principles, well known in the gay world (Lord Chesterfield), and published as authentic by a respectable prelate deceased, will show the dreadful vacancy and wretchedness of a mind left to itself in the decline of life, and unsupported by Christian principle:—"I have seen the silly round of business and pleasure, and have done with it all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which in truth is very low; whereas those who have not experienced always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of the ignorant audience. When I reflect on what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I cannot persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry of bustle and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look on all that is past as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions, and I do by no means wish to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation that most men boast? No, sir, I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that time is become my enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey."

—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754–1815.

3. They are transitory.

(4975.) It was a custom in Rome, that when the emperor went by upon some grand day in all his imperial pomp, there was an officer appointed to burn flax before him, crying out: *Sic transit gloria mundi!* which was purposely done to put him in mind that all his honour and grandeur should soon vanish and pass away, like the nimble smoke raised from that burning flax. And it was a good meditation that one had, standing by a river side, says he: The water which I see now runs away, and I see it no more; and the comforts of this world are like this running water, still gliding and running away from us. Those bitter sweets that the world doth, or can present, are but like smoke, that soon vanisheth away; coming to us with sparrows' wings, slowly and with much difficulty; but flying away with eagles' wings, hardly discoverable which way, or how they took their flight on such a sudden. It must therefore be our care so to use this world as if we used it not, for the fashion of it passeth away; and seeing we cannot enjoy the comforts thereof any long time, let us use them well to God's glory that gave them, and not abuse them to our own prejudice. —*Wolfgangius Lazius.*

(4976.) The great conqueror of the world (Alexander) caused to be painted on a table a sword in

the compass of a wheel, showing thereby that what he had gotten by the sword was subject to be turned about by the wheel of Fortune. Such is the condition of all things here below, whether they be riches, honours, or preferments: there is no more hold to be had of them than Saul had of Samuel's lap; they do but, like the rainbow, show themselves in all their dainty colours, and then vanish away; and if by chance they stay with us as long as death, they do but, like St. Paul's friends, bring us to the grave, as they brought him to the ship, and there leave us. So uncertain, deceitful, unconstant, are the things of this world to the owners thereof.

—*Shute*, 1627.

(4977.) The beauty of all worldly things is but as a fair picture drawn upon the ice, that melts away with it. The fashion of this world passeth away.

—*Burroughs*, 1599-1646.

(4978.) Our most fortified delights are like the child's castle, done down with a fillip; a shadow, nay, the very dream of a shadow; a rotten post, slightly painted; a paper tower, which the least puff overturns. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4979.) Wealth is like a bird; it hops all day from man to man, as that doth from tree to tree; and none can say where it will roost or rest at night. It is like a vagrant fellow, which because he is big-boned, and able to work, a man takes in a-doors, and cherisheth; and perhaps for a while he takes pains; but when he spies opportunity, the fugitive servant is gone, and takes away more with him than all his service came to. The world may seem to stand thee in some stead for a season, but at last it irrevocably runs away, and carries with it thy joys; thy goods, as Rachel stole Laban's idols; thy peace and content of heart goes with it, and thou are left desperate.

You see how quickly riches cease to be "the same:" and can any other earthly thing boast more stability? Honour must put off its robes when the play is done; make it never so glorious a show on this world's stage, it hath but a short part to act. A great name of worldly glory is but like a peal rung on the bells; the common people are the clappers; the rope that moves them is popularity; if you once let go your hold and leave pulling, the clapper lies still, and farewell honour. Strength, though, like Jeroboam, it put forth the arm of oppression, shall soon fall down withered. Beauty is like an almanac: if it last a year it is well. Pleasure like lightning: *oritur, moritur;* sweet, but short; a flash and away. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4980.) At the best, they are but glassy stuff; which, the finer it is, is so much more brittle: yea, what other, than those gay bubbles, which children are wont to raise from the mixed soap and spittle of their walnut-shell; which seem to represent pleasing colours, but in their flying up, instantly vanish! There is no remedy: either they must leave us, or we must leave them. —*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(4981.) All worldly things are like the sea, ebbing and flowing; or like the moon, always increasing or decreasing; or like a wheel, always turning up and down. —*Ambrose*, 1664.

(4982.) We do not hold worldly things during our life, nor as long as we shall behave ourselves well in our places; but only as long as God pleases. How often is the most shining glory burnt into a snuff, turned into ignominy, and honour into contempt, and our fulness into the want of all things! A cobweb that has been long a spinning is soon swept down.

—*Manton*, 1620-1667.

(4983.) The visible felicity of man is of no continuance. We may frequently observe in the evening a cloud, by the reflection of the sun invested with so bright a lustre and adorned with such a pleasant variety of colours, that, in the judgment of our eyes, if an angel were to assume a body correspondent to his glory, it were a fit matter for it; but in walking a few steps, the sun is descended beneath the horizon, and the light withdrawn, and of all that splendid flaming appearance nothing remains but a dark vapour, that falls down in a shower. Thus vanishing is the show of felicity here. —*Bates*, 1625-1699.

(4984.) There is no constancy in outward comforts. As brooks in winter are carried with violence, and run with a mighty stream, flowing over with abundance of water on every side, when there is no want or need of waters; but in the heat of summer is dried up, when water is scanty and hard to be had; such is the *friendship* of the world: it will promise us many things, when we have need of nothing; but when the wind turns and afflictions overtake us, it is like a tree withered for want of sap, and as a ditch without any water to refresh us. When the sun of our prosperity is hid and covered with a cloud, these shadows vanish and disappear. As leaves fall off in autumn, so does the friendship of creatures fail men, when the sap of that maintenance which commanded their company is withdrawn from them.

Man in *honour* abideth not. As the rising sun, coming into our horizon like a giant ready to run a race, appearing to us with a full and glorious countenance, within an hour's space is obscured with mists or darkened with clouds; and however, if it meet with neither of these, when it arrives at its noon-day height, it declines, descends, sets, and is buried under us: so the ambitious person shows himself to the world as chief favourite at court, with much pomp and pride; by and by his honour is eclipsed, by the hate of the people, or frowns of the prince, or envy of his fellow courtiers; or if not, yet he dies, and "carries nothing away," and "his glory doth not descend after him."

The like is evident of earthly *treasures:* they are soon gone, though not soon gotten. As a gallant ship, well rigged, trimmed, tackled, manned, with her top and top-gallant, and her well-spread sails, puts out of harbour to the admiration of many spectators; but within a few days is split upon some dangerous rock, or swallowed up of some disastrous tempest, or taken by some ravenous pirate; so are this world's goods on a sudden taken from their owners, or their owners from them.

—*Swinnock*, 1673.

(4985.) Among qualities that commend or vilify things unto us, duration and certainty have a chief place; they often alone suffice to render things valuable or contemptible. Why is gold more precious than glass or crystal? Why prefer we a ruby before a rose or a gilliflower? It is not because those are more serviceable, more beautiful,

more grateful to our senses than these (it is plainly otherwise); but because these are brittle and fading, those solid and permanent: these we cannot hope to retain the use or pleasure of long; those we may promise ourselves to enjoy as long as we please. —*Barrow*, 1630-1677.

(4986.) Earthly things, when we have them, we are not sure of them; like birds, they hop up and down, now on this hedge, and anon upon that: none can call them his own. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4987.) All sublunary comforts imitate the changeableness, as well as feel the influence, of the planet they are under. Time, like a river, carries them all away with a rapid course; they swim above the stream for a while, but are quickly swallowed up, and seen no more. The very monuments men raise to perpetuate their names consume and moulder away themselves, and proclaim their own mortality, as well as testify that of others.

—*South*, 1633-1716.

(4988.) I read when I was a boy of an ice-palace, built one winter at Petersburg. The walls, the roof, the floors, the furniture, were all of ice, but finished with taste; and everything that might be expected in a royal palace was to be found there; the ice, while in the state of water, had been previously coloured, so that to the eye all seemed formed of proper materials: but all was cold, useless, and transient. Had the frost continued till now, the palace might have been standing; but with the returning spring, it melted away, like the baseless fabric of a vision. Methinks there should have been one stone in the building, to have retained the inscription, *Sic transit gloria mundi!* for no contrivance could exhibit a fitter illustration of the vanity of human life. Men build and plan as if their works were to endure for ever; but the wind passes over them, and they are gone. In the midst of all their preparations, or, at farthest, when they think they have just completed their designs, their breath goeth forth, they return to their earth; in that very day their thoughts perish.

—*Newton*, 1725-1807.

(4989.) Let their possessors, remember, however, that they must shortly be divested of the brilliant appendages and splendid ornaments of rank and station, and enter into a world where they are unknown; where they will carry nothing but the essential elements of their being, impressed with those indelible characters which must sustain the scrutiny of Omniscience. The artificial decorations, be it remembered, are not, properly speaking, their own; the elevation to which they belong is momentary; and as the merit of an actor is not estimated by the part which he performs, but solely by the truth and propriety of his representation, and the peasant is often applauded where the monarch is hissed; so when the drama of life is concluded, He who allots its scenes, and determines its period, will take an account of His servants, and assign to each his punishment or reward, in his proper character. —*Robert Hall*, 1764-1831.

4. How the Christian estimates them.

(4990.) [*On the sight of boys playing.*] Every age hath some peculiar contentment. Thus we did, when we were of these years. Methinks I still remember the old fervour of my young pastimes. With what eagerness and passion do they pursue these childish sports! Now that there is a handful of cherry stones at the stake, how near is that boy's heart to his mouth, for fear of his playfellows next cast; and how exalted with desire and hope of his own speed! Those great unthrifts who hazard whole manors upon the dice, cannot expect their chance with more earnestness, or entertain it with more joy or grief.

We cannot but now smile to think of these poor and foolish pleasures of our childhood. There is no less disdain, that the regenerate man conceives of the dearest delights of his natural condition. He was once jolly and jocund, in the fruition of the world. Feasts, and revels, and games, and dalliance were his life; and no man could be happy without these: and scarce any man, but himself: but when once grace hath made him both good and wise, how scornfully doth he look back at these fond felicities of his carnal estate! Now he finds more manly, more divine contentments, and wonders he could be so transported with his former vanity. Pleasures are much according as they are esteemed: one man's delight is another man's pain. Only spiritual and heavenly things can settle and satiate the heart with a full and firm contentation.

O God, Thou art not capable either of bettering or of change: let me enjoy Thee; and I shall pity the miserable fickleness of those that want Thee; and shall be sure to be constantly happy.

—*Hall*, 1574-1656.

(4991.) The Christian doth not value earthly enjoyments, or himself by them; and if Satan were to think to hurt a saint by touching his external advantages, this were as if one should try to hurt a man by beating his clothes, when once he has put them off. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(4992.) The eye of a godly man is not fixed on the false sparkling of the world's pomp, honour, and wealth. It is dead to them, being quite dazzled with a greater beauty. The grass looks fine in the morning, when it is set with those liquid pearls, the drops of dew that shine upon it; but if you can look but a little while on the body of the sun, and then look down again, the eye is as it were dead; it sees not that faint shining on the earth that it thought so gay before. And as the eye is blinded, and dies to it, so within a few hours that gaiety quite vanishes and dies itself.

—*Leighton*, 1611-1684.

(4993.) Not golden veins in mountains, not diamonds in the sands, nor precious stones, not treasures which are heaped up in cities, nor the things which minister to the senses or to bodily ease or comfort, are best. They are second best. They are useful if they serve; they are evil if they rule. For the world is God's nursery. Here He brings up His children; and as in our houses all things are good—pictures, books, carpets, furniture, the table and the couch—if they aid us to rear well our children, and are good but for that; as our children themselves the chief treasures to us, and their character the chief part of themselves, so it is in God's great household globe on which we dwell. We are to despise nothing as if the being transient or physical were a reason for contempt. We are to treasure all things—only we are to measure their value by their relation to our higher nature. —*Beecher*.

5. When they become hurtful to us.

(4994.) Thorns will not prick of themselves, but when they are grasped in a man's hand they prick deep. So this world and the things thereof are all good, and were all made of God for the benefit of His creatures, did not our immoderate affection make them hurtful, which, indeed, embitters every sweet unto us. This is the root of all evil.
—*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(4995.) All the danger is when the world gets into the heart. The water is useful for the sailing of the ship; all the danger is when the water gets into the ship; so the fear is when the world gets into the heart. "Thou shalt not covet."
—*Watson*, 1696.

II. *ITS DELUSIVENESS.*

1. It is solid and valuable only in its outward appearance.

(4996.) All vanities are but butterflies, which wanton children greedily catch for; and sometimes they fly beside them, sometimes before them, sometimes behind them, sometimes close by them; yea, through their fingers, and yet they miss them; and when they have them, they are but butterflies; they have painted wings, but are crude and squalid worms. Such are the things of this world, vanities, butterflies. The world itself is not unlike an artichoke; nine parts of it are unprofitable leaves, scarce the tithe is good: about it there is a little picking meat, nothing so wholesome as dainty: in the midst of it there is a core, which is enough to choke them that devour it. —*Adams*, 1654.

(4997.) In Chili, where the ground is subject to frequent shocks of earthquake, the houses are built of lowly height and of unenduring structure; it is of little use to dig deep foundations, and pile up high walls where the very earth is unstable; it would be foolish to build as for ages when the whole edifice may be in ruins in a week. Herein we read a lesson as to our worldly schemes and possessions: this poor fleeting world deserves not that we should build our hopes and joys upon it as though they could last us long. We must treat it as a treacherous soil, and build but lightly on it, and we shall be wise. —*Spurgeon.*

2. It shows its best side to us at the beginning.

(4998.) The world, like a subtle merchant, offers to us a good sample of bad wares, and outwardly presents to our view the best end of the stuff, whereas the inmost and middle parts are coarse and slight; and places the purest and choicest commodities in the upper part of the vessel, whereas in the middle and the bottom it is mixed, counterfeit, and purposely falsified. —*Downame*, 1644.

(4999.) At the command of Jesus the waterpots were filled with water, and the water was by His divine power turned into wine (John ii.), where the different economy of God and the world is highly observable. "Every man sets forth good wine at first, and then the worse;" but God not only turns the water into wine, but into such wine that the last draught is most pleasant. The world presents us with fair language, promising hopes, convenient fortunes, pompous honours, and these are the outsides of the bowl; but when it is swallowed, these dissolve in the instant, and there remains bitterness and the malignity of Coloquinteda. Every sin smiles in the first address, and carries light in the face and honey in the lip, but "when we have well drunk, then comes that which is worse"—a whip with six strings, fears and terrors of conscience, and shame and displeasure and a cative disposition, and diffidence in the day of death. But when, "after the manner of purifying of the Christians," we fill our waterpots with water, watering our couch with our tears, and moistening our cheeks with the perpetual distillations of repentance, then Christ turns our water into wine—first penitents and then communicants, first waters of sorrow and then the wine of the chalice, first the justifications of correction and then the sanctifications of the sacrament, and the effects of the Divine power, joy and peace and serenity, hopes full of confidence, and confidence without shame, and boldness without presumption; for Jesus keeps the "best wine" until the last," not only because of the direct reservations of the highest joys till the nearer approaches of glory, but also because our relishes are higher after a long fruition than at the first essays; such being the nature of grace, that it increases in relish as it does in fruition, every part of grace being new duty and new reward.
—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

3. It promises more than it can perform.

(5000.) The world promiseth as much, and performeth as little, as the tomb of Semiramis. When she had built a stately tomb, she caused this inscription to be engraven on it: "Whatsoever king shall succeed here, and want money, let him open this tomb, and he shall have enough to serve his turn;" which Darius afterwards, wanting money, opened, and, instead of riches, found this sharp reproof: "Unless thou hadst been extremely covetous and greedy of filthy lucre, thou wouldst not have opened the grave of the dead to seek for money." Thus many run to the world with high hopes, and return with nothing but blanks. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

4. It lures us on with false hopes.

(5001.) The world is treacherous; it betrays both the hopes and the souls of men at once. How big is man with expectations of remote distant enjoyments! Like a man looking at a picture, or statue, at a distance, but coming near to it, and taking a close view, he sees it but a cheat, a dead, lifeless thing; so when a man comes to the enjoyment of the world, he falls infinitely short of his expectations. Like children that think the cloud is just touching such a hill, and if they were at it they would be just in the cloud; and when they go there they find the cloud removed away to another hill.
—*Ralph Erskine*, 1685–1752.

5. It will not bear exposure to the light.

(5002.) Those who work in perspective will so paint a room that the light entering only through some little hole, you shall perceive beautiful and perfect figures and shapes; but if you open the windows, and let in a full light, at most you shall see but some imperfect lines and shadows. So things of this world seem great and beautiful unto those who are in darkness, and have but little light of heaven; but those who enjoy the perfect light of truth and faith find nothing in them of substance.
—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

6. It deludes that it may degrade and destroy.

(5003.) The world deals with too many like a bad neighbour, that makes a man drunk purposely to defeat him of his purse or patrimony; when the liquor is evaporated the man awakes and finds himself a beggar. —*Braniard.*

7. How we are to treat it.

(5004.) Queen Elizabeth once said to a courtier, "They pass best over the world who trip over it quickly; for it is but a bog: if we stop, we sink."
—*Spurgeon.*

8. The folly of those who are ensnared by it.

(5005.) We pity the folly of the lark, which, while it playeth with the feather and stoopeth to the glass, is caught in the fowler's net: and yet cannot see ourselves alike made fools by Satan, who, deluding us by the vain feathers and glasses of the world, suddenly enwrappeth us in his snares. We see not the nets, indeed; it is too much that we shall feel them, and that they are not so easily escaped after as before avoided. O Lord, keep Thou mine eyes from beholding vanity. And, though mine eyes see it, let not my heart stoop to it, but loathe it afar off. And, if I stoop at any time, and be taken, set Thou my soul at liberty; that I may say, "My soul is escaped, even as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and I am delivered."
—*Hall*, 1574–1656.

III. *ITS PURSUIT BY THE UNGODLY.*

1. Their earnestness in its pursuit.

(5006.) Tell some of adding faith to faith, one degree of grace to another, and you shall find they have more mind to join house to house, and field to field. It is earth, earth; and they never think they have had enough of the soil, till death comes and stops their mouth with a shovelful digged out of their own grave. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5007.) Henry IV. of France, asking the Duke of Alva if he had observed the eclipses happening in that year, he answered that he had so much business on earth that he had no leisure to look up to heaven. A sad thing it is for men to be so bent, and their hearts so set on the things of this world, as not to cast up a look to the things that are in heaven; nay, not to regard, though God brings heaven down to them in His Word and sacraments. Yet so it is; most men are of this Spanish general's mind—witness the oxen, the farms, the pleasures, the profits, and preferments that men are so fast glued unto, that they have hardly leisure to entertain a thought of any goodness.
—*Spencer*, 1658.

2. Their folly in its pursuit.

(5008.) It is a great deal of care and pains that the spider takes in weaving her web; she runneth much, and often up and down; she fetcheth a compass this way and that way, and returneth often to the same point; she spendeth herself in multitudes of fine threads, to make herself a round cabinet; she exenterateth herself, and worketh out her own bowels, to make an artificial and curious piece of work, which, when it is made, is apt to be blown away with every puff of wind. She hangeth it up aloft, she fasteneth it to the roof of the house, she strengtheneth it with many a thread, wheeling often round about, not sparing her own bowels, but spending them willingly upon her work. And when she hath done all this, spun her fine threads, weaved them one within another, wrought herself a fine canopy, hung it aloft, and thinks all is sure,—suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, with a little sweep of a broom all falls to the ground, and so her labour perisheth. But here is not all, poor spider! she is killed either in her own web, or else she is taken in her own snare, haled to death, and trodden under foot. Thus the silly animal may be truly said either to weave her own winding-sheet, or to make a snare to hang herself. Just so do many men waste and consume themselves to get preferment, to enjoy pleasures, to heap up riches and increase them; and to that end they spend all their wit, and oftentimes the health of their bodies, running up and down, labouring and sweating, carking and caring; and when they have done all this, they have but weaved the spider's web to catch flies, yea, oftentimes are caught in their own nets, are made instruments of their own destruction, they take a great deal of pains with little success, to no end or purpose. —*Drexelius*, 1581–1638.

(5009.) As the millstone which turns about all day, grinding corn for others and not for itself, at night stands in the same place where it was in the morning, and after that great plenty of grain has passed by it is emptied of all, having no good by the bargain but to wear itself out for the profit of others; so worldly men, in attaining unto earthly vanities, toil themselves the whole day of this life, and when the night of death approaches, they are in the same case that they were in when they began, and having now only their labour for their pains, they retain nothing of all which has passed through their hands, but are constrained to leave them to the world, from which they first had them.
—*Downame*, 1644.

(5010.) We affect the vanities of the world, not for any good we see in them, but rather in self-love, pride, envy, and emulation, because we would prevent others, and obtain that which they so much desire. Like unto boys, who with all eagerness run after a ball, not for the love of itself, but that they may catch it before another, whereas they would scarce look after it if they had no competitor to contend with them. And as the vulgar people running in flocks to see some vain sight, do move others, who scarcely know wherefore they make such haste, to go with them for company, and even to outstrip their fellows with nimble speed; so do they run with headlong haste in the pursuit of these worldly vanities, not because themselves know any worth or excellency in them, but because they see that many have gone before them, and that many are still going speedily in this course; they also go for company, labouring to prevent them with their haste, and to obtain that first, which being obtained they do not know as yet whether it be worth their having and enjoying. —*Downame*, 1644.

(5011.) The rich worldling is but a hired porter, that carries a great load of wealth on his weary back all day, till he groan under it; at night, when the sun of his life sets, it is taken from him, and he is turned into a foul stable, a squalid grave, perchance with a galled shoulder, a raw and macerated conscience —*Adams*, 1654.

(5012.) They who dive into the bottom of this sea of the world to the hazard of their lives, instead of the pearl of contentment and happiness which they take such pains for, bring up nothing but their hands full of the sand and gravel of vexation and anguish. All the ways of worldly delights are strewed with nettles and briars, so that its greatest darlings are but like bears robbing a bee hive, that with much labour get a little honey, but are soundly stung for their pains. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

(5013.) What folly is it to dandle this vain world in our affections, whose joy, like the child's laughter on the mother's knee, is sure to end in a cry at last. Oh, remember Dives, stirring up his pillow and composing himself to rest; how he was called up by the tidings of death, before he was warm in his bed of ease.

Art thou trimming thy slimy carcass, while thy soul is dropping into hell? What is this but to be painting the door when the house is on fire?

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5014.) It is a dreaming and distracted world, that spend their days and cares for nothing; and are as serious in following a feather, and in the pursuit of that which they confess is vanity, and dying in their hands, as if, indeed, they knew it to be true felicity. They are like children busy in hunting butterflies; or like boys at football—as eager in the pursuit, and in overturning one another, as if it were for their lives or for some great, desirable prize; or more like to a heap of ants that gad about as busily and make as much ado for sticks and dust as if they were about some magnificent work. Thus doth the vain, deceived world lay out their thoughts and time upon impertinencies, and talk and walk like so many *noctambulos* in their sleep; they study, and care, and weep, and laugh, and labour and fight as men in a dream, and will hardly be persuaded but it is reality which they pursue till death come and awake them. Like a stage-play or a puppet-play, where all things seem to be what they are not, and all parties seem to do what they do not, and depart, and are all disrobed and unmasked; such is the life of the most of this world, who spend their days in a serious jesting, and in a busy doing of nothing.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(5015.) Gotthold one day looked on while a gardener watched a mole, caught it at its mischievous work, threw it with his spade out of the earth, and made it pay with its life for the damage it had done. This creature's whole employment, thought he within himself, is to plough up the well-dressed gardens and fields, to gnaw and destroy the roots of plants, and, by the many heaps it forms, to disfigure and spoil the parterres and meadows; all which it does for the sake of its food. Able to see and cater for itself in the dark, and even beneath the earth, it is blind when unexpectedly brought into light. And so it is with the man of the world. He burrows and filches in secret, seeks his own advantage at the expense of others, who wither and perish through his devices, and raises on every hand the monuments of his envy and selfishness. Besides, wise and crafty though he be in temporal things, he knows absolutely nothing of those that are spiritual and divine. But death stands by, and only waits the nod of the Most High to terminate in a moment his projects and intrigues, and cast the miserable man out of the earth, into the earth again; I mean, from all his temporal possessions into the grave.

—*Scriver*, 1629–1693.

(5016.) You may see a field of corn, yet full of fine showy poppies; if you turn some children into it, you will see them rush to the poppies, and altogether overlook the corn, and take no notice of it. Now this is the conduct of the men of the world—like the children, they are all eagerly in quest of the poppies, the glittering baubles and trifles of this life, while they are overlooking the wheat, the solid grains of eternity;—the fruit, which, if gathered into the garner, would endure unto eternal life.

—*Salter*.

(5017.) The men of this world are children. Offer a child an apple and a bank-note, he will doubtless choose the apple.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(5018.) How infatuated and criminal is the worldling! How beguiled his mind, and how criminal his heart, if he will still act against all experience, and all the declarations which God hath made! When a ship has been wrecked, and no hope of escape remained, the sailors have sometimes been so infatuated that, despising every consideration most suited to their danger, they have staved the liquor casks; determining that when there was no hope on earth, they would at least die in the midst of sensual gratification! You are ready to exclaim —"Surely these are not rational creatures!" But I scruple not to say that, if you continue to live a careless and ungodly life, while the pageant of this world is passing, and die in that state, such a wretched sailor is, in comparison, more rational than you are. If one were to remonstrate with such a stupid creature, it is probable he would say —"There is no help. I may live half-an-hour; and I am determined to get rid of what sensibility I have in order not to perceive my death, and enjoy a present gratification. I have no hope—no prospect; I can do nothing!" But no man, who has the Gospel preached in his ears, can say, however the world passeth away, and the procession is advancing, and with many of us almost gone, yet, no man can say—"There is no help;" for he may yet "flee for refuge to the hope set before him;" he may yet place his foot on the rock; he may yet escape the shipwreck: deliverance is proclaimed whenever the Gospel is preached, and whenever the Holy Spirit brings any light to the heart of man.

—*Cecil*, 1748–1810.

3. Their sinfulness in its pursuit.

(5019.) All sin is hateful to God, and none but the cleansed perfect soul shall stand before Him in the presence of His glory; nor any in whom iniquity hath dominion shall stand accepted in the presence of His grace; but yet no particular sin is so hateful to Him as idolatry is. For this is not only a trespassing against His laws, but a disclaiming or rejecting His very Sovereignty itself. To give a prince irreverent language, and to break his laws, is punishable; but to pull him out of his throne, and set up a scullion in it, and give him the honour and obedience of a king, this is another kind of matter, and much more intolerable. The first commandment is not like the rest, which require only obedience to particular laws in a particular action; but it establisheth the very rela-

tions of sovereign and subject, and requires a constant acknowledgment of these relations, and makes it high treason against the God of heaven in any that shall violate that command. Every crime is not treason: it is one thing to miscarry in a particular case, and another thing to have other gods before and besides the Lord, the only God. Now this is the sin of every worldling: he hath taken down God from the throne in his soul, and set up the flesh and the world in His stead; these he valueth, and magnifieth, and delighteth in; these have his very heart, while God that made it and redeemed him is set light by.

—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(5020.) Sirs, the thing that we are reproving is, that the world gets so much of your heart, and God so little. The creature should but have a small portion of your affections, if it be not the creature, but God that is your portion. But, alas! many are like the great man, that, being asked if he ever saw an eclipse of the sun, said, "He had so much ado upon earth, he never had time to look up to heaven." Just so may it be said of multitudes in the world, they are so much taken up with the things of time, the vain and perishing things of the world, they never get time to look up into, and call upon God. —*Ralph Erskine*, 1685–1752.

4. In the end it will profit them nothing.

(5021.) The world is not unfitly compared to a fishing-net, and the end of the world to the drawing up of the nets. While the nets are down there is nothing said to be caught, for the nets may break and the fish escape. But at the end of the world, when the nets are drawn up, it will then evidently appear what every man hath caught; and then those that have fished for riches, or gain, sovereignty, and power over their brethren, for the honours and preferments of this world, may say, with Peter, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." They dreamt of riches, and honours, and powers; but, being now awake, they find nothing in their hands at all. But those that have here fished for godliness, for peace, and for the honour of God, may say, "Lord, at Thy word we have let down our nets and have caught, yea, we have caught abundantly; we have fished for godliness, and have gotten life eternal; for grace, and we have gotten glory; for goodness, and we have gotten God Himself, who is the fountain of all goodness and glory. —*Gataker*, 1574–1654.

(5022.) Ah vain world! thou art a poor reward for the loss of Christ and heaven. While Satan is pleasing thy fancy, sinner, with the rattles and baubles of the earth, his hand is in thy treasure, robbing thee of that which alone is necessary. It is more necessary to be saved than to be; better not to be, than to be in hell.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

5. How it will seem to them in the hour of death.

(5023.) When the race is ended, and the play either won or lost, and ye are in the utmost circle and border of time, and shall put your foot within the march of eternity, all the good things of your short night-dream shall seem to you like ashes of a blaze of thorns or straw. —*Rutherford*, 1661.

(5024.) What occasions the surprise and the despair of the sinner on the bed of death, is to see that the world in which he had ever placed all his confidence is nothing, is but a dream, which vanishes and is annihilated. But the faithful soul, in this last moment, ah! he sees the world in the same light he had always viewed it; as a shadow which flitteth away; as a vapour which deceives at a distance, but, when approached, has neither reality nor substance. —*Massillon.*

(5025.) I have seen death in a variety of forms, and have had frequent occasion of observing how insignificant many things, which are now capable of giving us pain or pleasure, will appear when the soul is brought near to the borders of eternity. All the concerns which relate solely to this life, will then be found as trivial as the traces of a dream from which we are awakened.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

IV. *THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD.*

1. While in the world, he is not to be of it.

(5026.) A servant, whilst a stranger walks with his master, follows them both; but when the stranger takes his leave and departs from his master, he leaves the stranger and follows his master. Thus whilst the world does any way concur with the Lord, and conduces to the salvation of the precious soul, so far we may accompany it; but if it once depart from that, then let us give the world a farewell, follow God, and have a care of our souls.

—*John Denison*, 1621.

(5027.) Let us use worldly things as wise pilgrims do their staves and other necessaries convenient for their journey. So long as they help us forward in our way, let us make use of them, and accordingly esteem them. But if they become troublesome hindrances and cumbersome burdens, let us leave them behind us, or cast them away.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(5028.) The cream of the creature floats atop; and he that is not content to fleet it, but thinks by drinking a deeper draught to find yet more, goes further to speed worse. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5029.) Imitate little children, who, as they with one hand hold fast by their father, and with the other gather strawberries or blackberries along the hedges, so you gathering and handling the goods of this world with one hand, must with the other always hold fast the hand of your Heavenly Father, turning yourself towards Him from time to time, to see if your actions or occupations be pleasing to Him; but above all things, take heed that you never let go His protecting hand. —*Sales.*

(5030.) All the water is waste that runs beside the mill; so all thy thoughts and words are waste which are not to the glory of God. A bee will not sit on a flower where no honey can be sucked; neither should the Christian engage in anything but for his soul's good and God's honour.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5031.) A man and a beast may stand upon the same mountain, and even touch one another, yet they are in two different worlds: the beast perceives nothing but the grass; but the man contemplates the prospect, and thinks of a thousand remote things. Thus a Christian may be solitary at a full

Exchange ; he can converse with the people there upon trade, politics, and the stocks ; but they cannot talk with him upon the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

—*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(5032.) Christianity allows us to use the world, provided we do not abuse it. It does not spread before us a delicious banquet, and then come with a "Touch not, taste not, handle not."

—*Porteous*, 1731–1808.

2. In what Christian nonconformity to the world consists.

(1.) *Not in going out of the world.*

(5033.) To forsake the world, is not to go out of the world. It is not to forsake personal society, though all vicious society must be forsaken. It is not to vow a voluntary poverty, with the Papists. It is not to be idle and improvident ; but, positively, never to forsake it in the four following respects :—1. In respect of the immoderate use of the enjoyment of the world (1 Cor. vii. 29–31). We are to use it as stewards, that are to give an account. 2. In respect of service. Be not servants or slaves to it, for you cannot both serve God and mammon. 3. In respect of confidence. Trust not to it. Although you have worldly advantages, make them not your staff, your stay, your choice jewels. 4. In respect of adherence. Be not glued to the world. Let not the world be like the skin on the hand, that will not easily come off ; but like the glove on your hand, or the hat on your head, that you can easily part with.

—*Ralph Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(2.) *Not in cultivating singularities of dress or manners, but in making the will of Christ the rule of our life.*

(5034.) While, as men, we have many things in common with other men, yet, as Christians, we are expected to possess something original and peculiar. Our opinions, practice, and conduct are to be determined by the will of Christ (1 John ii. 3, 6). The world may be governed by its own laws. If they coincide with Christ's in anything, or in everything, it is well, and Christians are not to affect singularity. If they differ, the Christian community has another rule by which it is governed. I have a family in a gay, wicked, thoughtless city. As the head of that family I give laws by which I expect it will be influenced. Around me may be one family governed by the laws of fashion ; another by the laws of honour ; a third, perhaps, by certain arbitrary rules which pickpockets and highwaymen have set up. I do not interfere with them ; nor do I say that in no respects shall my family coincide with them. If they have anything commendable I shall not denounce it, nor demand that my children shall affect singularity. What I expect is, that my children will obey my laws. If my neighbour presumes to legislate in the case, and demands that my family shall forsake my laws ; if he affirms that my statutes are stern and harsh, and should be modified —that is a question for me to consider, not for him to legislate on.

Just so it is with Christianity. Christ has established a set of laws, and demanded a certain course of life. If the members of any other community, or of fifty others, should in many things, or in all things, coincide with what religion would produce, the Christian is not to affect singularity in the case. The question is whether I am adhering to the laws of the peculiar kingdom by which I am governed, and not whether others are falling in with these laws also. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

(3.) *In abstaining from unnecessary intercourse with the men of the world.*

(5035.) A saint must be separated,—not locally, but in regard of amity, in regard of intimate friendship ; as we see it is in outward things in some of our houses. There is a court where all come, poor and rich ; and there is in the house where those of nearer acquaintance come ; and then there is the innermost room, the closet, where only ourselves and those which are nearest to us come. So it is in the passages of the soul. There are some remote courtesies that come from us, as men, to all, be they what they will ; there are other respects to those that are nearer, that we admit nearer, that are of better quality ; and there are other that are nearest of all, that we admit even into the closet of our hearts ; and those are they with whom we hope to have communion for ever in heaven, the blessed people of God. —*Sibbes*, 1577–1635.

(5036.) A Christian in the world is like a man transacting his affairs in the rain. He will not suddenly leave his client because it rains ; but the moment the business is done he is off : as it is said in the Acts, "Being let go, they went to their own company." —*Newton*, 1725–1807.

(5037.) There is a certain degree of intercourse which must subsist between us and the world. But it is by no means desirable to extend it beyond that which the duties of our calling absolutely require. Our Lord declares that His faithful followers "are not of the world." The apostles also with one voice guard us against cultivating the friendship of the world ; and teach us to come out from among them, and to live as a distinct "peculiar people," "shining among them as lights in the dark place." We should go to them indeed when duty calls, as the physician enters the infected chambers of the sick : but we should never forget that "evil communications corrupt good manners ;" and that an undue familiarity with them is far more likely to weaken the spirituality of our own minds than to generate a holy disposition in theirs. In us should be verified the prophecy of Balaam, "Israel shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." —*Simeon*, 1758–1836.

(4.) *In setting before us as the ends of life the attainment of eternal blessedness, the promotion of the Divine glory, and the advancement of the welfare of our fellow-men : and in abstaining from those pursuits and pleasures that are inconsistent therewith.*

(5038.) The Christian and the carnal man are most wonderful to each other. The one wonders to see the other walk so strictly, and deny himself to those carnal liberties that the most take, and take for so necessary, that they think they could not live without them. And the Christian thinks it strange that men should be so bewitched, and still remain children in the vanity of their turmoil, wearying and humouring themselves from morning to night, running after stories and fancies, ever busy doing nothing ; wonders that the delights of earth and sin can so long entertain and please men, and persuade

them to give Jesus Christ so many refusals—to turn from their life and happiness, and choose to be miserable, yea, and take much pains to make themselves miserable. He knows the depravedness and blindness of nature in this—knows it by himself, that once he was so, and therefore wonders not so much at them as they do at him; yet the unreasonableness and frenzy of that course now appears to him in so strong a light that he cannot but wonder at those woful mistakes. But the ungodly wonder far more at him, not knowing the inward cause of his different choice and way. The believer, as we said, is upon the hill; he is going up, looks back on them in the valley, and sees their way tending to and in death, and calls them to retire from it as loud as he can; tells them the danger; but either they will not hear or understand this language, or will not believe him. Finding present ease and delight in their way, they will not consider and suspect the end of it; but they judge him the fool that will not share with them and take that way where such multitudes go and with such ease, and some of them with their train and horses and coaches and all their pomp; and he and a few straggling poor creatures like him climbing up a craggy, steep hill, and will by no means come off from that way and partake of theirs, not knowing or not believing that at the top of that hill he climbs is that happy, glorious city, the New Jerusalem, whereof he is a citizen, and whither he is tending; not believing that he knows the end both of their way and his own, and therefore would reclaim them if he could; but will by no means return to them, as the Lord commanded the prophet (Jer. xv. 19).

—*Leighton*, 1611-1684.

(5039.) Lycurgus framed a code of laws for Sparta. He had an object in each of his statutes, and he designed to rear a peculiar community. It was not the love of singularity, it was not a wish to differ from others for the mere sake of being different. It was with reference to his great object—to make the Spartans valiant, hardy, laborious, daring freemen. With this object he framed his laws; and this design was understood by every Lacedemonian. Suppose, now, he had left some such direction as the text, "Be not conformed to surrounding nations, or even to the other republics of Greece." The command would have been intelligible. It would not mean, "Do not in anything coincide with others, for they may be temperate, and laborious, and valiant, as well as you, and in this do not affect singularity. Their conduct in this respect is just what is required of you. Do not pursue it because they do, but because it will contribute to the great designs of the republic." The command would forbid conformity to other people, if that conformity should interfere with the purpose of the Spartan lawgiver. It might easily be seen that even the arts of Athens, the extensive attention to statuary and ornamental architecture, might not consist with the main design of the Lacedemonian. Innocent as they might be in themselves, or consistent as they might be in the members of the republic of Athens, yet should the Lacedemonians turn their attention to statuary or to the fine arts, as a people, they would abandon the peculiar design of the lawgiver in making them a hardy and valorous race of freemen. It would easily be seen that the delicacies and refinements of Corinth, its fashion and splendour, its luxuries and amusements, as well as its licentious habits, would be inconsistent with the design of the Spartan. Whether they were well for the Corinthian was another question; and a question which it did not pertain to the Spartan to settle. His inquiry was of a different kind. What was the will of the lawgiver? And are these things consistent with his plain and obvious directions? His design was to train up a peculiar community; was qualified to judge of that design. He contemplated that no other one—not even one of the confederated republics of Greece—should presume to come in and legislate for his people. If this peculiar design was consistent with their views and conduct, it was well. They would be conformed to, not because they were the views of Athens or Corinth, but because they contributed to the great purpose of the Lacedemonian lawgiver. In no case had they a right to originate laws for his people, or to demand that his laws should be conformed to their views.

Thus with the Christian. If the views and conduct of others coincide with his, it is well. If they do not, they are not at liberty to come in and demand that he shall be conformed to them. He has higher laws, and a higher object. He has a purpose which strikes on to eternity. His aim is to prepare for heaven. Theirs, to live for time. Nor can they claim jurisdiction over conduct that has been directed by the Son of God, and that He has judged best in ordering His peculiar community. The simple question is, whether a proposed course of conduct or opinion is consistent with the spirit and life demanded by the King of Zion.

—*Barnes*, 1798-1870.

(5040.) This rule: "Be ye not conformed to this world," forbids all mingling with the world which is inconsistent with the great objects of the kingdom of Christ, or which will not on the whole tend to promote it. It is not needful to state what those objects are. They may be summed up in a desire to become personally assimilated to Jesus Christ, and to bring our fellow-men to the hope of the same heaven. Now with this desire to be precisely what will be approved by the mind of Christ, we may apply the rule before us. It will be a test of the propriety of a thousand things which might otherwise be the subject of much debate. It will constitute a nice tact by which we may approach a great variety of objects without danger of error. A child can much more easily decide whether a thing will be acceptable to the mind of his father, than he could settle its propriety by argument. The inhabitant of Sparta could see at once that many things were inconsistent with the design of his republic, which he could by no means settle in an abstract manner. Whether the aim of the Athenian was proper, or the mild and soft pleasures of the Corinthian, he might not be able to settle by argument, but this would not be the way in which to train up the Lacedemonian. So it might become a question of abstract casuistry about a thousand scenes of amusement. It would be easy to argue by the hour in favour of parties of pleasure, and theatres, and ball-rooms, and all the vanity of fashionable life, and the mind might "find no end of wandering mazes lost." But apply the rule before us, and all mist vanishes. Since the beginning of the world, no professing Christian ever dreamed that he was imitating the example of Jesus Christ, or honouring the Christian religion, in a

theatre, a ball-room, or a splendid party of pleasure. And equally clear would be the decision in reference to multitudes of pleasures which it is needless to specify. —*Barnes*, 1798–1870.

(5.) *In keeping the affections disengaged from the world.*

(5041.) A right believer goes through the world as a man whose mind is in a deep study, or as one that has special haste of some weighty business goes through a street, that gazes on nothing, hears nothing, minds nothing that is in the way, but only that with which his mind is taken up withal. Our conversation is in heaven, our treasure is in heaven. —*Ward*, 1577–1639.

(5042.) A Christian is like Jacob's ladder; while his body, that lower part, stands on the ground, the top, his higher and better part, is in heaven.

He that hath the living waters of Jesus flowing in his heart, is mad if he stoop to the puddles of vanity, or seek content in the world. Yea, such a one will scarce descend to lawful pleasures, but for God's allowance, and nature's necessity; and then but as the eagle, who lives aloft, and stoops not but for her prey. —*Adams*, 1653.

(5043.) The flower called heliotropium turns its face towards the sun from morning to night, so does the true Christian towards the Sun of Righteousness. The command of God is, "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" and the carriage of holy men is answerable hereunto; "The twelve tribes served God instantly day and night." As the angels, though they are employed up and down in the world for the service of the saints, yet they "always behold the face of their Father;" so the children of God, though they are occupied about civil and natural actions, are called hither and thither as their occasions are, yet they pass the whole time of their sojourning here in fear. That watch is naught that goes only at first winding up, and stands still all the day after; that man's religion is little worth that, like Ephraim's goodness, is as a morning cloud or dew, which vanishes away ere noon.

The rivers run ever toward the sea, notwithstanding that hills and rocks and mountains interpose and force them to their winding meanders; nay, their compass about is not without profit, for they water those grounds in their passage through which they seem to wander. The person that has the living water of grace in him is always tending toward the ocean of his happiness, notwithstanding his diversions by his worldly actions and particular vocations; nay, he is doing good and serving his God and his soul, as well as his family and body, in those interjections.

The wheel of a chariot, though it be in motion all the day, and turning about the ground, yet it is but a small part of it that touches the earth at one time; the greatest part is always above it. So the true Christian; though he be all the day busy about earthly affairs, yet it is but his body, his lesser part, that is employed about them; his soul, his affections, which are his greater part, are always above them. —*Swinnock*, 1673.

3. Why he is not to set his affections on things below.

(1.) *Because the wealth and honours of the world are not essential either to our dignity or happiness.*

(5044.) If we excel in the use of reason and in the knowledge and practice of true religion, our goodness is not impaired when all worldly joys fail us. But if we be defective in them, and be either foolish men, or lame and bastardly Christians, these outward ornaments will be but like gay hangings on rotten and broken walls, which commend us to the sight of others, but do not better us in ourselves, by stopping our breaches and repairing our ruins. And as those who are sick of the dropsy, seem fat and in good liking to those who are far off, whereas it plainly appears to those who look upon them nearer hand, that their beauty proceeds not from the good habitude of their bodies, but from their fulness of humours, which is the true cause of their disease: so those who abound with these outward things may seem better and more happy than others, but those who consider them easily find that it is but a diseased body which commends them, and that they are not in truth bettered by all these things, but rather the diseases and spiritual sicknesses of their souls increased and made more desperate and incurable.

Let us not, therefore, account ourselves bettered by these outward things, for then our goods and goodness will both at once fail us; but by those things in which our excellency consists, and which, being in us and peculiar to ourselves, do make us justly to be preferred before all other creatures.

We know that a player is not better than his fellows, because he acts a king's part, seeing all his excellency is in his outward habit, and nothing in his person: and if another act his part better, he is preferred far before him, though he sustain the meanest and basest personage, because his work is measured, not by his gay clothes, but by his excellency in his own faculty and profession.

A surgeon is not commended because he goes in brave apparel, but for his great skill in curing wounds. And the scholar is not magnified for his fair house or full chests, but for his excellency in all manner of knowledge and learning. Neither is the pilot praised because he has a fair ship gilt with gold and well rigged, but for his skill in navigation, and care in using all his knowledge for the good of the passengers.

And thus also it is in other creatures. For the vine is not praised for its fair leaves, straight body, and good timber, but for its fruitfulness in bearing good and pleasant grapes. Neither is the horse bettered by his rich saddle and golden trappings, seeing his goodness consists not in these things which may at night be taken from him, but in his shape, strength, soundness, good pace, and sure travelling.

And so the excellency and goodness of a Christian consists not in these outward things, as honours, riches, pleasures, but in the fruits of godliness, which he oftentimes bears better and in greater abundance when he is pruned and these outward superfluities taken away; not in his gay habit and rich furniture, but in his swiftness and sureness in running the spiritual race, which he commonly best performs when he is lightened and unloaded of this worldly bravery. —*Downame*, 1644.

(2.) *Because their comparative unimportance is shown by the fact that they are bestowed on the good and on the bad indiscriminately.*

(5045.) Outward things happen alike to good and bad. "There is one event to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that

sacrificeth not; to him that sweareth, and to him that feareth an oath." They are both travellers in the thoroughfare of this world, both lodge in one inn, both have the same provision; perhaps the wicked have the better cheer,—but in the morning their ways part! —*Adams*, 1653.

(5046.) Although God cast common blessings promiscuously upon good and bad, yet He holds His best favours at a distance, as parents do cherries or apples from their children, to whet their appetites the more after them. —*John Hill*, 1658.

(5047.) All the estate of a believer lies in hope—and it is a royal estate! For outward things, the children of God have what He thinks fit to serve them: but those are not their portion, and therefore He gives often more of the world to those that shall have no more hereafter. But all *their* flourish and lustre is but a base advantage, as a lackey's gaudy clothes, that usually make more show than his that is heir of the estate.

—*Leighton*, 1611–1684.

(3.) *Because they will not bear close and intelligent examination.*

(5048.) The world and the best things of which it can boast are but mere vanities, and in comparison of God's spiritual graces, and our heavenly inheritance, of no worth or excellency. Neither is there anything in the earth great or excellent, but the Christian mind which contemns and despises these highly-esteemed vanities. They make a fair show, indeed, to those whose judgments are already forestalled with the false conceits of the corrupt flesh, and seem to be of some value and greatness to those who look upon them through the spectacles of affection. But if we pull off these false covers, and seriously and impartially behold them after their deceiving colours and painted vizards are laid aside, we shall find the world in its chief beauty and pomp to be but a glorious hypocrite, fair in show, and foul in truth, professing and promising much, and performing nothing; or a beautiful sepulchre outwardly adorned with all cost and bravery, but within full of stench and rottenness; or like unto our fair buildings in these times, which, making a sumptuous show to the passers-by, seem to invite poor men to receive relief, but within have no provision for hospitality, nor food to refresh those who stand in need. The like vanity also is in all those worldly things which are so affected and admired of those who have erected them in their hearts, as their idols whom they serve and adore; herein truly resembling idols and images, which are outwardly adorned with gold and precious ornaments, and make representation of some excellent personage, whereas if you examine them any further than the very superficies and outside, you shall find them no better than stocks or stones. So these worldly vanities seem to those whose weak sight can pierce no deeper than the outward show, beautiful and glorious; whereas, in truth, if we could behold them inwardly with the eye of a sound judgment, we should easily discern them to be contemptibly base and of no value. In this respect, like those goodly and beautiful pageants which being outwardly adorned and set forth with gold and painted colours, move multitudes of people to run after them, and to behold them with joyful admiration and ravishing wonder: whereas if you look into their inside, you shall find nothing but a few sticks, rags, and patches; and in respect of their durableness so slight and weak, that they are only fit for a vain show, and to serve for a day's sport.

—*Downame*, 1644.

(4.) *Because they are perilous to the soul.*

(5049.) What the astronomers say of the eclipse of the sun, that it is occasioned by the intervening of the moon between the sun and our sight, is true in this case: if the world get between Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and our sight, it will darken our sight of Jesus Christ, and bring eclipses upon our comforts and graces. Again, those men that dig deep into the bowels of the earth, they are oftimes choked and stifled by damps that come from the earth. So it is with Christians, those that will be ever poring and digging about the things of this world, it is a thousand to one that if from worldly things a damp doth not arise to smother their comforts and quench their graces. Lastly, a candle, though it may shine to the view of all, yet put it under ground, and (though there be not the least puff of wind) the very damp will stifle the light of the flame; and so it is that men may shine like candles in their comforts, yet bring them but under the earth, and a clod of that will stifle their candle, will damp their spiritual comforts, and bereave them of those joys that are in themselves unspeakable. —*John Magirus.*

(5050.) As the excellent and noble hawk called a falcon, upon the fist of the fowler, seeing a prey flying on high, doth by and by spread her wings and offer to break the strings wherewith she is holden, and to be gone after the prey, but if she be hooded, she neither seeth the prey nor is any whit moved: even so man, whose nature far excelleth all other living creatures, thinking upon the things that are above in heaven with God, and with the eyes of his mind beholding eternal bliss and endless felicity, he is inflamed and pricked with a great and wonderful desire to attain unto the same; but if he be hooded with ignorance, spiritual blindness, and a love of this world, he will never be touched with any heavenly motion, nor any whit moved with any right love of God, nor once turn so much as an eye of his mind towards heaven or God.

—*Cawdray*, 1609.

(5051.) Learn to despise the world; or, which is a better compendium in the duty, learn but truly to understand it; for it is a cozenage all the way; the head of it is a rainbow, and the face of it is flattery; its words are charms, and all its stories are false; its body is a shadow, and its hands do knit spiders' webs; it is an image and a noise, with a hyena's lip and a serpent's tail; it was given to serve the needs of our nature, and instead of doing it, it creates strange appetites and nourishes thirsts and fevers; it brings care, and debauches our nature, and brings shame and death as the reward of all our cares. Our nature is a disease, and the world doth nourish it; but if you leave to feed on such unwholesome diet, your nature reverts to its first purities, and to the entertainments of the grace of God. —*Jeremy Taylor*, 1612–1667.

(5052.) Some are not made better by God's gifts; yea, many are made worse. Give Saul a kingdom, and he will tyrannise; give Nabal good

cheer, and he will be drunk; give Judas an apostleship, and he will sell his Master for money.
—*Adams*, 1653.

(5053.) The devil can desire no greater advantage against thee than to overlade thee with worldly care, that he may say, as Pharaoh of Israel, "He is entangled, he is entangled." If this thief of care robs thee of thy *time*, get out of his hands, lest he rob thee of thy *soul*. If a friend should tell you that you kept so many servants as would beggar you, would you not listen to his counsel, and rather turn them out of doors than keep them within? Wilt thou, then, keep such a rout of worldly occasions, as will eat up all thoughts of God and heaven?
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(5054.) Who gave thee leave, Christian, to overlade thyself with the encumbrances of life? Is not God the Lord of thy *time*, as of everything else? He does indeed allow thee a fair portion for the lower employments of the body, but did He ever intend to turn Himself out of all? This is, as if the sailors, who are allowed by the merchant some small adventure for themselves, should fill the ship, and leave no stowage for his goods; or as if a servant should excuse himself to his master, when reproved for neglecting his duty, by saying he could not do it, because he was drunk.
—*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(5055.) The world does by the Christian as the little child by its mother; if it cannot keep her from going out, then it cries after her to go with her. So, if the world cannot keep us from going to religious duties, then it will cry to be taken along with us, and there is much ado to part it from the affections and thoughts. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

(5056.) A Christian too conversant with people of the world, resembles a bright piece of plate too much exposed to the air; which, though in reality it continues plate still, yet grows tarnished, and loses its fine burnish, and needs a fresh cleansing and rubbing up. —*Toplady*, 1740-1778.

(5057.) A thread can hide a star; a sixpence can hide the view of everything around us; and a man with but a little of this fleeting world may blind his mind, harden his heart, and he may lose himself, and be cast away at last.

(5058.) The world betrays the soul as well as the hopes; it betrays a man's soul to ruin, like sweet poison, that goes down pleasantly, but kills presently. The silken cords of the world have taken many a prisoner, and they have proven their fetters, which they could never break again. As Judas said of our blessed Lord, "Whomsoever I kiss, take Him, hold Him fast." So the world, being the devil's agent, says, "Whomsoever I kiss and embrace, and embraceth me mutually, and setteth his heart upon me, take him, hold him fast."
—*Ralph Erskine*, 1685-1752.

(5059.) I do pity from the bottom of my soul the careful, busy world, and would fain do my little part to instruct and warn them; or, if I cannot save them from certain destruction, to instruct and warn all against the strong current and whirling eddies of the gulf in which, alas, the multitude are sweeping downwards to destruction! What think you, my dear friends? is there not a voice without you that says, "I was not made to be the world's drudge, but to be the world's monarch! Else why this capacious understanding of all secrets of nature; this cunning hand that worketh it into infinite forms; this eye, which, being armed with ingenious instruments, at once possesseth the amplest and the most minute of things? And why this heart, which is blank in the midst of riches, and possessions, and honours, and power? Surely this soul of mine is not made to be the companion, much less the bondsman, of those creatures; for it is uncomforted in the midst of them. They cannot quiet the remorse of crime; they cannot heal the wounds of affection; they cannot extract the power of ingratitude, or fill up the tedium of disappointment. They bring me no peace; they do but increase my cares: one mountain climbed, another ariseth before me, and another, and there is no end of the labour. I do but get deeper into the bowels of this charmed land, and lose more and more my own liberty, my own innocency, my own being. I am hurried and hastened along with a multitude, who hurry and haste they know not whither. I could wish again for the ignorance and inexperience of my youth; for certainly I grow daily more hardened, and more cold, and more shrewd, and more artful. I am made familiar with deception, and trained to endure it, to conform to it. And what do I reap as the fruit of these earnest and laborious sowings? I reap a great increase of care, a heap of worldly ambitions, an intoxication of worldly pleasure. But where is conscience gone? Where are those ingenious thoughts with which my life commenced, the blushings of shame, the ardours of enthusiasm, the artless simplicity, the free and delicate honour, the tender and romantic affections, the chivalrous purposes, the gay and glorious morning of my life? Where is the poetry and the romance, and the beauty, with which my early soul did invest all things. Ah! and have I reaped the loss of all these fascinations? have I resigned this attendant angel, whom I wooed in youth, for the worldly beldam who now sits heavy upon my aged breast, and drinks the life-blood of my heart?" There is hardly a wider difference between an angel and a demon, than there often is between a young man entering the world in all the rich exuberance of youthful spirit, fulness of a joyful heart, and pastime of a simple and innocent imagination; and the same being after he hath been well drudged in mammon's workshop; worn and wearied out with the chances of life's lottery, if not fretted and maddened at the great gaming table of ambition. Which difference all know better than I can describe it; for mine has been as the inland lake, compared with that boisterous sea on which many have had to steer their course. And yet I am not ignorant (as who can, who hath fairly grasped and wrestled with the world?) of the fearful havoc it maketh upon the fair person of a man. Which may well be likened to a brave and martial troop of soldiers riding into the field of battle, in all the freshness of morning strength, with military glee and brave banners, burnished steel and warlike minstrelsy; and the same troop returning, tattered and torn, wounded and slain, weary and sorrowful, covered with their own blood and the dust of the ground: and as such a troop, which hath been defeated and disgraced, routed and put to flight, so is every company of men whom you may fix upon, after

having contended in this world's contest, to what they were when they entered into that conflict, more direful to the spirits of men than ever was any battle by sea or land to their bodies.

—*Irving*, 1792–1834.

(5.) *Because they can be serviceable to us only for a very little while.*

(5060.) Temporal good things are not the Christian's freight, but his ballast, and therefore are to be desired to poise, not load the vessel; they are not his portion, but his spending-money in his journey; and no wise traveller desires to carry more money about him than will defray his actual expenses.

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(6.) *Because if we do so, we shall risk their continuance, and shall certainly destroy our spiritual peace.*

(5061.) It is a good observation that is made upon that place of Job xxxviii. 22, where God thus challengeth Job: "Hast thou entered into the treasures of snow, or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?" where the commentator noteth out that all the comforts of this world are but like the treasures of snow. Do but take a handful of snow, and crush it in your hands, it will melt away presently; but if you let it lie upon the ground it will continue for some time. And so it is with the things of this world: if you take the comforts of this life in your hands, and lay them too near your hearts in affection and love to them, they will quickly melt and vanish away from you; but if you leave them in the proper place, and do not set an inordinate affection upon them, they will continue the longer with you: as if you should line a garment with linen, it would do very well; but if you line it with pitch or glue, that will stick fast to the body, and in all likelihood spoil both the garment and the man who wears it. So, when the world is glued to your hearts, it spoils the comforts of all the mercies that you enjoy; and so it may be said, that the otherwise lawful use of them is abused when they are either used too affectionately in making gods of them, or being too eagerly bent in the gaining of them.

—*Spencer*, 1658.

(7.) *Because God has already bestowed on us a nobler portion.*

(5062.) The Gospel mentions not riches, honours, beauty, pleasures; it passes these over in silence, which yet the Old Testament everywhere makes promise of. They were then children, and God pleased them with the promise of these toys and rattles, as taking with them. But in the Gospel He has shown us He has provided some better things for us; things spiritual and heavenly.

—*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(8.) *Because we have assured hope of a better inheritance.*

(5063.) Ye who look for so much in another world, may well be content with little in this. Nothing is more contrary to a heavenly hope than an earthly heart. If you saw a rich man among the poor gleaners in harvest-time, as busy to pick up the stray ears as the most miserable beggar in the company, oh, how you would cry, Shame! at such a sordid wretch. Well, Christian, I tell thee, that thou art more shameful still, if thou art as earnest after the world's trash as the poor carnal creature that hath no portion beyond the field of this life. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5064.) I am not seeking to depreciate the art and mystery of a true and large success. Win it bravely; wear it nobly. I only pray you not to exaggerate its worth. Remember the limit of all that this world can give you, and its doom. Win your prizes; wear them. But sometimes, I charge you, lift the veil of your eternal future; dwarf these perishing vanities by the sublime forms of the eternal verities; dim their glitter or their glare by the awful sunlight of that higher world. There will be moments when your proudest successes will seem mean and poor as the playwright's tinsel, or as the gaudy lustre of a ball-room, when one passes out under the clear heaven, where the solemn flush of dawn is stealing up into the sky. When those moments come, entertain them. Let them give their messages. Sit thou still awhile, and hear the word of the Lord which they bring. It may be that a higher kingdom than any of which thou dreamest may then be within reach of thy hand. There is no need to fear lest this earth should be eclipsed by the vision. Its claim is too pressing, its hold is too strong. But the day will come when it will all vanish as a dream when one awaketh, when all your great things, to win which you are tempted to sacrifice a life, will seem slight in your esteem as a child's baubles in the dawning manhood of your immortality. I only pray you sometimes to remember this. I would not cripple you in the keen race which you are running. God forbid! If it is your commission, if the native tendency of your faculty is to get on, lay to your work with a will. Run boldly, run swiftly; the very effort is a culture. But do not despise the beaten; do not forget how heaven may honour them; and do not magnify the prize. It is not much, even if you have all you aim at. It is not much. It does not seem great to any but to the bedazzled seekers. We may say all of it, as Queen Elizabeth said of the crown in her last speech to her last Parliament, "It seems grander to those who look at it than to those who wear it." And it will not always seem grand even to you. Let the sunlight of heaven stream on it betimes; it will spare you pain and shame when life's brief fever fit is over; when you wake up to grasp the substance of which this world's brightest is but the shadow, and to take the crown which a man must lose the world for Christ to win. —*J. Baldwin Brown.*

(9.) *Because we thus dishonour God Himself.*

(5065.) We may use earthly blessings when God bestows them, yet we are to be careful that we do not take our chief joy and comfort in them, but rather in the Lord who gave them, in the fruition of His spiritual graces, and in the assurance of our heavenly kingdom. For God did not give us these worldly cottages that we should joy in them, and neglect our stately palace; He did not bestow on us these toys and trifles that we should rest in them, and contemn our heavenly patrimony; but only He gives us these coarser meats to stay our stomachs for a time, till we come to the great supper of the Lamb; and casts unto us, as unto little children, these pleasing vanities, to keep us from crying and complaining, till we come to age and are capable of His heavenly excellences, and of those glorious

gifts of incomparable value. And, therefore, as we are not always to be children in knowledge, so neither let us be children in affection, doting upon these earthly trifles which were only given us for a time to use, and neglecting in respect of them God's spiritual graces, and that heavenly happiness which is provided for us to enjoy. —*Downame*, 1644.

WORSHIP. PUBLIC

1. Characteristics of acceptable worship.

(1.) *It must be offered by men who love and serve God.*

(5066.) You think you serve God by coming to church; but if you refuse to let the Word convert you, how should God be pleased with such a service as this? It is as if you should tell your servant what you have for him to do, and because he hath given you the hearing, he thinks he should have his wages, though he do nothing of that which you set him to do. Were not this an unreasonable servant? Or would you give him according to his expectation? It is a strange thing that men should think that God will save them for dissembling with Him, and save them for abusing His name and ordinances. Every time you hear, or pray, or praise God, or receive the sacrament, while you deny God in your heart and remain unconverted, you do but despise Him, and show more of your rebellion than your obedience. Would you take him for a good tenant that at every rent-day would duly wait on you, and put off his hat to you, but bring you never a penny of rent? Or would you take him for a good debtor that brings you nothing but an empty purse, and expects you should take that for payment? God biddeth you come to church and hear the Word; and so you do, and so far you do well; but withal, He chargeth you to suffer the Word to work upon your hearts, and to take it home and consider of it, and obey it, and cast away your former courses, and give your hearts and lives to Him; and this you will not do. And you think that He will accept of your services!
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(5067.) If a person were to attend the levee of an earthly prince every court-day, and pay his obeisance punctually and respectfully, but at other times speak and act in opposition to his sovereign, the king would justly deem such a one an hypocrite and an enemy. Nor will a solemn and stated attendance on the means of grace in the house of God prove us to be God's children and friends,—if we confine our religion to the church walls, and do not devote our lips and lives to the glory of that Saviour we profess to love. —*Salter*, 1840.

(2.) *It must be intelligent.*

(5068.) Worship is an act of the understanding, applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God and actual thoughts of His majesty; recognising Him as the supreme Lord and Governor of the world, which is natural knowledge; beholding the glory of His attributes in the Redeemer, which is evangelical knowledge. This is the sole act of the spirit of man. The same reason is for all our worship as for our thanksgiving. This must be done with understanding: "Sing ye praise with understanding" (Ps. xlvii. 7); with a knowledge and sense of His greatness, goodness, and wisdom. It is also an act of the will, whereby the soul adores and reverences His majesty, is ravished with His amiableness, embraceth His goodness, enters itself into an intimate communion with this most lovely object, and pitcheth all his affections upon Him; we must worship God understandingly; it is not else a reasonable service. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(3.) *It must be sincere and spiritual.*

(5069). We may be truly said to worship God, though we want perfection; but we cannot be said to worship Him if we want sincerity; a statue upon a tomb, with eyes and hands lifted up, offers as good and true a service; it wants only a voice, the gestures and postures are the same; nay, the service is better; it is not a mockery; it represents all that it can be framed to; but to worship without our spirits, is a presenting God with a picture, an echo, voice, and nothing else; a compliment; a mere lie; a "compassing Him about with lies."
—*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(5070.) God doth not institute worship-ordinances for bodily motion only; He speaketh to man, as to a man, and requireth human actions from him, even the work of the soul, and not the words of a parrot, or the motion of a puppet.
—*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

(4.) *It must be conducted with reverence.*

(5071.) If He be "our Lord," let us do Him reverence. It hath ever been the manner and posture of God's servants, when either they offer anything to Him (Matt. ii. 11), or pray to receive anything from Him (Ps. xcv. 6), to do it on their knees. When the king gives us a pardon for our life, forfeited to the law, we receive it on our knees. When he bestows favour or honour, be it but a knighthood, men kneel for it. In that holy place, where men receive the forgiveness of sins, the honour of saints, so gracious a pardon, so glorious a blessing, there be some that refuse so humble a gesture to the Lord Himself. Never tell me of a humble heart, where I see a stubborn knee. Indeed, this bodily reverence is not all; the tongue and heart must not be left out. But when our body is in such a position, and our mind in such disposition, we are then fittest to speak of Him, and to speak to Him. The tongue must also confess His glory. Those little engines are nimble enough in our own occasions; they run like the plummets of a clock when the catch is broken. But in our public devotions, *Amen* is scarce heard among us. The *Amen* of the primitive church was like a clap of thunder; and their *Hallelujah* as the roaring of the sea. How do they convince our silence! —*Adams*, 1653.

(5072.) God is Lord of my body also: and therefore challengeth as well reverent gesture as inward devotion. I will ever, in my prayers, either stand, as a servant, before my Master; or kneel, as a subject, to my Prince. —*Hall*, 1576–1656.

(5073.) God is a Spirit, yet will have the reverence of our body as well as spirit, for both are His; and especially in the public. A prince would not like rude behaviour from his servant in his bed-chamber, where none besides himself is witness to it; but much less will he bear it in his presence-chamber, as he sits on his throne before many of his subjects. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5074.) I have sometimes had the misfortune to sit in concerts where persons would chatter and giggle and laugh during the performance of the profoundest passages of the symphonies of the great artists; and I never fail to think, at such times, "I ask to know neither you, nor your father and mother, nor your name: I know what you *are*, by the way you conduct yourself here—by the want of sympathy and appreciation which you evince respecting what is passing around you." We could hardly help striking a man who should stand looking upon Niagara Falls without exhibiting emotions of awe and admiration. If we were to see a man walk through galleries of genius, totally unimpressed by what he saw, we should say to ourselves, "Let us be rid of such an unsusceptible creature as that."

Now I ask you to pass upon yourselves the same judgment. What do you suppose angels, that have trembled and quivered with ecstatic joy in the presence of God, think, when they see how indifferent you are to the Divine love and goodness in which you are perpetually bathed, and by which you are blessed and sustained every moment of your lives? How can they do otherwise than accuse you of monstrous ingratitude and moral insensibility, which betoken guilt as well as danger? —*Beecher.*

2. **Reasons for maintaining and observing it.**

(1.) *It is peculiarly acceptable to God.*

(5075.) No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto Him; but if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church choir, His saints' prayers in consort together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels and saints make but one consort. There is a wonderful prevalency in the joint prayers of His people. When Peter was in prison, the church meets and prays him out of his enemies' hands. A prince will grant a petition subscribed by the hands of a whole city, which, may be, he would not at the request of a private subject, and yet love him well too. There is an especial promise to public prayer: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

—*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(2.) *It is one of the chief channels of communication between our souls and God.*

(5076.) He that has a cause to be heard will not go to Smithfield, nor he that has cattle to buy or sell, to Westminster. He that has bargains to make or news to tell should not come to do that at church; nor he that has prayers to make, walk in the fields for his devotions. If I have a great friend, though in cases of necessity, as sickness or other restraints, he will vouchsafe to visit me, yet I must make my suits to him at home, at his own house. In cases of necessity, Christ in the sacrament vouchsafes to come home to me, and the court is where the King is. His blessings are with His ordinances wheresoever; but the place to which He has invited me is His house. He that made the great supper in the Gospel called in new guests; but he sent out no meat to them who had been invited, and might have come, and came not. Chamber prayers, single or with your family, chamber sermons, sermons read over there, and chamber sacraments administered in necessity there, are blessed assistants and supplements; they are as the alms at the gate, but the feast is within; they are as a cock of water without, but the cistern is within; he that has a handful of devotion at home, shall have his devotion multiplied to a gomer here, for when he is become a part of the congregation he is joint tenant with them, and the devotion of all the congregation, and the blessings upon all the congregation, are his blessings and his devotions.

—*Donne*, 1573–1631.

(5077.) Though the most remarkable progress of the believer may be upon his knees in secret intercourse betwixt God and him, yet public ordinances are the means of these private intercourses; though the secret may be more comfortable and refreshful, yet the public ordinances lay the foundation of that secret comfort and refreshment. It is in this as it is with the public well of a city, from whence people go and fetch water to their private houses; for ordinary, there is not so much use made of the water at the public well itself, till once they bring it home in their vessel to the private house or family, and there it is more freely made use of. Public ordinances are the wells; but, for ordinary, the children of God are not so much refreshed with the water thereof till once they get home to some secret corner with it, and there they get a more hearty refreshing drink of the water of life than they got at the public well; but still it was from thence it was fetched; and so the foundation of these private and refreshing meals is ordinarily laid in the public ordinances. It is true, some that go to fetch home water from the well may, according to their need, get a hearty drink of water even at the side of the well, before they bring any water home; and so the Lord's people may, and sometimes do, get a very heartsome and refreshing draught of living water, even at the well-side of public ordinances, while they are hearing the Word, or receiving the Sacrament of the Supper.

—*Erskine*, 1685–1752.

(3.) *It quickens the devotional feelings.*

(5078.) Though men might have worshipped God in secret, yet the appointment of a certain day, to be entirely devoted to His service, had a tendency to spiritualise their minds, and to make every one in some respects useful in furthering the welfare of the whole community. Sympathy is a powerful principle in the human breast: and the sight of others devoutly occupied in holy exercises is calculated to quicken the drowsy soul. The very circumstances of multitudes meeting together with raised expectations and heavenly affections, must operate like an assemblage of burning coals, all of which are instrumental to the kindling of others, while they receive in themselves fresh ardour from the contact. —*Simeon*, 1758–1836.

(4.) *It develops and ennobles the intellectual and moral powers.*

(5079.) The mind is essentially the same in the peasant and in the prince; the forces of it naturally in the untaught man and in the philosopher; only the one of these is busied in the meaner affairs and within narrower bounds, the other exercises himself

in things of weight and moment; and this it is that puts the wide difference between them. Noble objects are to the mind what the sunbeams are to a bud or flower; they open and unfold, as it were, the leaves of it, and put it upon exerting and spreading itself every way, and call forth all those powers that lie hid and locked up in it. The praise and admiration of God, therefore, brings this advantage along with it, that it sets our faculties upon their full stretch, and improves them to all the degrees of perfection of which they are capable.

—*Atterbury*, 1663–1732.

(5.) *It affords opportunity for intercessory prayer.*

(5080.) It is not merely the natural influence of public worship on those who offer it of which we ought to think. We believe that in the mystery of the relations which God has established between Himself and us, He has given us the power to widen and deepen the channels of His own bounty, and that this power is greatest when we pray *together*. When we ask Him to remember and comfort the sick who are not with us, we mean what we say, and we believe that in many a darkened and silent chamber, bright and peaceful thoughts make pain and weakness and the monotony of weary days and months of suffering more tolerable in answer to our prayers. Do you say, God is merciful and kind enough to console the sorrowful without being asked to do it, that He will not make their relief dependent on our sympathy and prayers? I reply that it is very plain that deep and strong as is the love of God for mankind, He *has* made the relief of human suffering dependent on human sympathy. He could, no doubt, send an angel to the sick; but if you neglect to go, no angel is sent. The feverish lips of the poor woman you visit would not be moistened by grateful fruit if you did not take the grapes; and some of you could tell how little children would have gone hungry to bed, notwithstanding God's love for them, if you had not bought them a supper. If God has made men so dependent on the acts to which our sympathy prompts us, I do not see that we ought to be surprised that He has made them dependent on our prayers too.

Far beyond the limits of these walls travel the results of the prayers you habitually offer here. Men who do not pray themselves are blessed, and men that pray are blessed more richly in answer to your intercessions. —*R. W. Dale.*

(6.) *It lays the foundation for heavenly friendships.*

(5081.) Our union with each other is only less important than our union with God. We may not perfectly understand why this is so, but it must be so. By the structure of our nature, by the constitution of the world, it is perfectly plain that God wants men to be one. In public worship this design of God is recognised and honoured; and Sunday by Sunday strong and imperishable links are being created which will bind us together through eternity.

You may say that you come and go without forming any friendships; that the people in the next pew remain strangers to you; that you pass each other in the street without mutual recognition; that you know nothing of their life, and they know nothing of yours; and that the idea of communion between those who worship together is a theory and nothing more. I may frankly acknowledge that the idea is not so fully realised, here and now, as it should be; but I am not at all disposed to acknowledge that it is therefore only a theory. Your life is being interwoven with their life, and theirs with yours, more closely than you think. You will know it some day if you do not know it now.

Take two schoolfellows, that sat on the same form, were flogged with the same cane, and went through, in the same class, the drudgery of mastering the rule of three, and getting by heart the Greek irregular verbs; they were not great friends as boys, perhaps,—but after years of separation they meet in New Zealand, or far away on the banks of the Mississippi; do they not find that their schooldays had brought them nearer together than they had ever supposed? If there is any kind of moral sympathy between them, any capacity for friendship, do they not become fast friends, and feel that they are infinitely more to each other than if they met for the first time? There are ties binding them together which they never thought of at the time those ties were being formed; the mere accident of having been at the same school makes their friendship incalculably heartier and more pleasant.

When the external temporary distinctions which now separate from each other those who worship together have for ever vanished, it will be found that they, too, have been brought nearer to each other than they had imagined. They had not dined together, or lent each other money, or talked to each other about the weather,—which things seem to form, in some people's judgment, the very essence of Christian communion—but together they had confessed sin; together they had received the Divine pardon; together they had been baptized with the Holy Ghost; in singing the same hymns, at the same time, they had known something on earth of the blessedness of heavenly worship; the same words, from the same preacher, had originated or strengthened their devout and strenuous endeavours to do the will of God; their whole moral and religious life had been shaped and coloured by the same influences; and they will discover that a more intimate fellowship and a closer sympathy are possible to them before the very throne of God, as the result of the thanksgivings and adoration which they used to offer on earth where "prayer was wont to be made." —*R. W. Dale.*

3. How often ought we to attend public worship?

(5082.) In these Christian days God has proscribed no rule as to the frequency with which we should worship Him, or the exact forms in which the worship of the Spirit should be expressed. He has left everything to our conscience, our judgment, and our love. In every place, at all times, alone and with others, at home and in the church of Christ, we may bow before His Majesty and be sure that He will listen to us. We are driven to Him by "the windy storm and tempest:" we cry to Him in the anguish of our penitence, or of our trouble, or of our fear; with vehement entreaty we beseech Him to avert the calamities which threaten us; and when our hearts are "smitten and withered like grass," we lie at His feet and implore Him to pity and to comfort us. But surely this is not enough. Are we not covered with shame that we should so easily forget to adore Him when we might come to Him without tears, and rejoice in His presence as His

angels do, and speak to Him with exulting delight about His infinite goodness and bounty; and that only by sorrow and chastisement are we drawn into most intimate communion with Him? Is our Father's house so unwelcome and dreary a place that there can be any cause for keeping outside as long as the winds are gentle and the skies bright, and only going in when the rain comes and the clouds of night hang heavily in the heavens? Thank God, He does not refuse to let us in when we come to Him as our refuge in time of trouble, but it would surely be a better thing that He should be our "dwelling-place," the home of our hearts when our joy is perfect, and not merely the asylum of our wretchedness. —*R. W. Dale.*

4. Preparation should be made for it.

(5083.) The Christian is like some heavy birds, as the bustard and others, that cannot get upon the wing without a run of a furlong or two, or a great bell that takes some time to the raising of it. Now, meditation is the great instrument thou art to use in this preparatory work, allow thyself some considerable portion of time before the day of extraordinary prayer for thy retirement, wherein thou mayest converse most privately with thy own heart. This cannot be done in a crowd, neither must it be left to the time of engaging in the extraordinary duty; we cannot do both duties together; the husbandman cannot whet his scythe and cut the grass at once. Betake thyself, therefore, to thy closet, and, in the first place, call thy thoughts off the world, and, as much as is possible, clear thy soul of all that is foreign to the work thou art about; this is as the wiping of the table book before we can write anything well on it. Now the more effectually to gather in thy heart to a holy seriousness, and compact thy thoughts together, it were expedient for thee at first to lay before thee the grand importance of the approaching service. Thou art going to stand before the great God, and that very near in an extraordinary duty, wherein thou wilt either satisfy or profane His reverend name in a high degree, and accordingly art to expect His love or wrath in some choice blessing or dreadful curse, to be the issue and result of thy undertaking; gird the loins of thy mind with some such awful apprehensions as these. As natural fear makes the spirits retire from the outward parts of the body to the heart, so this holy fear of miscarrying in so solemn a duty would be a means to call thy thoughts from all exterior carnal objects, and fix them upon the duty in hand. "In Thy fear will I worship." Such will the print on the wax be, as the sculpture is on the seal; if the fear of God be deeply engraven on thy heart, there is no doubt but it will make a suitable impression on the duty thou performest. —*Gurnall*, 1617–1679.

(5084.) Our worship is spiritual when the door of the heart is shut against all intruders, as our Saviour commands in closet-duties. It was not His meaning to command the shutting the closet-door, and leave the heart-door open for every thought that would be apt to haunt us. Worldly affections are to be laid aside if we would have our worship spiritual; this was meant by the Jewish custom of wiping or washing off the dust of their feet before their entrance into the Temple, and of not bringing money in their girdles. To be spiritual in worship, is to have our souls gathered and bound up wholly in themselves, and offered to God. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(5085.) Sequester yourselves from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come hot, reeking out of the world into God's presence, but you will find the influence of it in your duties. It is with the heart a few minutes since plunged in the world, now at the feet of God, just as with the sea after a storm, which still continues working muddy and disquiet; though the wind be laid and storm over, thy heart must have some time to settle. There are few musicians that can take down a lute or viol, and play presently upon it, without some time to tune it. When thou goest to God in any duty, take thy heart aside, and say, "O my soul, I am now addressing myself to the greatest work that ever a creature was employed about. I am going into the awful presence of God, about business of everlasting moment."
—*Salter.*

5. While we are engaged in it, our thoughts must be kept under control.

(5086.) A remembrance of God's omnipresence will quell distractions in worship. The actual thoughts of this would establish our thoughts, pull them back when they begin to rove, and blow off all the froth that lies on the top of our spirits. An eye taken up with the presence of one object is not at leisure to be filled with another; he that looks intently upon the sun shall have nothing for a while but the sun in his eye. Oppose to every intruding thought the idea of the Divine omnipresence, and put it to silence by the awe of His majesty. When the master is present scholars mind their books, keep their places, and run not over the forms to play with one another; and the master's eye keeps an idle servant to his work, that otherwise would be gazing at every straw, and prating to every passenger. How soon would the remembrance of this dash all extravagant fancies out of countenance, just as the news of the approach of a prince would make the courtiers bustle up themselves, huddle up their vain sports, and prepare themselves for a reverent behaviour in his sight. We should not dare to give God a piece of our heart, when we apprehend Him present with the whole; we should not dare to mock one that we knew was more inwards with us than we are with ourselves, and that beheld every motion of our mind as well as action of our body. —*Charnock*, 1628–1680.

(5087.) Seeing it is much in the capacity and frame of thy heart, how much thou shalt enjoy of God in this contemplation, be sure that all the room thou hast be empty; and, if ever, seek Him here with all thy soul: thrust not Christ into the stable and the manger, as if thou hadst better guests for the chiefest rooms. Say to all thy worldly business and thoughts, as Christ to His disciples, "Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder" (Matt. xxvi. 36). Or as Abraham, when he went to sacrifice Isaac, left his servant and ass below the mount, saying, "Stay you here, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you:" so say thou to all thy worldly thoughts, "Abide you below, while I go up to Christ, and then I will return to you again." Yea, as God did terrify the people with His threats of death, if any one should

dare to come to the mount, when Moses was to receive the law from God; so do thou terrify thy own heart, and use violence against thy intruding thoughts, if they offer to accompany thee to the mount of contemplation. Even as the priests thrust Uzziah the king out of the Temple, where he presumed to burn incense, when they saw the leprosy to arise upon him; so do thou thrust these thoughts from the temple of thy heart, which have the badge of God's prohibition upon them. As you will beat back your dogs, yea, and leave your servants behind you, when you yourselves are admitted into the prince's presence, so also do by these. Yourselves may be welcome, but such followers may not. —*Baxter*, 1615–1691.

6. Common sins in public worship.

(5088.) In public worship all should join. The little strings go to make up a concert, as well as the great. —*Goodwin*, 1600–1679.

(5089.) That man coolly insults God who needlessly composes himself to slumber, when professing to be a suppliant for mercy at His feet.

Similar is the presumption of neglecting to participate in divine worship when present in God's house. Negative sins are sometimes most intensely sinful. Heedless sins are sometimes most fearfully fatal.

If you were one of a delegation to the Court of St. James's for the presentation of a petition, and were admitted to audience with the Queen, should you think it becoming to the dignity of the royal presence to neglect the business in hand, and to wander about the apartment curiously, while your chairman was presenting the petition in your name? Yet that which would be only a breach of etiquette there, is a much graver offence in the house of God. A listless and wandering mind—roving like fool's eyes—in the temple of worship, is a most insolent indignity to the King of kings. —*Phelps.*

(5090.) There are practices tolerated in religious congregations which Christians who are jealous for the honour of their Master's house should utterly condemn. Decorum is the handmaid of devotional feeling, and for this reason the house of God should never be disturbed by the slightest approach to irreverence.

"It is a part of my religion," said a pious old lady, when asked why she went early to church; "it is a part of my religion not to interrupt the religion of others." And we believe if many a country congregation made it a part of their religion not to twist their necks almost out of joint to witness the entrance of every person who passes up the aisle during service, it would be better both for their necks and their religion.

A gross abuse of religious decorum sometimes needs harsh medicine as a remedy. We give that adopted by Henry Clay Dean, who was at one time Chaplain of Congress. The anecdote is from the "Pacific Methodist":—

"Being worried one afternoon by this turning practice in his congregation, Mr. Dean stopped in his sermon and said:

"'Now, you listen to me, and I'll tell you who the people are as each one of them comes in.'

"He then went on with his discourse, until a gentleman entered, when he bawled out, like an usher, 'Deacon A——, who keeps the shop over the way,' and then went on with his sermon. Presently another man passed up the aisle, and his name, residence, and occupation were given; so he continued for some time. At length some one entered the door who was unknown to Mr. Dean, when he cried out, 'A little old man, with drab coat and an old white hat; don't know him—look for yourselves.' That congregation was cured."

(5091.) When the time for commencing public worship has been fixed by the united action or general assent of a Christian congregation, every member of that congregation is obligated to conform to that arrangement; and whoever, through indolence or indifference, is behind time, sins against God, his fellow-worshippers, and his own good. A tardy courtier offends his prince—how much more a tardy worshipper his God. To be behind time at a business appointment, is to infringe upon the time and rights of others, and never more so than when that business is worshipping God.

7. By what rule the material accompaniments of worship are to be judged.

(5092.) Excess of material circumstance in spiritual worship, whether of architectural adornment, ritual ceremony, musical elaboration, or even intellectual fastidiousness, is as injurious to it as is overcumbrous machinery in manufacture, excess of ceremonial in social life, superfluous raiment to personal activity, or gaudy ornamentation to personal grace. It is both injurious to life and offensive to taste. But equally so, on the other hand, is penuriousness and nakedness. If we may not overlay spiritual life, neither may we denude it. The true law of life is that its energies be developed in all the force and with all the beauty of which they are capable, and that it worship with such cultured adornment as in the highest degree may appeal to and express its own spiritual emotions. This is the simple law and the sufficient test of all artistic appliances. Is any particular cultus conducive to the worshipping heart of the congregation? If not, and still more if it be injurious to it, then no matter how beautiful in itself it may be—how conducive to the profit and joy of other congregations—however sanctioned by history and contemporary use—let it be rejected, and, if needful, let it be dealt with as the serpent of brass, which Hezekiah destroyed and pronounced to be "Nehushtan."
—*Allon.*

8. Necessity of a suitable building.

(5093.) The church ought to be of a comely structure, proportionably magnificent to the number of the people that are to have recourse to it in the common exercise of their devotions. For though men of equal condition may make bold with themselves and meet in what place they please, yet it would be thought a piece of gross unmannerliness to expect a prince to give an inferior peasant the meeting in a barn or cow stable. Would it not, then, look like a piece of irreligious rudeness, which is truly a kind of profaneness, to expect that Almighty God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, should give us the meeting in squalid or sordid places, even then when we pretend most to show our reverence and devotion to Him? For though we may make bold one with another to meet where we please; yet we making our approaches to God in those places, and He therefore making His special approaches to us (for in a philosophical sense He is

everywhere alike), questionless it cannot but be an expression of our reverence unto Him to have the structure of the place proportionably capacious, well and fairly built, and as properly significant of our religion and devotional homages we owe to our crucified Saviour, as can be without suspicion of idolatry or any scandalous superstition. For it is true from the very light of nature, which the knowledge of Christ does not extinguish, but direct and perfect, that houses of public worship ought to have some stateliness and splendour in them expressive of the reverence we bear to the Godhead we adore.

—*Henry More*, 1614–1687.

(5094.) But must there not be an "order" of architecture appropriate to Christian churches? Should not the very structure of our buildings for worship indicate their sacred purpose; I reply, that, of course, every building should correspond to the object for which it is erected. If I build a cotton-mill there must be an engine-house, and long rooms for the machinery. If I build a retail shop there must be a window to display the goods, and there must be convenience for storing them, and there must be easy access for the customers, and arrangements to prevent those that come in to buy from interfering with those employed to sell. In a court of justice, there must be a bench for the judge, and a bar for the criminals, and a box for the witnesses, and accommodation for the barristers, and a place for the general public.

If I build a church, it is right that I should build it with a due regard to the use to which it is devoted. I may be led to the choice of a certain order of architecture, because in this country that order indicates that it is a building for religious worship; but in all the arrangements of the interior I ought to be guided by the fact, that it is meant to be *a place of assembly in which a Christian congregation shall receive instruction and unite in worship*. Whatever promotes these purposes, ministers to the object for which it is built, and nothing must be permitted to interfere with that object.

—*R. W. Dale*.

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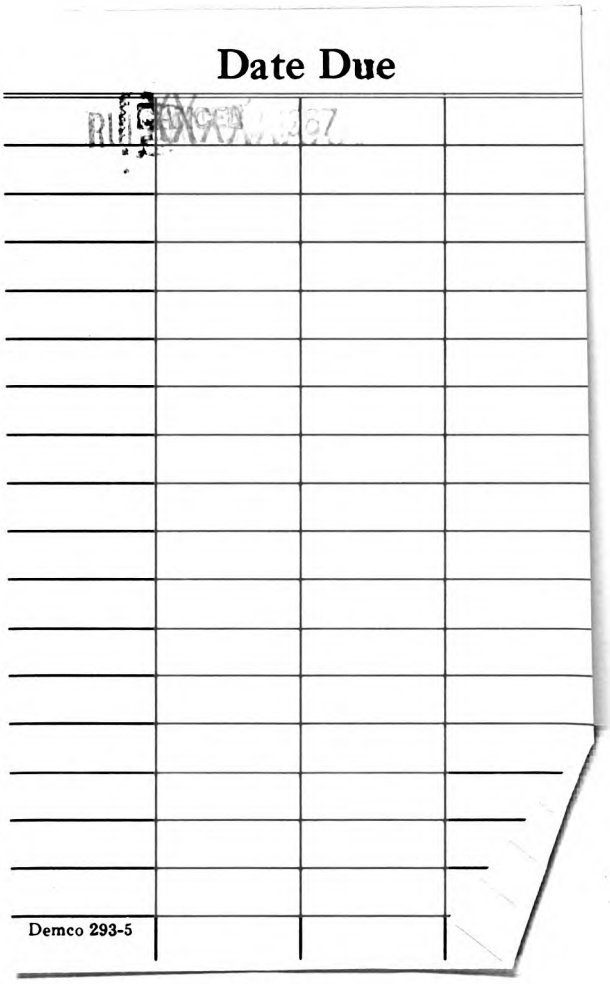
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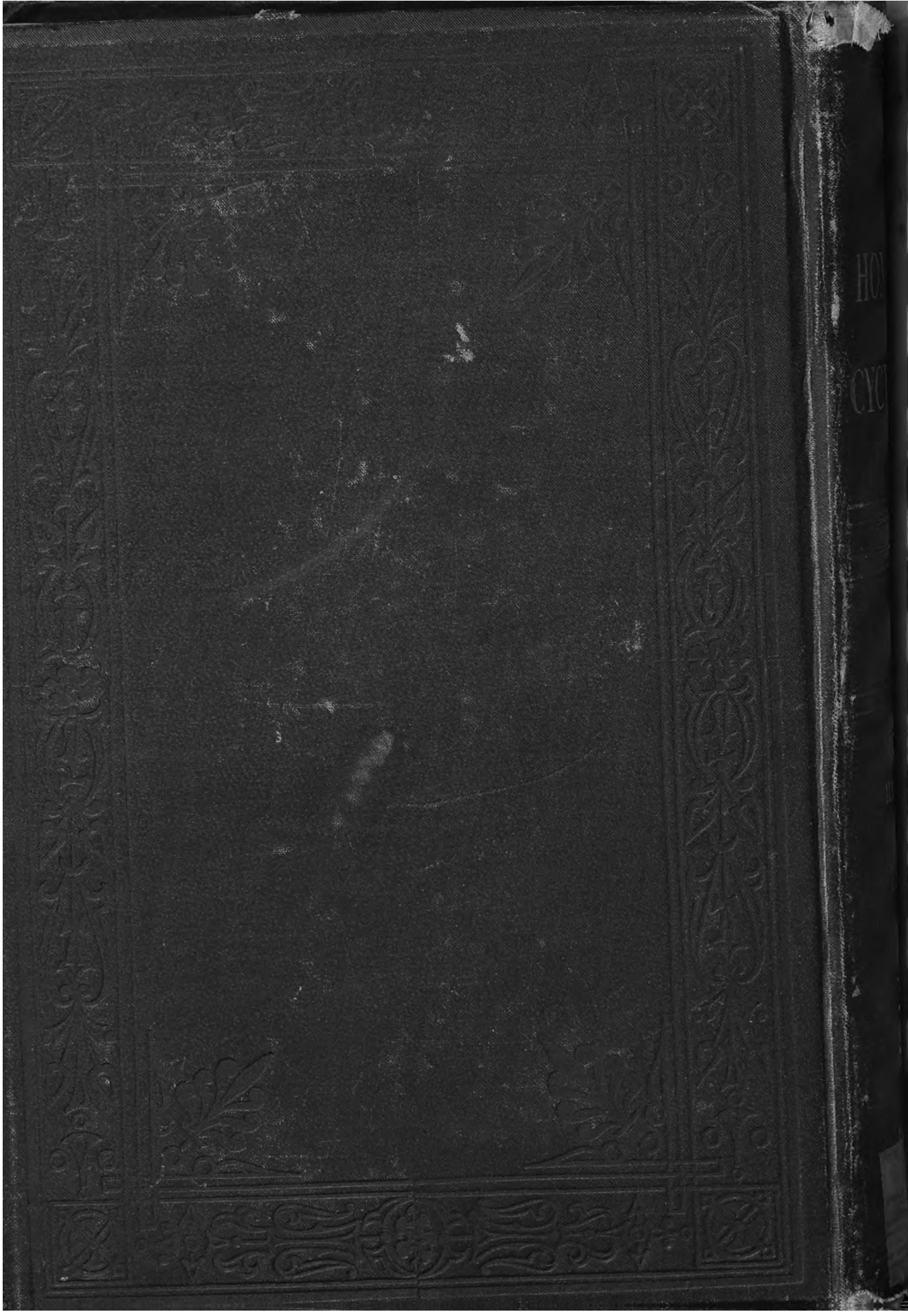
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